

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HARRY VAN ZANDT

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Tara Liston: This begins an interview with Mr. Harry Van Zandt in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on March, May 11, 1996, with Tara Liston and ...

Tara Kraenzlin: Tara L. Kraenzlin.

TL: Okay, now, we are going to begin by talking about your parents. We will start with your father. Where was he born and raised?

Harry Van Zandt: My father was born in Somerville, New Jersey. I presume he was pretty much raised in Somerville, [laughter] New Jersey, too, yes, also, and then, at some point in time, moved to North Plainfield, New Jersey.

TL: Okay

HVZ: What else do you want to know?

TL: Where was your mother born?

HVZ: My mother was born in New York City.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah, and then, ... her family moved to Westfield, New Jersey.

TL: How did your parents meet?

HVZ: I haven't the slightest idea. [laughter]

TL: Really?

HVZ: I was the youngest of six boys and, I'm sure, by the time I came along, they were tired of talking about it. [laughter] I never heard the story.

TL: Okay. What did your father do for a living?

HVZ: He ... had a plumbing, heating, and piping contracting firm.

TL: Did your father's business do well during the Depression?

HVZ: He did. All facts considered, he did extremely well, yeah, because he had several large jobs. One, in Perth Amboy, for the National Lead Company, and the other job that he spent a long time on was up in the Adirondack Mountains, near Tahawus, New York, where they had discovered a supply of titanium oxide, which they had been importing from India, primarily, and then, when the war broke out, of course, ... [it] got difficult to import that sort of thing, and they opened up a mine there, and had to build not only the mine, and all the facilities, and processing

plant, but, also, they had to build a town, stores, churches, and everything else in ... Tahawus. They built the whole community.

TL: Did you move to the community with him?

HVZ: Oh, no, no. He went up there on the job and they had about forty-five men. They lived right on the job. They built dormitories and that sort of thing for the men, ... yeah, and I was at Rutgers at that time.

TL: Oh, of course.

HVZ: Right. Yeah, we'd go up to visit him. It was a two-day trip from Rutgers. [laughter]

TL: Did your mom ever stay with him?

HVZ: ... No, no. She would go up to visit, because he made good friends there at Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, some old cronies, and [laughter] ... go visiting these people, too. It was an interesting time for him. He loved the woods and he loved the Adirondacks, so, it was a very enjoyable experience for him.

TL: Did your mother work?

HVZ: No, never.

TL: She stayed home with the kids.

HVZ: Yeah.

TK: All six of them. She probably had her hands full.

HVZ: At that point in time, ... I was the only kid and I was ... in college.

TK: Did any of your brothers go to college also?

HVZ: ... I had one brother [who] graduated from Rutgers in 1940. I had another brother who attended Rutgers for three years, and then, had to drop out for lack of funds, in the middle of the Depression.

TL: Did he ever go back?

HVZ: No, no. He didn't have to. ... [laughter] He went out ... and got a job with General Electric, immediately, and was with General Electric up until about the last, oh, maybe, five years of his working life.

TL: What made all of you decide to go to Rutgers?

HVZ: It was close, [laughter] and, my freshman year, I commuted from Plainfield.

TK: You later moved into the fraternity house.

HVZ: Sophomore year.

TK: Yeah. Why did you move? Were you tired of commuting?

HVZ: That and I had two very good friends who were ... in a rooming house, at that time, and I got to be very friendly with them. They were both Zetas and they moved into the Zeta House, I guess, their ... sophomore year, I think. They were Class of '43.

TK: Okay.

HVZ: That was Joe Hewitt and a fella named Don Jones. Don Jones ... ended up an assistant football coach at Rutgers. [laughter] Yeah, and then, ... from there, he went to Hamilton College and was head football coach there for many, many, many years.

TL: Do you still keep in touch with him?

HVZ: He's dead.

TL: Oh.

HVZ: ... When he retired, he moved to Florida and was coaching golf someplace down there, [laughter] and Joe is also dead.

TK: Did you visit the old house?

HVZ: ... Don't want to go, no.

TK: Oh, yeah?

HVZ: I walked by it, but, I wouldn't go inside. [laughter]

TL: Too scared, right? [laughter]

HVZ: ... Too depressing, no.

TL: How did your social life change when you went from being a commuter to being a frat boy?

HVZ: ... It wasn't that much [of a] difference, because I was dating a girl who ... I would later marry.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Started dating her the ... summer after we'd graduated from high school together.

TK: How did you meet her?

HVZ: How'd I meet her? I met her when ... we were both in the seventh grade and [in] different schools, different elementary schools, or grammar schools, as they were called then, and she came to a party at a friend's house, one of my friend's house, and that's where I met her, and she was in the seventh grade and so was I, and we went through high school together. We started dating the summer after high school, and so, ... [by] the time I got to Rutgers, we were still dating. Well, we dated all through school.

TL: When did you get married?

HVZ: January the 1st, 1944.

TK: Why on New Year's Day?

HVZ: ... That's when I had a three-day pass. [laughter]

TK: It is a very interesting day to have your wedding.

HVZ: Well, it's easy to remember. [laughter]

TL: I am sure she appreciates that.

HVZ: But, no, ... this Black Fifty group, you know what the Black Fifty is?

TK: Yes, but, please explain it further.

HVZ: Okay, well, I'm sure you've heard from ... others of the Black Fifty, but, ... we were all ROTC students, and, at the end of, what calendar year was it? Well, in any event, at the end of our junior year here at Rutgers, we were called into active duty, and we stayed right on campus, and, you know, marched to class and all that business. ... Now, the senior class, Class of '43, were also called into active duty at the same time. They immediately went from Rutgers to Fort Benning, Georgia. I'm talking about the infantry, now, the infantry ROTC, to go through OCS. The juniors were transferred to ... Fort Dix, from whence we went to Fort McClellan, Alabama, [and] went through basic training.

TL: You went through twice, right?

HVZ: ... We went through three basic training companies. The first company we joined, I don't know how long we were there, and then, they transferred us. ... All the ROTC students ... on that post were put in one training company, and ... that was the second company we were in, and then,

we ... actually finished our basic training. They didn't know what the hell to do with us, and they put us in another training company, and that's where we were until we came back to Rutgers. You know, that's the smart thing to do. You take a kid out of Rutgers, where he's paying his tuition, and then, you send him back, but, we came back to Rutgers in uniform and lived all ... over the campus. I was living in, what was then, ... the Commuter Club, they called it. You know where that is? The corner of College Avenue and, what's the street [that] runs in front of Queens, right there on the corner? ...

TK: Hamilton?

HVZ: Hamilton? I don't know.

TK: I think it is Hamilton.

HVZ: ... Some of us were living in there. That's where I was living, ... and then, at New Year's, we had a three-day pass. That's when I got married.

TL: Where did you spend your honeymoon?

HVZ: Poundridge, New York.

TL: What is there?

HVZ: We had a friend who had a country house up there, ... real nice.

TL: I was told by Mr. Livy Goodman that your first trainer was excellent. He really pounded the physical training and everything into you. Do you remember anything about him?

HVZ: He was talking about ... basic training? Oh, he was talking about ... a guy named Pappy. We called him Pappy Vopack. ... I don't know what Pappy's real first name was, but, yeah, he was a rough character.

TL: Do you have any stories about him?

HVZ: No, nothing you haven't heard about Pappy Vopack.

TL: I only heard a few stories.

HVZ: Is that right? ... Well, he ... also taught bayonet training, too, and he enjoyed that, too. He was very physical, yeah, and he made us very physical. He said he was gonna shape us up, so we could get killed with dignity, [laughter] but, no I can't tell any stories about him. ... Oh, I'm sure there are a lot of them that could be told, but, no, he loved to take us up over a mountain there called Bain's Gap, which was right outside the post there, march up that thing in a full field pack and that sort of thing, fall you out. At night, after you think you're about time to go to bed, he'd fall you out, at night, to go running around the post and that sort of thing, too. No, ... he got us

all in excellent physical shape. Well, he and everybody involved in basic training, [which], then, was quite different than the modern day Army. They were tough on you.

TK: How did you feel about the whole process of entering the Army and being trained as you were?

HVZ: Well, I'll tell you, ... entering the Army the way we did, where ... you go away with, well, there actually were fifty-one of us, ... you know, good [friends], you've already built up a lot of comradeship with them, you know. Rutgers, at that time, you knew everybody on campus. You knew everybody's face, you know, and ... most people you could call by name, and, when you go away with fifty people like that, ... it's a completely different experience than entering the Army on your own, as a raw recruit, and being thrown in with a bunch of strangers. You know, ... it was not a bad experience and I think everybody looks back on it [and] has a lot of good stories to tell about it, rather than [bad stories]. ...

TL: Do you remember the Mississippi boys that you were stuck with, the rich ones?

HVZ: Oh, the Mississippi [boys] I don't remember as being rich boys, but, ... no, I remember some of ... [them] being very, very stiff rednecks, [laughter] to put it mildly, yeah, but, I don't remember [them] as being rich boys, no, not too much.

TL: Were they lazy? I heard they were lazy or from a more leisurely class.

HVZ: Well, they were a little different. No, I couldn't say they were lazier, no.

TL: This was probably the first time you ever met anybody from outside the New Jersey-New York area.

HVZ: Yeah, ... that's true, and, yeah, ... [it] took a little getting used to, but, I was intrigued with them and with the way they were, and then, at OCS, practically everyone in my platoon at the OCS, that's Officer Candidate School, ... was from Texas A&M, and ... a lot of the guys in our class were from CCNY, and so, I palled with the Texas boys, and everybody thought I was a Texan [laughter] by the time I finished OCS, and I still keep in touch ... with several of them from Texas A&M. They were a good bunch of boys. ...

TL: Have you ever gone down there to visit with them?

HVZ: ... Yeah. I've got one young, ... young, jeez, what am I talking about? He's as old as I, [laughter] boy that washed out of our OCS class, and I still keep ... in touch with him, see him at reunions, and he, and his wife, and my wife, and I went on a trip with a group from the division, and we were very close there, too, but, after he ... washed out of OCS, he ended up at Camp Shelby in the Sixty-Fifth Infantry Division. When I graduated from OCS, I was assigned to the Sixty-Fifth, [laughter] and he was in the same company that I was assigned to, and, in fact, another graduate of '44, another Black Fifty, who had graduated about two weeks, or one week, before I did from OCS, was in the same company, and then, it ended up in Europe. This fellow,

Bob (Shuman?), he was from Sugarland, Texas. He ended up in my section over there in Europe.
...

TL: You were never really alone.

HVZ: Small world. [laughter] ... Right, and my company commander, first company commander I had, ... in the Sixty-Fifth Division, ... he was a Texas A&M man, older man, yeah, but, also a Texan. I got along very well with Texans. ... [laughter] In fact, I ended up living in Texas for a while after the war.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah.

TL: Was that before Korea?

HVZ: After Korea. ...

TL: Well, we will have to pursue that later. [laughter]

HVZ: But, no, ... as far as you know, your reactions, at that time, the country was in the middle of a war and we had been very privileged to have stayed out it as long as we did, since we were in college. So, no one felt ... like they were being, you know, shafted by being called into the Army. Everybody felt like it was ... high time, really, and, as I say, then, going away with this group of guys, that all of you got along so well together, and ... had such a good time together, sharing each other's troubles, and everything else.

TK: Can you describe what makes the relationship between the Black Fifty so special?

HVZ: ... Naturally, you came from the same university, but, you came from different fraternities, for the most part. ... Two others of the Black Fifty were from my fraternity, but, you know, you ... made new friends, got very friendly with some other guys, and we're still very friendly with them, right to this day, yeah, but, I don't know what else I'd tell you about ... the feelings. As in any group, there are cliques, of course, where you have, you know, these four guys, they hung out together, ... and these four guys hung out together, that sort of thing, but, no conflict whatsoever.

TK: Do you think it was to your advantage to be with people who were from your area and arrived in the service by a similar route?

HVZ: Oh, absolutely, absolutely, with [the] same backgrounds, ... yeah, same university, right, and, oh, yes, big, big advantage, yeah, right.

TK: I think that is one of the reasons why this group is so interesting.

HVZ: That's why the Class of 1944 is such a great group, ... because it had this nucleus of people. In addition to the infantry, you have ... the other juniors who were called in. They were in the Signal Corps, and so, they fit right in, too. So, you get together, ... you're actually having a reunion of Army friends and a reunion of your college friends.

TK: Right.

HVZ: So, it's a ... good strong class. ...

TL: Yeah, you can tell they have a lot of school pride over there. [laughter]

HVZ: Well, they have a lot of ... pride in ourselves, anyhow.

TL: Well, you should.

HVZ: Yeah, right.

TL: What did your mother think when you were inducted? Was she worried?

HVZ: Well, yes, I'm sure she was. ...

TL: Well, you did have other brothers.

HVZ: Well, I had this brother I was telling you about that graduated in 1940. He went into the Air Corps. It's Air Corps, not Air Force, Air Corps.

TL: Right. [laughter]

HVZ: Yeah. He became a bombardier and shipped over to England, where he was with the Eighth Air Force, and, at that time, their tour of duty consisted of twenty-five missions, and, if you were fortunate enough to complete twenty-five missions, then, you were shipped home or [you] got a different assignment, out of combat. ... He had completed his twenty-five missions and was back home, ... well, in fact, he visited me when I was down at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, with the Sixty-Fifth Division. We hadn't even shipped overseas, yet, [laughter] ... and he was already home again. ...

TL: Did his plane go on the Schweinfurt bombing raid?

HVZ: Well, I don't whether ... [he] hit it, but, [laughter] ... he was on that disastrous Schweinfurt raid.

TL: Really?

HVZ: I've gotta whole book of his ... in the car. ...

TL: Do you really? I would like to see that.

HVZ: I brought it down thinking I'd, maybe, be able leave it with you. ...

TL and TK: Show it to the Taras.

HVZ: Yeah, but, ... his wife, his widow, brought it up to me around the 1st of April, and ... she said she wanted to. He has two excellent scrapbooks that he's put together, but, he's also included in this thing aerial photographs that he had got from the archives down in Arlington, Virginia, ... showing, actually, aerial photographs of these bombs landing, and, for all he knew, some of them might have come out of his airplane, [laughter] ... you know what I mean? ...

TL: That is incredible.

HVZ: Oh, yeah, and all these raids, (Berlin?), Schweinfurt, several in France, what's the submarine base up there, the German submarine base? [Hamburg or Brest?] They bombed some, but, the Schweinfurt raid was, ... without a doubt, probably one of the worst debacles that the Eighth Air Force went through. ... That was before we had long range fighter escorts for those bombers, so, they were at the mercy of the German Air Force. They lost about fifty percent of the planes that started out. ...

TL: Did he have a lot of respect for the Luftwaffe?

HVZ: Well, I don't know ... whether you call it respect or not. ... I don't think he's ever thought about ... that, that particular vein, whether he had respect for them or not.

TK: Well, for their fighting abilities, not for the men themselves.

HVZ: Well, you ... get down to that, you have ... two factors involved, the abilities of the pilots, how well they're trained, and ... how good their equipment is, and, obviously, the Americans out-produced them, as far as volume is concerned, and, I think, out-produced them as far as quality of airplanes are concerned, too. So, later in the war, the Luftwaffe was no longer a factor.

TK: Right. I think it is very interesting that your brother had already finished by the time you were just getting started. When he came down to visit you, did he give you any advice?

HVZ: No, ... not really, no. Well, ... it would have been difficult for him to give advice. ... If you're in an airplane, you are somehow divorced ... from the danger. You don't really feel imminent danger until your plane is hit. After a while, when you get smarter, and the longer ... you fly these missions, the more dangerous it is to you, and first thing you know, the only thing you're considering is, "Can I get through twenty-five of them without getting, you know, my plane shot out from under me?"

TL: Right.

HVZ: ... Whereas in the ground force, you're closer to the danger. You know, ... it's more personal. ... In the air, you see this flack bursting all around you, but, ... it's not like somebody's shooting at you with some sort of a weapon, directly, you know what I mean? So, completely different experience.

TL: Did the two of you ever talk about the war?

HVZ: No. ... During the war, he wrote me very interesting letters.

TL: Do you still have them?

HVZ: Some of them. I still have the one about the Schweinfurt mission.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah.

TK: Did he continue to write to you once he was home and you were overseas?

HVZ: Yes. Oh, yeah. He was one of my main correspondents. My wife was the other one.

TK: What about your mother?

HVZ: Oh, occasionally, [laughter] ... not too often, and then, I had another brother [who] was in the Air Force, Air Corps, also. ... He was with the photographic squadron.

TL: So, your brother might have taken some of the pictures in your other brother's scrapbook?

HVZ: No, 'cause ... they were mapping, doing aerial mapping, like in North Africa, after the fighting had stopped, and ... they did a lot of aerial photography work up in Alaska, when they were building the Alcan Highway, that sort of thing. It's more aerial photography work, yeah, but, so, he wasn't actually involved in any combat.

TK: What was it like to be at Rutgers when you knew what was going to happen, that you would be in the war?

HVZ: Party, party. [laughter]

TK: Really?

HVZ: ... Lots of parties, yeah.

TL: Where was your favorite hangout?

HVZ: My favorite hangout? Well, there ... weren't that many. Weekends, I'd get home or ... get to Neva's house, but, well, you know, our house party weekends, she'd ... come on over for the weekend, but, the favorite hangout, Corner Tavern [laughter] and the Elbow Room. ...

TL: The Elbow Room, where is that?

HVZ: That's in the basement of the Zeta House. [laughter] ... We spent a long time working [on] the Zeta House. What is now the first floor used to be the second floor. What is now the basement used to be the first floor of that house, before they put (all the filler on it?), and the downstairs there, they had this wood paneling wainscot all the way around the room, beautiful thing. So, we just went down there, and fixed it up, and ... built a bar. We had tables, and checkered tablecloths, and the whole bit, roll up a keg of beer on the weekend and have parties down there, have somebody stationed up by the front door. In case somebody came in the front door, they would step on a buzzer and it'd buzz down below. We'd know the party was over. [laughter] ...

TL: Who would come to stop it, the police or one of the deans?

HVZ: Oh, back in those days, there was no liquor allowed on campus, you know.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Oh, no, oh, no. ... You know, even when you had a house party, you had to have chaperones. If there were gonna be females present, you had to have chaperones, and the dean would go around, check every fraternity that's having a party, oh, yes, at some point. ...

TL: Did Dean Metzger do the checking?

HVZ: No, it wasn't Metzger. I can't remember who it was, but, it wasn't Metzger, no. ... He couldn't have made it around, I don't think, [laughter] but, no, ... they were quite a bit stricter, but, like I said, ... you couldn't have beer in the fraternity house, or any kind of alcoholic beverage. That's not to say we didn't, [laughter] but, no, ... everybody knew that that was their last year of school and that they would be in the Army the next year. ... That following year, Rutgers was practically devoid of any kind of civilian students. That's when they started the Army Specialized Training Program, bringing in the ASTP. So, the next time I saw the Zeta House, ... it was a barracks ... for soldiers over there.

TL: What was it like to move from civilian-run Rutgers to a military camp in the Deep South, and then, back up to a Rutgers which was completely dominated by the Army?

HVZ: Well, it was better than being overseas, but, no, it was kind of silly, because, like, I was an economics major, and most people were something like that here, business major, economics, something like that, and ... we arrived here ... towards the end of a semester, so, we couldn't start going to classes right away. So, we wasted some time there. Then, ... when the new semester started, we started classes, and they had me, for instance, taking physics, calculus, and my last

course in math was in ... [what] would've been my freshman year here, advanced algebra, or something or other, and the professor said he'd give me a passing grade if I promised never to take a math course again. [laughter] ... So, he put me in calculus, and the only thing I was good at was taking a course in engineering drawing, and I was good at that, but, physics and calculus, I didn't have enough math to get through either one of them, and so, it was engineering students. They were doing well, but, anybody else was ...

TL: Sinking fast?

HVZ: ... Yeah. It was pretty bad, but, fortunately, ... they pulled us out before the end of the semester, so, we didn't either get a passing or a failing [grade], neither one, and then, we went to OCS at Fort Benning. I'm talking about the infantry, now. ...

TL: What did you think of that training?

HVZ: That training was a snap, compared to basic training. It was quite easy. ...

TL: Did you go to Fort Benning with any other members of the Black Fifty?

HVZ: Oh, sure.

TL: How many of them? Where did most of them go?

HVZ: ... Well, of the fifty infantry, I would guess, probably, I'd say, in the history book, ... do you have a copy of that history?

TL: I have it downstairs.

HVZ: It tells in there who went where ... and there were a few who went ... to armored. A couple, I guess, went to the Air Force, but, most of us went down to Benning, ended up in infantry, and there were, I think, five of us that got split off from the group, 'cause we were the tail-end of the alphabet. There was Thayer, Simon, Pino, Van Zandt, and Zellner. We five ended up in a different training company ... than the large group. So, they graduated ... a week before we did.

TK: You must have always been the last one in class. [laughter]

HVZ: That's right, same thing in the Army. Last one to get paid, [laughter] last one to get your shots, yeah, everything.

TL: That must have been horrifying, having to watch a long line of soldiers get their shots before you did.

HVZ: ... Well, every once in a while, they'd tell you, "Reverse alphabet," and that was pretty good. [laughter]

TL: How was the medical treatment you received down there?

HVZ: Medical treatment? God, I don't know that I ever had any, other than get shots, no.

TL: Did you feel like it was an assembly line and that they were just pushing you through?

HVZ: Well. [laughter] It was ... pretty normal, as far as shots are concerned. As long as you didn't stand still too long, you'd get another shot, you know. ... [laughter]

TL: When were you made an anti-tank platoon leader?

HVZ: Made anti-tank platoon leader? When I got to Camp Shelby and ... was assigned to the Sixty-Fifth Infantry Division. Then, I was assigned as the anti-tank platoon leader in, what was it? the Third Battalion, the 259th Infantry.

TL: How did you attain that position?

HVZ: I don't know. They needed ... an anti-tank platoon leader. ... It wasn't much of a job, really. ...

TL: What were your duties?

HVZ: ... Not very much, 'cause I had a good sergeant who had been handling the platoon for a while, and we were in training at that time, and you'd take the guns out, and practice setting them up, and firing them, and that sort of thing, and then, that was about it.

TL: Were any other Black Fifty members in your platoon?

HVZ: ... Not at that time, no, but, Paul Keat, ... also one of the Black Fifty, was in the same company, and ... he was a platoon leader of ... what they called the "pioneer platoon."

TL: Was that just a nickname?

HVZ: No, no, that was the poor man's engineers, you know, [laughter] for the battalion. ...

TL: Really?

HVZ: I think they call it, now, an A&P platoon, which means ammunition and ... pioneer platoon.

TK: When you were at Le Havre, you were encamped at a place you dubbed Camp Lucky Strike.

HVZ: ... No, we didn't. I don't know who did.

TK: Was it there before you got there?

HVZ: No, no, ... there was nothing there when we got there.

TK: Okay.

HVZ: We went up from the ship, we were trucked up to the high ground, and there was probably a couple of feet of snow on the ground, and, every once in a while, you'd see a pile or a hump in the middle of the snow field, and you ... dug out that snow, and underneath were some tents, and ... we set up the tents, ... and that's where the whole damn division was encamped, and then, later on, that area became known as Camp Lucky Strike. ... Late in the war, and after the war was over, I kept hearing about Camp Lucky Strike, and it was a long time before I realized ... that was [the] camp, ... and that area became the main port of debarkation ... for GIs returning from the ETO back to the States. They processed through Camp Lucky Strike. [laughter]

TL: So, you had no idea what they were talking about, even though you had actually started it.

HVZ: No, no, no, because there was no camp there. As a matter-of-fact, our advance party left Camp Shelby, and ... went to England, and set up a nice area for us for when we arrived. We were to arrive in England, and, ... I guess midway across the Atlantic, our orders were changed, and we landed at Le Havre instead, because this was when ... the Battle of the Bulge was still going on, the tail-end of it. ...

TL: You arrived for the tail-end of the Battle of the Bulge.

HVZ: No, we got in the tail-end of the Bulge, and, actually, the Bulge was actually much farther north, up around Luxembourg, and Bastogne, and the northern part, there it was. We were ... down along the ... Saar River Valley, Saarlouis. ... It's called Saarlouis now. It was called Saarlautern.

TL: How was your voyage across the Atlantic?

HVZ: Rough, rough. ... Our entire battalion, and, I think, regimental headquarters, were all on one ship, and it had been an Italian luxury liner that they had converted into a troop ship with bunks, I think, eight high. Guys sleeping eight high in bunks down in what would've been the hold, you know, and everybody was seasick. Everybody was seasick and [when] the guy ... on the top bunk got seasick, you know what happened to the guys underneath, ... [laughter] but, it was a terrible [voyage]. ...

TL: Was it a fight to the top?

HVZ: No, I don't think anybody realized, when they picked their bunk, what was gonna happen. ... Everybody was sick, yeah, rough seas.

TL: How was the food?

HVZ: Who ate it? [laughter] The food was hard to get, because you'd go up, you know, they have these long, long tables, with railings around them, and you'd be eating here, and first thing you know, your food would be down that end, then, it'd come sliding back, [laughter] ... but, no, the dining room was pretty empty by the time the trip was over. ...

TK: What conditions did you find when you arrived in Le Havre?

HVZ: In Le Havre? I described that. There was nothing there, absolutely nothing, no food, ... no accommodations, other than these tents that, if you were lucky, you got one of the Coleman, the diesel, ... stoves.

TK: Were you happy to be off the ship?

HVZ: Well, ... you know, it's hard [to say], everything's relative. ... They'd set up one ... chow tent, and they'd be cooking in there, and you'd get in line in the morning, and you'd probably make your way through the line by afternoon, is what it amounted to. It's long, long lines out there, and you just stood in line, and then, [when] you finished eating, you'd get back in line again, because ...

TL: It was dinner.

HVZ: ... Dinner time. It was terrible.

TL: Did you do any additional training there?

HVZ: Oh, you couldn't, you couldn't, no, not under those conditions, 'cause, when the snow melted, the mud was about two feet deep. ... I said to myself, "Boy, you know, this may be terrible, but, it's gonna be worse up on the front lines."

TL: Were you right?

HVZ: No. [laughter] The first place we stopped, when we got off that train, ... they put us up ... in an orphanage and I was sleeping on a bed with white sheets.

TK: Really?

HVZ: Yeah, for one night, anyhow. ...

TL: How was that train trip across Europe? Do you remember?

HVZ: No, I don't remember. ... We were in the forty & eights, you know, those boxcars, ... little boxcars, yeah, but, so, you didn't see much. ...

TL: Right.

HVZ: ... No, probably, Camp Lucky Strike was the worst living conditions I had over there, 'cause the rest of the war, you slept under a roof.

TL: You did?

HVZ: Oh, yes.

TL: Were you lucky that you were able to do that?

HVZ: Oh. ... You'd sleep in a house, German house, and a German bed.

TL: Where would the Germans be?

HVZ: Who cares? [laughter] No, ... they'd usually be gone, but, occasionally, you'd have to root them out or kick them up in the attic, so you could take over their house, something like that.

TL: Right. When did you first see a German? Did they give up immediately?

HVZ: First German soldier? Oh, golly, first German soldier had already given up. Didn't really see that, you know, many German soldiers. They were hightailing it by this time.

TL: Right.

HVZ: This was ... towards the end of the war. ... The German Army ... had already been defeated.

TL: Right.

HVZ: You know, after the Battle of the Bulge, they had nothing left, what all, and it was just a rat race. You're just chasing them across Europe and I can't tell you when [was] the first time I saw a German soldier.

TL: Were you even worried about seeing them at this point, since you knew they were on the run?

HVZ: Well, yeah, you had to be a little bit concerned, because, ... you know, they would leave groups behind as a delaying force, and, in some cases, the groups would be ... young men and old men ... that stayed behind, ... but, I think, at that point, probably, the cream of the German Army was more concerned about keeping the Russians out of Germany than they were [about] keeping the Americans out of Germany.

TL: Right. Did you meet up with any Russian forces?

HVZ: Yeah, well, at the end of the war, yeah, right.

TL: What was your opinion of them?

HVZ: Of the Russians? Well, I don't know. I guess ... I'd call them ignorant, rough people, ... the way I'd describe them. ... Our battalion ended the war in Austria, on the banks of the Enns River, and the Enns River runs north and south, and we were preparing to cross the Enns and continue on towards Vienna, and then, the orders came down that the German Army facing us had surrendered. So, they said, "No further movement to the East," and we sat there for, I would say, probably two weeks, waiting for the Russians to stop having fun in Vienna and come on over to the Enns River, and, within twenty-four hours after they got there, our men and the Russians were shooting at each other, back and forth, across the river.

TL: Really? It was the Americans versus the Russians.

HVZ: Well, it wasn't really versus, but, you know, the Russians'd get a little drunk, or something like that, and start shooting their weapons, and, you know, trying to scare the crazy Americans. ...

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah, and our GIs would shoot a few rounds back, [laughter] let them know they were [there], ... and then, finally, when the Russians came across, they were ... a real rough crew. We moved back into Linz, Austria, from there, and that's where the division headquarters was, and ... I guess our whole regiment went back into Linz. ... Our forces had the area north of the Danube and all the way up into Czechoslovakia, actually. By pre-arrangement. I don't know who this was, Truman or Roosevelt, but, somebody agreed to let the Russians take all that territory. So, we moved back, south of the Danube River, and the Russians moved in north of the Danube and immediately started shipping stuff on the Danube back to Russia.

TL: Really, like what?

HVZ: Sheep. ... Anything that moved, they shipped back. Reparations, I guess you'd call it. [laughter]

TL: What was the attitude of the men when you knew that the Russians were coming, because you knew that they were Communists?

HVZ: Well, they were supposed to be our allies, you know. ...

TL: Right, however, was there a lack of trust?

HVZ: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. There was on my part, at least, and anybody I know of, yes. ... Oh, 'cause they were ... an unruly bunch. They had a group in Linz, a liaison group in Linz, and they'd get drunk at night and be shooting up the place and everything else. They were a rough bunch.

TK: During which months were you in Linz?

HVZ: In Linz? Oh, golly, I don't know. I can't keep track of months. ...

TK: You were in Austria throughout most of the occupation, though.

HVZ: From the end of the war, yes, I was in Austria all the time. ... Yeah, in Salzburg.

TL: Were the people of Austria happy that you were there? Were they denying that they had any Nazi affiliation?

HVZ: Oh, they all denied. They were, "*Nich Nazi. Nich Nazi,*" you know, [laughter] but, oh, I ran across one German woman ... in Neunkirken, Germany, and ... she said, "Hitler was a *Schone man,*" ... beautiful man. ...

TL: Really?

HVZ: ... Oh. So, I stole her typewriter. [laughter] I still have it, as a matter-of-fact, but, it doesn't work. ... Souvenir, but, ... no, most of them, the Austrians, ... well, as far as they were concerned, they weren't German. They didn't have anything to do with Hitler, and so on, and so forth, but, of course, we know better than that, but, by the same token, ... the Germans were the same way. Quite frankly, the Germans, to my way of thinking, were a lot friendlier than the French.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Oh, yeah. French seemed to resent us, really.

TL: Why do you think that?

HVZ: Because they have an inferiority complex, because they did not stand up to Hitler. They just completely caved in to him, and, ... you know, more and more, history is proving that all this French Resistance that you hear about was a bunch of hogwash, too, and I think they resented the Americans, whereas the Germans, ... they seemed to get along fine. ...

TK: In Germany, you often stayed in the houses of German people while they were still there. What was that like?

HVZ: Well, I can't remember any Germans still being in any of the houses I stayed in, except in Salzburg. When I was stationed in Salzburg, I'd joined the Forty-Second Division down there, and this was after [the] occupation, you know, for some time, and the house that the officers of the company were billeted in, the owner of the house, and his wife, and we never have figured out whether it was his mistress or the housekeeper, were living upstairs in the attic.

TL: Probably both. [laughter]

HVZ: ... On the third floor. He was the owner of the biggest brewery in Salzburg, I think, ... and we occupied the rest of the house, and [it] worked out fine. ...

TL: Did you get any other kinds of treats from any of the houses, besides the typewriter?

HVZ: Treats? No. Course, the main thing, every time you went into a town, the first thing everybody started looking for was the local distillery or brewery. So, we got a lot of treats that way, had a lot of champagne, which they had stolen from the French, [laughter] but, no, that's about the only treats. ... Everybody was most interested in ... getting a good German Leica camera, finding a Leica camera, which I never had, or a good German pistol, like a Luger or something like that. That was the main souvenir everybody was looking for.

TL: Right.

HVZ: Right, and, very often, the burgermeister of these little towns, when they knew the Americans were coming, would require that everybody turn in ... their weapons, and their cameras, and things like that, to the city hall. So, you'd go down there and there'd be boxes of them, ... people picking out a good one. Passed up a lot of real fine shotguns there, I know that. ...

TL: Really? Why did you pass them up?

HVZ: Oh, I ... wasn't interested in shotguns. I was more interested in the camera and a good Luger pistol.

TL: Were you able to get a Luger?

HVZ: I had two of them.

TL: Really?

HVZ: ... Yeah, but, I gave them away before I came home.

TL: Why?

HVZ: Well, they said you could only carry ... one weapon home with you, souvenir, and I had already gotten ... a Mauser machine pistol. ...

TL: Do you still have that?

HVZ: No. I sold that one Christmas when I needed Christmas money. [laughter] Sold it ... when I was living in California. Wish I still had it, because it's a priceless gun.

TK: What were your duties during the occupation?

HVZ: The occupation? Oh, various. Yeah, well, let me see. Right after the war, when I was still with my original battalion, at that time, I was a battalion S-2, which is the ... battalion intelligence officer. So, the Army started a information education program.

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HVZ: Yeah, the Army started an information education program, where ... some guys, if they qualified and ... were lucky, would be sent off to (Biarritz?), or England, or someplace like that, to go to ... school, and then, each battalion was supposed to set up a battalion school. Each regiment was supposed to set up a regiment school. So, they made me the battalion information education officer, and I had to go around and find qualified people to teach classes and decide what kind of classes we were going to have, and then, they sent me to school, down in Salzburg first, and, after that, they sent me to school in Paris. [laughter]

TK: Did that confirm your feelings about the French?

HVZ: Yeah, pretty much, pretty much, but, went to school in Paris, and, [when] I came back from Paris, about that time, they decided that ... the division was going to be broken up. So, that was the end of it. ... So, then, yeah, we went back into Germany to break up the outfit, and then, I came back into Linz. Let me see, I was then assigned to the Yankee Division, Twenty-Sixth Division. That's when I had charge of a displaced persons camp, ... just on the outskirts of Linz, Austria. That was interesting. ...

TK: Please, tell us about that.

HVZ: Displaced persons? Well, this was a camp of *Volks Deutch*, *Sudetan Deutch*, from the Sudetanland. They all spoke German and that's about all they did speak, you know, very low German. I had one guy who was the Lagerfurher, ... one of the inmates. He ran the camp pretty much, and he had a couple of girls in the office and whatnot, and I had a detail of three men there, who, you know, would go pick up supplies, things like that, and bring it around. Fortunately, one of them spoke German, 'cause I didn't, and Sergeant Tully, he was a butcher from Chicago, I don't know where he learned German, but, he did. He spoke German, but, no, there were families living there with these people, and, at that point, you started repatriating these people, sending them back, 'cause most of these people had come into Linz to work in the Hermann Goring Steelworks that were located in Linz. ... [They] hadn't been in a concentration camp. They were in a work camp, and then, you had to interview them, ... and find out where they were from, and start shipping them back to where they came from.

TK: How did they feel about being shipped back?

HVZ: For the most part, ... [they] didn't like it one bit. In fact, even had some commit suicide on the train.

TL: How did they do that? Did they jump off of the train?

HVZ: Jump out of the train, anything, yeah, yeah, cut their throats, anything. ...

TL: Where were they going, Czechoslovakia?

HVZ: Some were, ... right, back to Czechoslovakia, and anybody that was going back to Russian-occupied territory did not want to go. ...

TL: Did that also confirm your feelings towards the Russians, that they were evil people?

HVZ: Well, they were animals, they really were. We had girls there in the camp who had been raped by the Russian soldiers. ... I know when the Russians, rather, the Germans, started surrendering to us, coming across the bridge at Enns, and they came across the dam at Schmidding, a village south of Enns, ... and, anyway, they could get across the Enns River to surrender to us, rather than the Russians, and they were all moving in front of the Russian Army. ... They came across with their vehicles loaded down with soldiers and females, all trying to escape the Russians.

TK: Were any of the people at the DP camp allowed to remain in Austria?

HVZ: I don't know. ... I doubt it. I would presume the Austrians didn't want them. ...

TK: Was that a difficult assignment for you? How did you feel about that?

HVZ: No. ... You know, it was inevitable, I mean, and so, no, it wasn't that tough. Toughest thing about working in a place like that ... was the little kids, the babies, who had nothing, you know, absolutely nothing, no diapers, you know, nothing like that.

TL: Really?

HVZ: ... The Red Cross finally helped me out on that. [I] had to make trips down to the Red Cross, and they, with the ladies back in the States, you know, ... would get together, and I'm sure they thought this was a waste of time, but, they were doing it for the war effort, and they'd make layettes for babies and things like that. Well, by God, we put them to real good use.

TL: Really?

HVZ: That was the toughest part.

TL: Where were those babies going back, too?

HVZ: Well, I don't know that. ...

TK: In your area, were there also DP camps for concentration camp survivors?

HVZ: Yes. ... I'd seen some running around.

TK: However, you did not work with them.

HVZ: No, no. Closest I came to that was, ... we had one ... Polish, Polish-Jew, Jewish camp. It wasn't a camp, actually. [We] took over an apartment complex, and housed them in the apartment complex, and that was a little touchy, as far as with the Austrian civilians, because the Austrian civilians had done some bad things to them, so, they were intent on some revenge. So, it was difficult, keeping control of that group of people, but, I wasn't directly involved in it.

TL: Did the American soldiers let them take their revenge?

HVZ: No, no, no, no. Well, if they did, I didn't know about it, yeah, but, ... a lot of things happened you didn't know about, perhaps. ... I know we had ... a whole Hungarian cavalry regiment surrender to us and the Hungarians traveled with their ladies, you know, right along with them. Now, ... they were not our enemies. ... Our government classified the Hungarians as co-belligerents. So, this whole regiment surrendered to us, and we took them up ... on a real nice farm, and billeted them up there, and they had their horses with them, of course, and everything else, and they set up a riding school, so that all the GIs could go up there and ride the horses.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Oh, it was really nice, but, these DPs would sneak out of the camp at night, and go up there, ... and steal the horses. ...

TL: Did they assign guard sentries to the farm?

HVZ: Well, ... these Hungarians didn't have any weapons or anything like that.

TL: Right.

HVZ: No, the horses all just gradually disappeared. They all got eaten. ...

TK: Approximately how many people were in this particular camp that you worked in?

HVZ: Oh, good question. Probably about nine hundred, I would say.

TK: What other things did you do during the occupation?

HVZ: Okay, what else did I do? ... That was with the Twenty-Sixth to Eighty-Third. I was a battalion staff officer again with the Eighty-Third Division. That was back in Linz. Then, I was transferred to the Forty-Second Infantry Division. See, these divisions ... would replace each other [and] you'd get transferred over to them. The Forty-Second actually had their headquarters in Vienna, and I had my choice of being stationed in Vienna or in Salzburg, and Vienna, at that time, was occupied by all four belligerents, okay? Russian, French, English, and Americans,

divided, but, it was sitting out in the middle of the territory that was occupied by the Russians. So, you're sitting on a little island out there, and I didn't think much of that, having to stay on this little island out there in the Russian territory, ... and Salzburg, ... if you'd ever seen *The Sound of Music* ...

TL: Yeah, every time you say that, I keep seeing Maria out there on the lake.

HVZ: Well, ... yeah, that lake's actually there, [and] ... the gazebo. ...

TL: Did you see it?

HVZ: Yeah, sure. Oh, no, it's still there. Well, it was ten years ago.

TL: Really? Is it as beautiful as it looked in the movie?

HVZ: ... Salzburg's a beautiful city, ... you know, with the monastery. ...

TL: Did you see the monastery?

HVZ: Oh, I was up there. ... Back in those days, ... they had a funicular there that had two cars, one at the bottom, one at the top, and they'd go up tracks like this, and then, they'd cross, there's a spot like that, and there's a station there. You can get off halfway up, and then, they come back on this single track again, but, they fill the car at the top. It has a big tank at the bottom of the thing, you fill it with water. They empty the water out of the one at the bottom, and the weight of the top one pulls this other car up the mountain, and then, they reverse the procedure. ...

TL: You are kidding.

HVZ: No, fill this one with water, and dump the water, and that's the way the funicular worked there. ... No, Salzburg's ... a beautiful city.

TK: Being in Austria after the war, did you think of the people as Germans or did you note a distinction?

HVZ: I saw the distinction.

TK: How would you describe the distinction?

HVZ: There, the distinction probably would be like the difference between a New Yorker, I mean a real New Yorker, and somebody from Mississippi. [laughter]

TL: That big?

HVZ: Oh. ...

TK: Just in attitude?

HVZ: ... Well, I don't know how ... to describe New Yorkers. ... [laughter]

TL: Who does?

TK: The abrasiveness?

HVZ: Yes, yeah, that's right, yeah, and the way they talk. You know the way they talk? Germans, you know, *Pifkadeutch* is one thing, and, ... well, you know, the German says, "*Jah*," or, "*Jawohl*," right?

TL: Yeah.

HVZ: Well, the Austrian says, "*Yo*," you know, and talks slower. You can understand their German. I'd get along quite well with the Austrians, but, you talk to a northern German and it's rapid-fire, [laughter] you know, that type thing. No, ... Austrians are real friendly, nice people, happy people. ... I like them a lot. I like Austria a lot.

TL: How many times have you been back there?

HVZ: ... Just twice, yeah, ...

TK: When did you first decide to go back?

HVZ: ... Probably about twelve years ago.

TK: Was that hard at first or just interesting?

HVZ: Oh, no, no, no. ... I'd go back to Austria anytime. [laughter]

TK: Yeah.

HVZ: ... No, it's a great country.

TL: Did you see any areas where you had been stationed?

HVZ: Oh, yeah.

TL: Had they changed a lot?

HVZ: No. It's not like, ... well, I shouldn't say that it's not like Korea, but, ... Europe, Germany and Austria, [if] something is blown apart and blown down, they rebuild it. They rebuild it like it was, okay. Now, Americans, you tear a building down, you put up something made out of glass

... [laughter] and aluminum, right? Completely different, but, there, you go back and ... they're the same cities. ... Well, Salzburg, ... that monastery at the top, where the abbey is ...

TL: Right.

HVZ: ... *Sound of Music*, ... that was built by the Romans, you know, guarding the Salzac River. What's the other river there, the junction of the two rivers?

TL: I always wanted to go there.

HVZ: Austria?

TL: Yeah.

HVZ: Oh, you'd love it. Austria or Switzerland, either one. ...

TL: Really?

HVZ: Switzerland's very modern. ... Austria, no, it's lovely and Vienna is a great city. ...

TK: By the time you got over to Europe, the Battle of the Bulge was already over. How did you feel about that?

HVZ: ... I don't know. ... As is the case, usually, in fact, that's the way the Battle of the Bulge got started, because they did that, they'd put a new outfit on what is supposed to be a quiet line, okay? ... I think it was the 104th Infantry Division ... that was put up there. They were brand new on the line. They put them up on what was going to be a quiet spot and that's where the Germans hit them, but, they put us on a line down on the Saar River. ... We were in a little town called Wadgassen, and we went in and relieved the Twenty-Sixth Division, who had been sitting there doing nothing, and you could see the German pillboxes across the river from us, directly across from us, and it was just a gentleman's agreement. You fire a shot at us, we'll fire one shot back at you. You know, it was that sort of thing. ... It was a very quiet front, and then, the Bulge was actually north of us, and we were down at the southern end of ... what you might even call the Ardennes, Battle of the Ardennes. Everybody calls it the Battle of the Bulge, but, ... it was the Battle of the Ardennes, really. ... It was gradual, you know, easy indoctrination into the thing, and then, ... when the division broke through [at] what was then called Saarlautern, and crossed on over, and went on up to the Rhine, from then on, it was a rat race, as they say, yeah, just going hell bent for election, fast as you could go, and, as a battalion S-2, my main duties, ... they'd give me the map, show me where we were going, or where we were supposed to go, and I'd go out with my crew, and we'd set up road signs, and tell them to, "Follow me." ...

TK: Going back, when you were going through basic and preparing to go overseas, what were your feelings on how close the end was?

HVZ: Oh, ... the end?

TK: Did you have any idea?

HVZ: No, didn't even think about it. ...

TK: Really?

HVZ: No. ... If you mean, "Was I sitting there worried about was I gonna get killed?" no, you don't do that. I never did that at all in World War II. ...

TL: Was Korea a different story?

HVZ: Korea was a different story, but, ... you don't think about that. You do, and, consequently, you do some foolish things. You don't realize it until later, though, and that's when you get scared, after it's all over with. That's when I used to get scared, but, while it's going on, you don't think about it, so, you don't have sense enough to think about it, or you're too busy to think about it, but, then, when it's all over with, and you think what might have been, then, you get scared, you know.

TL: What were your reactions when you found out about V-E Day and V-J Day?

HVZ: V-E Day? Well, like I say, V-E Day was sort of anticlimactic, because we had already heard that you know, the army facing us [had surrendered]. The war was over, what was it? about three days before V-E Day. ...

TL: Were you aware of that where you were at?

HVZ: Yeah. At that point, I was more concerned about my wife, who was expecting a baby, ... our first child at that time. ...

TL: How did you find out?

HVZ: Well, by V-Mail. ... [laughter] Of all those things, she sent a telegram, she sent air mail, you know, regular mail, and she sent one of these folded envelopes that [were] used in World War II called V-Mail.

TL: Right.

HVZ: That came first.

TL: [laughter] That must have been exciting.

HVZ: Yeah, it was, yeah, right. ...

TL: When they dropped the atom bomb, what was your opinion of the bombs? Were you thrilled that they finally ended it?

HVZ: Oh, of course, ... that the Japanese surrendered, yes. Now, as far as the bomb, you know, ... the extent of the atom bomb, you're on occupation duty in Europe, and they drop a bomb in Japan, and they call it an atomic bomb, you hadn't the slightest idea what that means. You know, I had no appreciation of how powerful this thing was or exactly what it was all about.

TL: Right.

HVZ: But, it ... really didn't have much reaction. V-J Day, then, you knew the war was over, then, you start worrying about, "How soon am I gonna be able to get out of here and get home, now that the war's over?" yeah, and ... that was your main concern, how many points do you need to rotate and what's it gonna be next week?

TL: Right. How long was it from the end of the war to when you got back to the States, so you could meet your baby?

HVZ: Well, lord, ... oh, what was he, twenty-two months old?

TL: Really?

HVZ: No, no, no, no, no. He wasn't that old. What am I trying to say? He was born in, ... I'm embarrassed. I don't remember. [laughter] May the 5th, it would have been, 1945.

TL: Really? That is my sister's birthday. [laughter]

HVZ: 1945. '45? No, we were married in 1944. ... Yeah, okay, yeah, May of '45. Oh, when'd I get home? Did I say in that thing there?

TK: That is all right.

HVZ: Yeah, let me see. Well, I came home in June, May or June, of '46. ... So, it's about a-year-old, yeah, right. ...

TL: Where did you arrive?

HVZ: New York City.

TL: In the Harbor?

HVZ: Yeah, Statue of Liberty, the whole bit.

TL: Were there crowds cheering?

HVZ: Oh, [laughter] wasn't anybody there. Oh, no. What for?

TL: It was too late by that time.

HVZ: Oh, sure. ... The war had long been over. All the troops had all come home. ... You know, people talk about [how] Vietnam boys didn't have any parades, well, I didn't. [laughter] I didn't have a parade for either war I was in. No, we came into New York City, then, by train, from there to Camp Kilmer.

TL: You went down to Livingston. [laughter]

HVZ: Livingston Campus.

TL: What a treat.

HVZ: Camp Kilmer, and, yeah, I was in a barracks, taking a shower, and somebody said, "Hey, your wife's outside." ...

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah. ... She came over ... and her sister, younger sister, was having an engagement party, that same day, at home. So, rather than go, you know, throw a wet blanket on their engagement party, we went over to a tavern over here, and had a few drinks, and celebrated a little bit, and then, went back down ... to North Plainfield.

TL: That must have been some reunion.

HVZ: ... Yes, it was.

TK: After you got back, you moved pretty soon.

HVZ: Yeah, well, I came back to Rutgers. ...

TL: Where did you live at Rutgers? Did you live in North Plainfield?

HVZ: I commuted from North Plainfield, right, and so, there wasn't any social life or anything. I was just strictly going to class to get my degree. ...

TL: Now, you were in class with a baby. [laughter]

HVZ: ... I just went ... one semester, ... to get, you know, a sufficient number of graduation points, and then, we immediately moved to California.

TK: Where in California?

HVZ: Altadena, California.

TK: Okay.

TL: What was out in California?

HVZ: My brother and his wife. I had two brothers out there.

TL: What made them all go to the West Coast?

HVZ: ... My oldest brother ... moved out there in 1936.

TL: Really?

HVZ: I think it was something like that. The company he was working for sent him out there to be a regional manager, and so, when I got home, he said, "Hey, come on out to California." ... [laughter] This other brother, who had been in the Air Force, he had settled in California, too, so, we said, "Okay, we'll try California."

TK: What line of work did you take up when you went out there?

HVZ: Went to work for a ceramic tile manufacturer out there, yeah, working in the order and shipping departments and that sort of thing, part of the sales department, actually.

TL: You also stayed on in the military.

HVZ: No, ... there's a difference.

TL: What did you do? I do not know, exactly.

HVZ: ... When I was separated, we got separated at Fort Dix, okay?

TL: Okay.

HVZ: ... They said, "Do you want to sign up in the reserves?" I said, "Why not," you know, ... you worked that hard for a commission, and, if there's another war, you're gonna be in it anyhow, so, you might as well join the reserves, which I did, and I was an inactive reservist, or an inert reservist, actually. Never joined any unit, never ... took any drills or anything like that, was just ... signed in the reserves, and then, in California, they called up the reserves, the inactive reserves.

TL: Right. Did you expect them to call you up?

HVZ: No, no.

TL: How were you notified of this?

HVZ: ... How? Well, I tell you, I was laying at home in the bed with pneumonia, and my wife walked in, and threw the mail on my chest, and she says, "There's some more junk there from the War Department," [laughter] and I opened it up, and it was my orders to report to Camp Stoneman, California.

TL: That probably just made you sicker, I am sure. [laughter]

HVZ: Well, no, not sick enough, anyhow, but, fortunately, they deferred me. ... I was supposed to report on the 17th of November, 1950, and they deferred me until January the 2nd. ... So, I was able to stay home, and see the Rose Bowl Game, and watch the Rose Parade on Pasadena. ...

TL: You saw the parade?

HVZ: Oh, yeah. We used to go down there every year ... with a step ladder, ... [laughter] and sit Jeff on, ... you know, the paint can thing, and Neva would climb up first, and I'd climb up behind her, and the three of us would stand up on the step ladder and watch the Rose Parade. Probably don't allow that anymore. OSHA wouldn't allow that. ... I reported to Camp Stoneman on January the 2nd, right, 1951. ...

TL: That must have been quite an after-anniversary treat. It must have been horrible to have to leave.

HVZ: ... Yeah, yeah, it was. It was tough. ...

TL: Can you explain the difference between leaving during World War II, and then, leaving for Korea?

HVZ: Oh, yeah, difference was, there, I had a wife and a son, and I was going all by myself. [laughter] Yeah, big difference, and you were going to Korea.

TL: Who ever heard of Korea?

HVZ: Who ever heard of Korea, right.

TK: Was it scarier for you to be going to Asia rather than Europe?

HVZ: Yes, yes, no doubt about it, no doubt about it. You weren't fighting your own kind of people. Yeah, right, so, it was completely strange. No, but, the speed with which it was done, see, ... I reported in on January the 2nd, and, at Camp Stoneman, they sent us down to Fort Ord, California, for a two-week refresher course. [laughter]

TL: A two-week refresher course.

HVZ: Yeah. Then, took us back up to (Stoneman?), sent us over to Travis Air Force Base, flew us from Travis to Japan, Pan-American, no less, [laughter] yeah, went by Pan-American to Japan, to Tachikawa Air Force Base, and then, from there, to Camp Drake, where I was assigned to the Third Infantry Division, moved by train down to Sasebo, by ship over to Pusan, and by train and truck up to the front lines. So, from January the 2nd to February the 18th, I joined a rifle company on the front lines.

TL: On the front lines, really? Did you go right up to the Yalu?

HVZ: No, no, we had been kicked back from the Yalu.

TL: Oh, we had already been pushed back at this point.

HVZ: Oh.

TL: What year are we in?

HVZ: '51.

TL: Oh, we are in 1951 now, okay.

HVZ: So, you're talking, ... Yalu, that was November-December. Remember, "Home by Christmas?"

TL: I am sorry. I had the wrong year in my mind.

HVZ: ... This was February. We were south of the Han River, as a matter-of-fact, at that point, right.

TL: What was your reaction to MacArthur being replaced by Ridgway?

HVZ: Well, ... see, Ridgway had already taken over Eighth Army ... before I got there. "Thank God," is all I can say, because Ridgway is the guy who turned that war around.

TL: Right.

HVZ: Walker killed himself. He was commander of Eighth Army. He killed himself in a Jeep accident, right? ... MacArthur's chief of staff was General Almond, and he was in command of Tenth Corps over there, and Tenth Corps was the one up [at the] Chosen Reservoir, and Eighth Army [and] Tenth Corps were two separate units. When Ridgway took over, he said "Uh-uh. It's all gonna ... be part of Eighth Army," and he turned the war around.

TL: So, you have a lot of respect for him.

HVZ: Absolutely, absolutely, like no one else, and MacArthur, you know, well, we always nicknamed MacArthur “Dugout Doug.” [laughter]

TK: Yeah.

HVZ: ... No, I never thought much of MacArthur. I thought he was a big grandstander.

TL: Was your opinion shared by the men you were with? In America, the people hailed MacArthur and put down Truman.

HVZ: Not everybody, not everybody. Yeah, no, ... I have no respect for Harry Truman either, not after what he did to the Army, and, ... you know, I blame Harry Truman for me being recalled.

TL: Right.

HVZ: Harry Truman and his Secretary of War, Louie Johnson, right.

TK: Why?

HVZ: Because they raped the United States Armed Forces. They weren't even up to full strength, authorized strength, which was 350,000, which was peanuts, and, you know, ... Louie Johnson, ... well, he was just terrible, and Harry Truman thought that all generals and admirals were spendthrifts, and the admirals were the worst, because, of course, an aircraft carrier costs more money. ...

TL: Right.

HVZ: But, Harry hated the military. He's like our present president, who despises the military.

TK: When you arrived in Korea, was it as bad or worse than you thought it would be?

HVZ: I didn't know what to think, 'cause I didn't even know where Korea was when I heard where I was [going].

TL: Really? Did you have to pull out the map and find out where you were going?

HVZ: Hadn't paid any attention to the Korean War. I was busy working, you know. ... As far as I knew, it was a police action. That's what Harry called it. ...

TK: Did you meet other men like yourself, who had been in World War II and had families now?

HVZ: Sure, sure.

TK: Do you think that group of veterans had different reactions to the war than the men who were called up for their first involvement in the military?

HVZ: ... What do you mean by called up? ... The people in Korea were in the Army, okay, they were regular Army, or they were draftees who were already in the Army, and, ... when the war first started, they were stationed in Japan, and they rushed them from Japan over to Korea. They rushed off a five hundred man battalion, right, and they were gonna stop this 134,000 man North Korean Army, 'cause as soon as the Gooks saw, you know, American uniforms, the Gooks were gonna turn around and run away. Well, it didn't turn out that way, and, ... probably, the most interesting thing, I probably haven't told you, but, the outfit that I was assigned to was a part of the Third Infantry Division. ... Now, the Third Infantry Division, ... an infantry division, normally, ... it's a triangular division. It has three infantry regiments, and you might [have], say, a fourth regiment [that] consists of artillery, and tanks, and this, that, and the other thing, but, there are three infantry regiments. The Third Infantry Division, which is a regular Army division, couldn't fill up with manpower two regiments, two of their regiments. So, they took ... one of the regiments, the Thirtieth Infantry Regiment, left it in the States, took the personnel out of that, put them into the Seventh and the Fifteenth Regiments, still didn't have two full regiments. ... When they got to Korea, they had to fill those regiments up with South Korean soldiers, who spoke no English, who had no training, who had nothing. This is Harry Truman's Army, okay?

TL: Yeah.

HVZ: Now, the outfit that I joined was a full strength, regular Army regiment from Puerto Rico.

TL: From Puerto Rico?

HVZ: From Puerto Rico, right. So, they assigned them to the Third Infantry Division as their third regiment, because they only had two regiments. They arrived slightly before the Third Division. ...

TK: Was there a language problem there as well?

HVZ: Oh, sure, but, in the ... beginning ...

TL: That must have been complete chaos.

HVZ: No, it wasn't, because, in the beginning, ... see, these are, I say, regular Army, you know. You had corporals there that ... had twenty, twenty-two years service, and, ... in Puerto Rico, it was required that the non-coms spend two nights a week studying English, go to English classes. So, all the non-coms spoke English ... and a lot of the enlisted men did, too. Not all of them, but, a lot of them did, but, you always had one of them standing there that could interpret for you.

TL: Right.

HVZ: ... They were ... one of the few full-strength regiments that ever shipped over to Korea. ... About half the officers were Puerto Ricans and half the officers were continentals.

TL: This must have been a very chaotic time for you, since you were taken away from your family and dropped in the middle of a war in a far away land with South Koreans who could not speak English and who were trying to learn how to fight ...

HVZ: ... Yeah, I didn't see any of those, but, ... I ended up with a bunch of Spanish people.
[laughter]

TL: How did you feel about this process? Did you feel as if this was not as organized as World War II? Did you feel not as safe?

HVZ: Oh, you definitely didn't feel as safe, no. No, no, you definitely didn't.

TK: Why?

HVZ: Well, ... it's front lines, what reason? ... Korea was basically a basic infantry war, okay? Now, Europe, ... you had tanks, you know, you had vehicles, you had big artillery, you had air force, and ... you were fighting another modern Army, you might say. In Korea, what you had was, you know, man-to-man, more or less, two basic infantry armies ... facing each other. Artillery backing us up, of course, but, they had mortars and that sort of thing, too, but, no, completely different, and, ... as I said in the book, ... the way I compared ... the ETO and Korea was, ... in the ETO, we used road maps. In Korea, we used contour maps. There were no roads. You look on a map, you were going someplace, and you see a little, dotted line, that's a trail. That's the trail that the farmers used, and that's where you'd go, yeah, but, no, it was a completely different war.

TL: How were your rations? I know you had a terrible time with the freezing cold and the planes dropping them into enemy lines.

HVZ: Rations? Oh, no. ...

TL: Did you have any of those problems?

HVZ: No, no, no. The only time that happened was, they re-supplied the 187th Airborne Regiment a couple of times and dropped it in the wrong places, that sort of thing, yeah, but, no, with us, we were supplied ... by Jeep, or by truck, or by "chiggys," South Korean bearers who had the A-frames on their back, and they'd bring up your rations to you that way, but, we ate, primarily C-rations. That's three ... wet cans, three dry cans, per man, per day, right, and, frankly, I thought they were pretty good rations, C-rations.

TL: Really?

HVZ: A lot better than what we got in World War II. ... All that they got us there ... was K-rations, which was pretty sparse eating, but, the C-rations were pretty good.

TL: I had a friend who was up at the Yalu and he said their C-rations were from World War II and they could not smoke the cigarettes because they were so stale. I was wondering if you ever had similar problems?

HVZ: ... Yeah. Oh, the cigarettes, well, the cigarettes came in the C-rations, too, yeah, and then, later on, they started bringing up PX supplies, and, once a week, they'd bring up PX supplies, and the men would always get me a whole carton of cigarettes, bring me up a carton of Chesterfields. I finally said, "I can't smoke Chesterfields." You know, I was getting a cough from them. He said, "Well, I thought all Americans smoked Chesterfields." [laughter] So, then, I started getting a different brand, but, no, we had plenty of ... cigarettes, ... and then, when the situation permitted, your kitchens would come up close enough so that they could make hot chow, and bring it up in the, you know, ... big containers, and set up a chow line, so, feed you hot. In fact, I finally insisted, ... late in the war, when things were more stable, that the cooks bring up, ... you know, the bottom part of the stove, where they could cook, fry, actually fry eggs on top of the thing.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah, because all the eggs they were getting that were friable, they were hard-boiling them, yeah, and bringing them all up hard boiled, but, I was dying for some fried eggs, so, ... [laughter] they started frying eggs right up there.

TL: That is the good thing about power. "Bring up the whole damn oven, I want some fried eggs."

HVZ: ... Well, you know, if you didn't do something like that, the cooks will take the easy way out. It's a whole lot easier to hard boil a bunch of eggs than it is to bring those stoves up, disconnect them, bring them up, and fire them up, and fry eggs there, one at a time, for the guys as they came through.

TL: They must have really liked you for that. How was the weather when you were there? Can you describe that?

HVZ: You hear ... a lot of, you know, horrible descriptions about the weather. Obviously, the winter I spent there was a mild winter. The rains ... were worse than anything that I could say, 'cause they'd have a monsoon season. ... You know, it'd fill up [the] holes in a hurry.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Oh. Yeah, you didn't climb out, you'd be swimming. ... The rains really came down, and, yeah, it was hot in the summer, it was cold in the winter, but, we kept moving. ... You were all right, pile jacket, and another coat, and they furnished parkas, they issued parkas. They issued

shoe packs for your feet and they were warm, as long as you had a couple pairs of socks and two inner soles inside them. [laughter]

TL: Was it a rule to change your socks constantly?

HVZ: ... Well, that's what everybody's taught, ... but, you don't always have the socks available. I was caught one time, ... had just washed my feet and two pairs of socks, and was sitting there by the fire, letting them, the socks, dry, when we got orders to move out. So, I had to put on two pairs of wet socks inside of these shoe packs, which are rubber on the bottom. They don't breath, you know, and I went for six days before I was able to take those socks off.

TL: That must have been horrible.

HVZ: Yeah, your skin came off with the socks. ...

TL: Were you sent to the hospital for that?

HVZ: Oh, no, no.

TL: It was not that bad?

HVZ: No, that's not trench foot. ... I ended up with a real bad case of athlete's foot for the rest of my life, but, fungus infection, that's all it was, but, ... you're talking about the weather, and you hear stories about trench foot, and, far as I know, I never had a case of trench foot in my company.

TL: Really?

HVZ: No, no. ... That winter was not that cold, Winter of '51-'52. So, when I got there, in February of '51, ... evidently, the cold weather was finished then, too. November and December of '50 ... were very cold months, and, of course, ... the fighting was way up north then, too, at that time, where it was bitter cold, yeah, and I can imagine, up there in those mountains, how cold it must get, and I was, again, fortunate. ... The eastern spine of the peninsula is where the very high ridge of mountains is, and I was always ... in I Corps, which was over in the western part of ... the country, north of Seoul, and Uijongbu, up in the Iron Triangle, in that area, and we had some high mountains, but, nothing like over there in the east coast, that we got to one time, in order to help out Tenth Corps, when we moved our division over there, went into line up there in those high mountains, and they were awful, absolutely awful. Climb hands and knees before you'd get to the top of [it].

TL: Really?

HVZ: Oh.

TL: With your backpacks and everything else, too?

HVZ: Well, you didn't carry much. ... I guess, at that point, we were carrying our own sleeping bags, but, when time permitted, when we were on the advance, we would send all the sleeping bags down into the valley. They'd collect them down there, and put them into vehicles, and, as we moved along the ridge line, at night, we'd send a detail down, and ... the packs would come up the valley in the trucks. You'd send a detail down and each guy would bring up maybe four sleeping bags [and] pass them out to everybody. You didn't get your own sleeping bag. You got [laughter] ... anybody's sleeping bag, right. Yeah, but, and then, other times, you carried your sleeping bag. ...

TL: It just depended on the terrain.

HVZ: ... Yeah, for the most part, yeah, or how close the enemy was, you know, whether you were going to be able to bring up vehicles and that sort of thing.

TL: Did you ever see any MIGs?

HVZ: Never saw a MIG, never saw a ... Chinese airplane. We had, ... you know, one of these ... Bed-Check Charlie guys that came over a few times, ... but, that's the ... only Russian plane I saw, or, that wasn't even Russian. No, ... the United States, ... the UN, had complete air superiority there, and the fighting, any dogfights or anything like that, they were way up on the Chinese border.

TL: Right. Did you ever witness any dogfights?

HVZ: Nope. [In] Europe I did. ... We watched dogfights over [Europe]. ...

TL: What was that like?

HVZ: Well, ... you know, you see these two dots fooling around in the sky, you don't know who's who, actually. You know, one gets shot down, you say, "Well, I hope it wasn't us." [laughter] ...

TL: Would dogfights attract a big crowd?

HVZ: No, you'd be moving along a road, or something like that, and, you know, advancing, and so, ... you're looking as you're moving. ...

TL: Did you ever see a large group of planes flying over you?

HVZ: Yes, yes.

TL: What does that look like, when the sky is literally full of planes?

HVZ: It is unbelievable. From horizon to horizon, no matter which way you looked, there was nothing but airplanes. [I'm] trying to think where we were when that happened.

TL: Was it at the Rhine?

HVZ: No, it was ... after we'd crossed the Rhine. God, I don't know where they were going, but, I never saw so many airplanes in all my life. All I could think of was, "Thank God, they're all ours." [laughter]

TL: That must have been incredible.

HVZ: Yeah, ... just like an umbrella over you. ... You know, you look this way, you look that way, and ... it was just like the whole sky was just covered over like that with airplanes.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah, big bombers, little planes, yeah, and they're so high, you know, all you hear is a, [Mr. Van Zandt makes a humming noise, like an airplane engine,] and then, they're all going over. ...

TL: That must be incredible.

HVZ: Yes, yeah, ... great feeling, great sight. [laughter]

TL: I am sure it would not have been so great if those were German planes.

HVZ: That's right, no. ... Makes you feel good.

TL: World War II made you feel good. I get the feeling that Korea did not do the same thing for you.

HVZ: No, Korea, ... that was a miserable war ... and a useless war. You know, you didn't feel like you accomplished a hell of a lot.

TL: Did you know why you were there? Did you have a clear objective?

HVZ: That was the problem with the Korean War. ... The first thing they teach you in OCS, in leadership courses, ... [is] that the secret to a good soldier is belief in the cause, all right. So, what was the cause? Right, right, and nobody bothered enunciating it. You know, they threw my orders on my chest and said, "Hey, come."

TK: You mentioned that you are not a big Truman fan. Did you have that opinion of him as a president before going to Korea?

HVZ: Oh, no, ... since Korea. ... When you look back, and analyze the situation, and that sort of thing, and realize what sort of a man he was, you know, if you read the history books, and you read about Harry Vaughn, his so-called military advisor, and Louis Johnson, who is nothing but a politician and a big contributor, 250,000 dollars to Truman's campaign, or something like that, ... that's how he got his job, and he was also an American Legion buddy of Truman's, and you read about Truman's background, and the fact that he couldn't get into West Point, and, from then on, he hated all West Pointers, and then, you read what they did to the Army, ... and the Navy, and the Air Force as far as allocating funds, and ... men, and material to them ...

TL: Then, sending them over to a war without goals.

HVZ: Yeah, and then, you hear, now, the history books say that this was all part of Truman's policy of containment. Well, that's a real crock, when you consider that his Secretary of War, no, who was Dean Acheson. Dean Acheson, just six months before they invaded South Korea, said that South Korea, or the Korean Peninsula, was outside of our area of responsibility.

TL: Right.

HVZ: ... Senator Donnelley said that, "Well, South Korea's not that important."

-----END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE-----

TL: This continues an interview with Mr. Harry Van Zandt with Tara Liston and Tara Kraenzlin. Please continue.

HVZ: ... Harry was interested in, ... number one, getting the boys home, because, you know, everybody was hollering, at the end of World War II, "Get our boys out of uniform. Let's get them back home again," and so, it was a popular thing to do, but, he didn't consider the consequences, and they were more concerned with Russia and what was happening in Europe than ... he was [with], oh, little Korea, okay? Consequently, ... there were some reserve units that were called up that ended up in Europe, but, to [the] best of my knowledge, there were no reserve units, active units, ever ended up in Korea, and they called up something like six National Guard divisions. Out of the six, two of them ended up in Korea, towards the end of the war, but, you know, the National Guard units were in such terrible shape that, ... by the time they trained them and got them ready to go, they were completely different personnel ... in all of them.

TL: Right. What did you think of Eisenhower and Dulles' policy of containment?

HVZ: ... Theirs was the domino theory. ... Right. Well, yeah, I don't know. Of course, Eisenhower, he didn't have anything to do with Korea, other than he went over there and ... had lunch with his son, Tom, ... and said, "I will go to Korea, if I'm elected," ... which is a great election ploy, ... and he did go, but, not that it accomplished anything, I don't think.

TL: Right.

HVZ: ... 'Cause, for all intents, the war was over. It was just a matter of signing the truce and Stalin's death had more to do with ... finally getting the truce signed.

TL: Right, but, Dulles traveled all over the world, more than any other Secretary of State ever, saying the same thing as Truman and Acheson.

HVZ: ... But, he didn't involve us in any wars.

TL: Right. That is what I always think.

HVZ: Yeah, ... I don't know. ... People compare Truman and ... Bush, for instance. I mean, I know Truman's daughter, ... what's her name? [Margaret] She wrote an article, something about Bush, "You're no Harry Truman," and I said, "Thank God," [laughter] because, when ... Bush went to war, number one, he got ready. He had the troops, and he got ready, and then, he let the military run the war.

TL: Which is exactly what you are supposed to do.

HVZ: Now, Korea, we weren't ready. We never did get ready. We never had the people [or the] ... power over there and the State Department ran the war. Vietnam was the same thing. The State Department ran that war, not ... the Defense Department.

TK: What was your reaction to the integration of the military?

HVZ: ... It was the only sensible thing to do. ... You're talking about blacks, you're not talking about Puerto Ricans?

TK: No, not particularly. [laughter]

HVZ: ... Okay. Now, ... an all black outfit ... is absolutely worthless, absolutely worthless. You take blacks and mix them with ... white soldiers, ... fighting alongside them, they're just the same kind of soldiers that the white guy's gonna be. Okay, but, you put all blacks together, ... particularly when you've ... got white officers, primarily, and you've got a class of officer that ... the worst thing that can happen to him in the military is to be assigned to a black outfit, okay? It's considered a dead end. You know, a West Pointer wouldn't be caught dead ... as commanding [one], ... and then, you ... add to that the fact that ... a lot of the officers disliked blacks, hate them, okay, and it's an intolerable situation. Now, you break them up, you salt and pepper them in, and you got a whole different situation, so that, now, when you look at the Marine Corps, or any non-com ... in the Army, I'll bet you at least a third of them are black non-coms, yeah, and ... they're good soldiers. The Puerto Ricans, for instance, they were, as I said, ... regular Army, well trained, a lot of *esprit de corps*. In World War II, they wouldn't use them, because they didn't trust them, all right, and so, they sent them to Korea, and, by God, they were gonna show people that they were real soldiers. ... However, when they started rotation, which is the stupidest policy the Army ever came up with, but, they still do it, individual rotation, where you get a certain number of points, you go home, right? Well, the Sixty-Fifth shipped to Korea

as a complete regiment. So, when they started rotation, everybody has the same number of points, everybody except for people like me that came in as replacements. So, I said, "Well, who do you rotate first?" Well, they said, "You rotate your most deserving."

TL: Oh, no.

HVZ: And, who's your most deserving? Your non-commissioned officers, so, those were the first ones to leave, all your experienced non-commissioned officers. Then, you start getting replacements. In fact, they were getting replacements from Puerto Rico so fast that the Sixty-Fifth Regiment couldn't absorb them.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah, but, ... and then, of course, you start rotating. ... You break down the whole outfit is what it amounts to, then, you get in ... recruits who couldn't speak a word of English. You start promoting privates to corporal and corporal to sergeants. In fact, ... I had a corporal as a platoon leader, you know, which is a lieutenant's job, because you're so short of non-coms. ...

TL: Really?

HVZ: And then, of course, we got short of officers and officer replacements came over. ... I was born and raised in New Jersey. ... Then, I moved to California after the war, then, to Texas, okay? ... I just lived in California before the Korean War. I'm going too fast here, [laughter] but, I didn't know a Puerto Rican from a Cuban, all right. Now, the people from New York City, they knew Puerto Ricans. They didn't like Puerto Ricans, and they'd send those guys over there to lead Puerto Ricans, who hated them to start with, and, ... again, you've got inexperienced, ill-trained, or not trained [officers]. They had very short basic training, and so, the outfit just went completely bonkers, and they ended up court-martialing a bunch of them and sentenced one officer and I don't know how many enlisted men, but, it was the third time they refused to go up this stupid hill.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah. Well, they ... threw them up there twice, and then, the third time, they ordered them up ... one of those hills after they abandoned it. No other outfit ever was able to take it, either, but, they court-martialed the Puerto Ricans, but, anyhow, ... it's a case of ... bad training, bad leadership, ... and prejudice ... that blew them apart, and ... a lot of that is true of the black soldiers, too, but, the black soldier, I think, more than the white soldier, ... you know, fear is contagious amongst them, and if the guy next to them gets scared, they're gonna get scared, and if they think he's not gonna stay there, they're not gonna stay there. ... They did a lot of bugging out, right, but, a ... lot of white outfits did, too, yeah, not as often ... or as frequently.

TK: Do you think, like the Puerto Ricans who were not allowed to fight in World War II, that they were anxious to prove themselves?

HVZ: Absolutely. Oh, absolutely.

TK: Do you think that helped their position in the minds of other soldiers? Did other soldiers pick up on that and kind of give them credit for it?

HVZ: ... Depends on the period in which the soldier you're talking about was involved in the Korean War. The ones who were there early on have nothing but praise for the Sixty-Fifth Regiment. The ones, later on, who were talking about a different regiment completely, a hundred ... and fifty percent turnover in personnel, ... they have a completely different attitude, but, by the same token, you hear the GIs talk about the South Korean soldiers, how bad they are, you know, and how they bugged out all the time, and, yet, at the end of the war, ... South Koreans were the soldiers that ... were holding the line, were fighting on the line, and they turned into some good [soldiers], ... but, again, it was a case of they were drafting these South Koreans off the streets of Seoul, ... just taking them off, conscripting them into the Army. ... Give them a uniform and a gun and there they are, they're in the Army. ... They had no support in the way of artillery or anything like that. ... They didn't have tanks, they didn't have artillery, and they threw them in there, and they bugged out like crazy in the beginning, but, later on, they were good divisions. It was a matter of training and leadership.

TL: Were you ever injured?

HVZ: Wounded.

TL: Wounded?

HVZ: Yeah, once. [laughter]

TK: Injured would mean like an accident, I guess.

TL: Injured is like his socks. [laughter]

HVZ: ... Yes, and I always make the distinction between a wound and an injury, all right? One gets you a Purple Heart and an injury does not, or it shouldn't, let's put it that way. Sometimes it does, if somebody's stupid. ...

TL: What happened?

HVZ: ... Well, what was it? ... It was a river crossing operation, and ... two companies of our battalion had gotten across the river and were getting the hell kicked out of them, and they moved my company down to go over, and the engineers had put a foot bridge across, and it had been knocked loose, and they were in there. A detail of them was ... trying to put another footbridge across this river, which ... was at flood stage, you know, and, when we were sitting there, the ... Chinese were mortaring, lobbing mortar rounds down into this gully where we were trying to put this bridge across, and I happened to be sitting up there, and my company was down the gully

behind me, and one round came in and just caught me in the arm. Whether it was a rock or shrapnel, I don't know. [There] were a lot of rocks around.

TL: Did you get pulled back immediately?

HVZ: Oh, no, no, no. It was a small wound. ...

TL: You kept going.

HVZ: Oh, sure. It wasn't until a day or two later I went to the battalion surgeon. ... I had something, a cold or something like that, and ... he saw my torn shirt, and ... said, "You ever have a Purple Heart?" and I said, "No." He says, "Well, here, I'll write you up for one." [laughter]

TL: Oh, that was nice.

HVZ: Yeah, but, it was just a scratch.

TL: You were very lucky.

HVZ: Oh. A lot of lucky things happen, that's how you get through a war, especially one like Korea.

TK: How was the mail service in Korea, as opposed to World War II?

HVZ: Well, once it started coming through, it was all right. It took a long time before they got it straightened out, ... but, it started coming through. I got a lot of letters. Yeah, I got a lot of letters. ... It was sporadic. You'd get [mail] two or three days at a time. ... So, it was either feast or famine. ...

TK: Would you say it was harder to be away from your wife now that you had already settled in, as opposed to the first time?

HVZ: Oh, sure, oh. Yeah, we'd just moved into a new house, and, yeah, settled in pretty good. Financially, it was very tough.

TK: Did your wife have to go to work?

HVZ: She went to ... work a little bit, ... while Jeff was in school, you know, and she worked for a friend of ours who owned drug store, and she worked there. ...

TL: Tough lady.

HVZ: Well.

TL: When did you receive word that you were going home?

HVZ: Oh, Lordy. ... Well, it's on there. [laughter] The date ... I knew I was slated to go ...

TL: March 23, 1952.

HVZ: Yeah, ... you kept pretty good track of that, ... where you were on the list. No, you kept very good track of that, 'cause, you know, you could check with battalion and regiment and find out where you stood on the list, the rotation list, and I knew this one lieutenant [at] company headquarters, ... what the heck was he? I guess he was a battalion S-2. I was a headquarters company commander and he was scheduled to go on rotation. He was next on the list, and I was behind him, and his name came up for R&R, that's rest and relaxation, rest and recuperation, I don't know. [laughter]

TL: One of them.

HVZ: I don't really know what it officially means, but, so, he says, "No." He didn't want to go because he was afraid he'd miss his rotation. So, they said, "Do you want to go?" and I said, "Yeah." I'd already been twice, which was very unusual, so, "Hey, I want a third time," and flew to Japan. You know, you'd have a ball over there, and came back, and he was still there, and he rotated. I rotated about a week later. He rotated about two days after I got there and I rotated about a week later. ...

TL: Did you return through San Francisco?

HVZ: No, we went by plane to Sasebo, Japan, where we climbed on another boat and went up the west coast of Japan, picked up some troops up at Osaka, around the northern end of the Japanese Islands, right up at Vladivostok, and across the North Pacific, and landed at Seattle. It only took us twenty-two days. ...

TK: Then, you were only in Seattle and not California.

HVZ: ... Yeah, ... got off the boat in Seattle, and, you know, everybody's going down the gangplank with their duffel bags, and ... going off to, what is it? Fort Lewis, ... whatever post there is there in Seattle, and there's a guy there from my [company]. ... This company I worked for had a Seattle office, and he was standing right there, and he says, "Hey, come on," and I pulled out of line. We went down to a bar, had a few drinks. Everybody else went out to the post to get separated. ... We went from the bar back ... to the offices there, and had a cup of coffee and whatnot, and talked to everybody there at the office, and then, he says, "You'd better get back out there." I went out there and everybody had gone. Everybody'd been processed and left, and everybody was ready to go home, and so, they processed me through in about five minutes.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah, and I ... flew from there down to San Francisco, where my wife met me.

TL: That must have been a great reunion.

HVZ: ... Yeah, it was our third honeymoon, [laughter] and so, we stayed a couple of days in San Francisco, doing San Francisco, and then, drove down the Pacific Coast Highway.

TL: Did you resign from the reserves at that point?

HVZ: Oh, no, no, no, I was still on active duty.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Oh. Then, ... you have a leave of absence, and then, a friend of mine called and said that he'd heard that if you'd spent a certain number of months ... after being recalled, that you were eligible to get separated, because they had me assigned to Fort Ord, California, to teach basic, have a basic training company. Last thing in the world I wanted to do was to be teaching a bunch of snot nosed kids. [laughter] So, I said, "No, thank you, ... I'll get out." So, I went back up, I said, "No, I want out," so, he said, "Okay, you're out." Yeah, that was it.

TL: That must have been the most happy day of your life.

HVZ: ... Later on, I said I wanted out completely, you know, 'cause I was still in the reserves at that point. I was just not on active duty. So, I checked on that, and they said, "Well, you don't have to worry about it, because, after a certain length of time, ... unless you go on active duty, you were automatically out," and I said, "[I'm] not taking any chances." I wrote a letter to the War Department, and resigned my commission, and, within a couple of weeks, I had it, resignation, bingo, out, completely

TL: Done.

HVZ: Done.

TL: The end of another chapter of your life.

HVZ: Yeah, no, once burned is enough. [laughter] Next time a war breaks out, I don't want to be recalled again. ... Korean War was a very unfair war, very unfair war. ... This rifle company that I joined in Korea, you know, in a rifle company, you have five officers. You have a company commander, executive officer, you have three platoon leaders, is that five? That's five. Then, you have a warrant officer in the rear. He's just a warrant officer, but, ... of these three platoon leaders in Fox Company, ... well, the company commander was a Puerto Rican, the executive officer was a Puerto Rican, the three platoon leaders were all West Point graduates, regular Army, West Point graduates, and ... the other platoon leader had been killed. ... I took his place. So, here I am, a civilian with three West Pointers and two Puerto Ricans in this rifle company.

TL: That must have been a very unique experience.

HVZ: Yeah. ... Well, anyhow, fortunately, the Puerto Rican company commander was ... very *simpatico*. He was a real nice guy, right, also was the exec. He was a nice guy, too. I still hear from him. He was the first officer to rotate from the regiment.

TL: Do you belong to any veterans' associations?

HVZ: Yeah. ... Well, the Third Division Association has a, what do we call it? Society of the Third Infantry Division, but, ... I've never been to any of their functions, because I wouldn't see anybody I know, ... being with the Puerto Ricans. ... They don't come. Very few of them belong to the Association anyhow.

TK: It is quite a trip, too.

HVZ: Well, not only that, but, ... I'm sure they feel that they got a bad rap towards the end of the war.

TK: Especially the ones who were there in the beginning.

HVZ: Yeah, so, I could go to reunions and I wouldn't see anybody I know, although I did hear from a guy, he wrote me because he'd read something I wrote, and he's from Dallas. He's assistant attorney general of the State of Texas, or something or other, in Dallas, Texas, and ... he wrote me, and said my name sounded familiar, and, sure enough, I looked up some orders and his name was on the orders. He went on R&R with me, as a matter-of-fact.

TL: Really?

HVZ: Yeah. ... He was in the same company with me. ... Guy named Cabannis, but, ... I didn't know him that well, because all the while I was in that headquarters company, he was in the back, working with a work detail ... on a defensive line, but, interesting, and then, ... they had a dedication, you know, ... just before they dedicated the Korean War Memorial down in Washington. They have, what is it? nineteen statues, or something like that. ... Well, the statues were actually fabricated up in New York State, near Beacon, New York, and we went down there when ... the statues were finished and on display outside this foundry, and they were about to load them on flatbed trucks and take them to Washington. ... They had them on view there, and I went down there to look at these things, and I'm going around, after the ceremony, taking pictures of these statues, and this friend of mine says, "Hey, there's a Third Division guy over there," and he went over, and he came back, he says, "My God, he was with the Sixty-Fifth." So, I go over, tapped him on the shoulder, and it was a Puerto Rican boy from New York who was in my second platoon in Korea. ...

TK: That is a cute coincidence story.

HVZ: ... Oh. His wife and daughter were with him and ... his wife kept saying, "I told you you'd see somebody." [laughter] ...

TL: She probably dragged him there.

HVZ: Finding somebody like that, you know, ... it's a thousand to one shot.

TL: Yeah, larger.

HVZ: Eugenio Apulvedo.

TL: Did you like the Korean War Monument? I love it.

HVZ: I haven't seen it. Did you like it?

TL: Oh.

HVZ: Good.

TL: I think it was the best memorial. I like it much better than the Vietnam Memorial. The way they have them set up, it is just like they are actually going forward.

HVZ: ... A lot of Korean vets, ... I don't agree with them in the least, but, they're mad because we don't have the names on the wall, but, here's what we do have. They have a computer base there where you can punch up anybody's name ... and you get a printout like that. ... Of course, most of them don't have pictures, but, ... if you have a picture of someone who was killed in Korea ...

TL: They could put it in there?

HVZ: They could put it in there. ... I got that one from Ben, Jr., from Ben's son, who lives in Brooklyn. Took me some doing to locate Ben. [Ben Ford, Class of 1944, member of the Black Fifty.] ...

TK: Oh, that is nice.

HVZ: I like it better.

TL: You have to go down there and see it.

TK: I think it depends on the type of person you are. For people who want to do research, that is the best thing, but, for someone who just wants to see their name on the wall, it is not so good.

TL: In my opinion, the Vietnam Memorial starts people off talking, but, by the time they are in the heart of it, everybody is dead silent, because all you see are all the names of the guys that died uselessly. At the Korean War Memorial, they are actually in combat, the way they have it set up, and, from the looks on their faces, you can actually read their eyes. They seem to say, "My God,

why am I here?" It is just incredible. It puts you on the battlefield. So, on one hand, you have the Vietnam Memorial ...

HVZ: ... It's a big tombstone. ... I agree. ... Well, the other thing about the Vietnam [Memorial], and the same thing about ... those who are talking about the Korean War, you know, ... well, the president of the Korean War Veterans' Association, ... he was touting names on a wall. I said, "How many names you talking about for the Korean War?" and he came up with some figure like 68,000 and some odd figures, and I said, "How do you get that number?" He says, "Well, 54,259 killed in Korea. There's 8177 missing in action," and I said, "No, the 8177, in the first place, is included in that 54,000 figure, okay? Okay, and also included in that 54,000 is some 20,000 who were not killed in action. Some of them were killed or died in Korea from disease, accidents, and so on, and some of them were killed maybe in a bar room in Berlin, or in a training accident in the United States, or anyplace, but, there's some 20,000 of that fifty-four, so, there's actually 32,600, ... roughly, whose names should be on that wall." Now, the Vietnam Wall ... already has something like 58,000 names on it.

TL: Right.

HVZ: ... Some of those names [are] of people [who] have gone down there and seen their own name, and they're still adding names to it, because the guy died, and they say, "Well, he died of the wounds that he got, you know, because ... he was in the Vietnam War," and so, [it is] inaccurate.

TL: Yeah. Everything is very controversial.

TK: So, yeah, inaccurate, but, ... I think the advantage of ... what they have ... [at the] Korean [Memorial] is that they can update it.

TL: Right.

HVZ: Oh, absolutely. I had to update this thing, because they had some typos on the thing, yeah, and I had another friend whose picture I sent them, a picture I took of the guy in Korea, as a matter-of-fact, and he was platoon leader in E Company, and I was in F Company, and he had got his picture on there, too. Unfortunately, ... he had a sister, but, his mother died, and she kept in touch with me for a long time after the war. ... I think it's much more permanent. ... Korea veterans say, you know, "We could put these names up like, you know, the wall that they have in Ellis Island of the immigrants." Have you ever seen that?

TL: Yeah.

TK: Yeah.

HVZ: It's useless, absolutely useless. ...

[Tape Paused]

TL: This concludes an interview with Mr. Harry Van Zandt. We will continue the second half of his life at a somewhat later date. Thank you very much.

HVZ: [laughter] Okay.

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

Reviewed by Andrew Noyes 5/8/98
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 2/6/00
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 2/25/00
Reviewed by Harry Van Zandt 4/00