

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Clarence Brockman
August 13, 2010
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Clarence Brockman, conducted by Stephen Mize on August 13, 2010 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Clarence Brockman
August 13, 2010

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum in **Washington, D.C.** It is Friday, 13 August, at 20 minutes past one in the afternoon. This is an oral history interview with Mr. **Clarence Harvey Brockman**. He was with the third army, 80th infantry division, 317th headquarters company. Mr. **Brockman**, can you briefly describe your childhood?

Answer: How's that?

Q: Can you be – briefly describe your childhood for us, where you grew up?

A: I grew up in a town, little town of **Midway, PA.**

Q: **Midway, Pennsylvania?**

A: **Midway, Pennsylvania**, was June 26th, 1920, 5:30 Saturday morning.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay.

Q: What did your parents do?

A: How's that?

Q: What did your parents do? Your father, what di – what was – sort of –

A: He would – worked on the railroad.

Q: Railroad, okay.

A: He was a railroad man.

Q: And how and why did you enter the army?

A: I got a letter, it said greetings.

Q: Okay.

A: But before that, another friend of mine, we graduated in 1940, we tried to enter the service then, in 1940. He went, and I couldn't go cause I wore glasses.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm. And so you were conscripted. At what – when – what day was that, what year and day?

A: In July, fon – '42 – 1942 July 23rd.

Q: Okay.

A: I think, yeah, it was 23rd.

Q: And what did you fe – how – how did you feel when you got that letter? What were your attitudes regarding the war, how did you feel about the war?

A: Well, at that time, we're young. And when they bombed **Pearl Harbor**, made us kind of mad. We took it as a joke, tell you the truth. And we – and after we started reading stories about it, and stories about – about **Germany**, and it turned us, started turn us. And, when the – I went in there, down to Camp **Forrest, Tennessee**, went through training down there. Then I went through training up at f-fort – Camp **S-Salano(ph), Kansas**, up at Camp **Phillips**. From there we sent us out to **Yuma, Arizona** to desert training. Then they sent us to **New Jersey. New Jersey**, the

training there was about how many bars you could go down the street without getting drunk, from the camp.

Q: And how long in – how long did that training take? How long of a period of time was that?

A: Oh, let's see. Was year and a half in training.

Q: Right. And was that all stateside, or – what happened when you went to **Europe**? Was there more training in – in – in **Britain**?

A: In – in a – we got to **England**, was there about four weeks, picking up ammunition and waiting for our turn to go across the channel. We did some training over there, ni – mostly night training. But the nights over there are not too long.

Q: Right.

A: Right, okay. And – and then we left there, went down through **Southampton**, left out of **Southampton** to **Utah** Beach.

Q: And when did you arrive at **Utah** Beach?

A: **U-Utah** Beach.

Q: When – when did you arrive there, at **Utah**?

A: Boy, that's a hard date to find. I can't remember the date.

Q: Okay, no worries. Do you feel that – all of that training, did it adequately prepare you for combat?

A: I was in regimental headquarters, and most of the people in regimental headquarters are specialists, one way or the other. I was in communications. And then – **[background voices]** Yeah, 15th of August, that's when I got over there. That prepared us, I think, that year and a half, compared to what they're training now, you know, weeks. They're not getting enough training. And – and we got in **France**, and we do – was in the war.

Q: Right. And you said you were a radio lineman, is that right?

A: No, I was a wireman.

Q: Wireman.

A: Wireman.

Q: Okay.

A: In the wire section the – in communications.

Q: Right.

A: And I said that most everybody in that regiment headquarters were specialists in something, radio, telephone, and my **R** and **R** platoon, and they were specialists their own about seeking out the men – enemy. And actually, the training was enough, cause we knew how to string a line, we knew how to make ties in the line for communications, and go out and repair them after they get – get shot up or broken up, and that's what we did.

Q: What – can you tell us about your first combat experience?

A: First combat experience, I took a Polish prisoner, first day. He was wearing a wine colored suit. He was a – he was operating a machine gun. He wasn't pulling the trigger, he was just loading them. And the **SS** officer was about 50 to 75 yards in back of him, with a string tied to the trigger of the machine gun, and he pulls – pulls the string for that machine gun to operate. And these guys were supposed to stay there and load it up when it's empty, load it up. If they didn't, he'd shoot them. And the – this man come out of the woods there, put his hands up when he saw me. And so I called the – our sergeant, pa – **Sawyer**. He was from **Sewickly**, he was Polish. I says, what's he talking about? Well, he says, he's been in that – been in that position for two days now with no water and he wants a drink. He says, don't give him anything. I gave him a slug of water out of my canteen, and he was very grateful for it. And that was my first combat experience right there.

Q: Yes. And did you – were you at all involved in crossing the **Moselle**?

A: How's that?

Q: Were you at all involved in crossing the **Moselle**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And can you tell – tell us about that experience?

A: We crossed the **Moselle** on September the 12th, and that was mean and nasty fighting down there. And that's where I got the Bronze Star first – I mean, first time. And what happened was, they put us down in a defensive position at **Dilliard**(ph). As a – right above a church, a ro – dirt road went up the church, went

up the **OP**. And they had shelled the **OP**, and quite a few of them were killed up there. And they're sending an ambulance up there. And they told us that the – we had to stay there in this position. So I start digging a little bit. And the first time the 88 come in, and I digging – started digging faster, you know, I was really shoveling dirt there. What happened was that that, they had notified the guys in back of me, I was a – oh, about – about 50 yards in front of them. And they rolled back under a big apple tree, and I was out in that bend in the road that goes up the hill. A **Dilliard** there from **Dilliard**. And I happened to look across the field, here come a German patr – patrol across the field. And there wasn't supposed to be a German on that side of the river. I saw they're getting close, closer and closer to our position, and I start cutting loose at them when they got too close.

Q: How were you armed? How were you armed? Wha-What weapon were you carrying?

A: The **M1**

Q: The **M1**

A: **M1**.

Q: The carbine or the full sized?

A: The – the – the full [**indecipherable**]

Q: Right, good.

A: Yeah. And then I knocked off the last three in that patrol, there was approximately nine of them. And I knocked off the last three, and I thought, it's

funny, I don't hear no shots behind me. Here what happened was the sergeant come up and ordered the men under the tree to fall back. And they forgot to tell me when I was up there digging. And that really made me mad.

Q: I can imagine.

A: They left me there by myself. I knocked off the first three, and the rest of them gave – saw the three were being knocked off, they disappeared. And to this day, when I talk to **Felix**, he was down in a building in there, and they said he's – he said it's all the same patrol. That's another – he's over there, and so then, actually, I wasn't supposed to be doing that work. I'm – I'm a – I'm a wireman, but I had to defend my position, and I did. And not only it happened then, it happened during the whole war, especially in the Battle of the Bulge. And from then on, when we – well, after – after **Argentan**, **Argentan-Falaise** Gap, that battle up there in **France**, that was the beginning of it, and then when he got to **Moselle** river, which driving across **France**, you know, 50 - 60 mile an hour, how fast you want to go, until we got to **Orleans**. And I got a picture of **G** Company in **Orleans**. Did you ever see that picture? One guy was carrying a sniper rifle. And then the **[indecipherable]** got to **Moselle**, that's – that's where what, 317th lost 300 and some – 365 men, wasn't it? Across that river.

A2: The battalion, the battalion.

A: Huh?

A2: The battalion lost that.

A: Yeah, yeah, we lost 365 men right there at crossing. And which I thought, and some others too say [indecipherable] you know. Back in – back before this war started, when I was in school, I studied history. My family goes back as far as the year 1205. I'm entitled to wear a deer's head [indecipherable] with a dagger through his head. You know what that means? It means your ancestors fought in the Crusades. And I had a relative fight in all wars, from [indecipherable] World War, Civil War, Spanish War, American war, and the – like, I had a uncle – great-uncle was killed in World War I. He got the **DSO** for what he did, but he died for it. He rescued two of his buddies out on the field, and he got machine-gunned. And they – they named a street down in Fort **Benning, Brockman** Way, because he got the **DSO**. And – so our family's been in a – wars, all wars.

Q: Can you tell us about the battle – your experiences at the Battle of the Bulge?

A: Cold, cold, let's put it that way. We were gonna left – I was gonna head to – was heading to **Beechy**, out of **Saint Avoild, France**. We got down there about 11 o'clock at night, and we was to go across into **Beechy, Germany** there. And they said, never mind. There's trucks up there, get on them, you're going for a long ride. So we took the long ride up to **Luxembourg**, a hundred – hundred mile way. And the first stop in **Luxembourg**, there's a bend in the road going from **Luxembourg** city, up to **Mersch**. There's a big bend road. The – in the middle of that bend is a – is a bar, a café. And that's when we first got our first booze in **Luxembourg**. We got **Luxembourg – Mersch**, the town of **Mersch**, top the hill **Mersch** was a

knocked out German tank – I don't know who knocked that out – knocked out tank there. And I knew then something's wrong up here, we're just going up here for a holiday. But we got up to **Mersch** and then we headed up north to **Ettelbruck**. We're still going riding, riding at night. **Ettelbruck**, we took the back road above **Ettelbruck**, and it circled down around **Oberfeulen** and we went into **Niederfeulen**. And that's where we stopped for a couple weeks right there, **Niederfeulen**. And then from **Niederfeulen** we went to **Heiderscheid**, **Heiderscheid**, and then there was a lot of towns, small towns around there. **Tadler** and **Kehmens**(ph). And from there we went to **Wiltz**. After we hit **Wiltz**, it was miserable cold. And we're going up to **Buchholz**, and that was cold. The wind was blowing like crazy. And the town where we stopped, that was it. And they put us back on the trucks again, and they took us down south to cross into – over to the crossing to **Depburg**. What was the name of that river?

A2: **Sauer** river.

A: **Sauer** river.

A2: And **Diligen**(ph).

A: And **Diligen**(ph), yeah. **Diligen's**(ph) where – where I crossed. And I went back over there, first trip when I went back was in '72, my wife and I went over. And we stopped there at **Diligen**(ph). It's a – where we cr – where they had the bridge head, that was the – some farmer. And he was mad at us, even then. Because the engineers come in and knocked his barn down to make a crossing. And I still ta – I

didn't do it, you know? And then, we crossed there, and then into **Bitburg**, and come back down. Back down, we come back down into – to **Luxembourg**, and from **Luxembourg** we crossed over the river again, and we stayed over there, that si – this time, we stayed over there. We went into **Saarburg, Saarburg** and up to the t-town, little town of **Oberzerf**. That's where **Turner** got his medal, **Oberzerf. Zerf, Zerf.**

A2: **Dolle.**

A: **Dolle?**

A2: **Dolle** is where he got his Congressional Medal of Honor.

A: Well, who got – who got the [indecipherable] at **Oberzerf?**

A2: I don't know.

A: Ri-Right there, we crossed there, at **Zerf**, and **Oberzerf** was before **Zerf**. And that's where they throwed these Screaming **Mimis** at us, in this town. And it hit the General **McBride's Jeep**, flattened it flatter than a pancake. And the communication officer, Officer **Dolka(ph)**, well, anyway, he got his [indecipherable] blown off, and that's the last I saw of that guy. And – and then we went through the woods to **Gemirth(ph)**, and we stayed in a cellar which was a grocery store above us. And I went down the cellar, that's where they got all the bottles, and the whole platoon stayed down in that cellar that night.

Q: What did you select?

A: They couldn't get out, we couldn't get out because they was throwing mortar shells on us. And so we – we was drinking schnapps, chasing it down with white wine. Don't ever do it again. And from then on, we went down through the – those woods, **Gemirth**(ph), and what was the name of that town? If I had my map here I'd tell you. That we went to **[indecipherable]** and from **Kashdra**(ph) we went north to **Mainz**, crossed the river **Mainz** and from there up to **Kassel**. And went up to **Kassel** and – and then we headed down to **Eisenach**. **Gerd**t, **Netbray**(ph), the – **Autobahn**, on the **Autobahn**, and we got to **Weimar**. And it's four of us in the picture there. We just decided we need some drinks and we asked these people in **Weimar** where it was. And the one man says, you go up this road, he says, it's two farmers up there, and they make good schnapps. So we went up that road, and we got within about three miles of the camp. Now, we didn't even know the camp was there, we didn't know anything about those camps. They never told us about the concentration camps. And we – I was driving the truck, we had a three-quarter ton truck, a **Dodge**, and I was the driver. And I asked **Billman**, Corporal **Billman**, I says, do they have monkeys over here? He says no. I says, well look up in them trees. And there was the inmates. They saw us coming first, before we saw them, and they went up in the trees to hide. And one of them was Italian, and the guy from – **Siberelli**(ph) from **Altoona**, he's Italian and he can speak the language. We asked him about it, what – what you're doing there? And they told us about the camp. We didn't per – still didn't believe them. So we took them up the ca – road up there.

What's the name of that mountain up there? Well, anyway, we took them up that camp, and we drove in the front gate. There wasn't a guard around, in fact they had disappeared about three days before, and the Americans or anything else, six armored – they heard the six armored tanks coming, and they took off. And we went in there, and we saw the sights, we saw the bodies, the piles of bodies were right there, and that was it. And it made us kind of mad. I'm gonna speak a little rough now. And we stayed there – we got there on the 11th, we stayed there in **Weimar** on the 12th, and the 13th, 14th we left. We started going east then, we had – was ordered to leave. And well, we went back over there, this past year, on the Holocaust day. The people, I kept asking them, all over the city, you know, I says, you tell me why you was – why the camp was there. We didn't know it was there. So, that made me kind of mad. I just told them, I says, you're full of shit. I says, your kids were playing up in that camp during the war, the whole time, the kids were up there. They knew it was there. And you could smell it. You could smell it, the camp, from miles away. That's six miles up there – from the downtown, and you could smell it. And so then, when I come th – was up there on the 12th of April this year, they had the ceremony about everything up there, and was greeted by this man from **Ukraine**, a Russian. And then when – when the book I got, it's in my case here. Okay. Yup, yup. It was – no, the little black book in the case. Little black book. These are the pictures we took over there. This what my daughter made up.

This book I brought over there. It's in English. That's got the pictures of everything, **Buchenwald**.

Q: Mr. **Brockman**, let's – let's back up to the 11th of April, 1945. You said you weren't told about the concentration camps and about their existence. Yet, as you – when you – you first made contact, what did you think you were seeing? What did you think you were taking in?

A: The Crystal Night, I read about that before, back here in the **States**. And I always was a reader, and a history man. And I read about that Crystal Night, and I just wondered, you know, why the people let them do that. And you figure you got a guy with a black mustache on, he's the boss, period. What he did, what he said, what he ordered, if you didn't do it, you – you were shot, you know. These **SS** guys will sho – shoo – shoot you. I had a run in with a **SS** man where this picture was taken here of that – that there. We were talking to those two Polish prisoners. That was in the middle of some town after we left **Weimar**. That's where we – where it is. Those guys were walking home from that part of the country to **Poland**. We told him stay still, you'll get transportation, you know? No. But anyway, they was in a house. They were in a, like a slave labor camp. And was four women, three story house, four women. And this one come down, when we go into the town, she was covered with blood. She had a broken nose, busted jaw, her body was beat up. And I says, what happened to you? And she told me. She said, the **SS** man over there, she says, he tried to rape me. I says, you mean that private, the **SS** private? He says,

he's not an ess – he's not a private, he's a captain. I says, you're sure about that? So she called her other girlfriends out of the house, and they says, yes, he's a captain.

And he beat hell on her, cause he tried to ra-rape her, right then and there. And well, he got four **MIs**, right quick like. Four of shot him, because he had no right to live.

Q: Were you speaking to the woman in English, or did you have a –

A: How's that?

Q: Were you speaking to the woman in English, or –

A: English, yeah.

Q: What town was that, do you recall?

A: A town?

Q: Yes.

A: That – I don't re-recall that town. If they bring that – that book where they took that picture, I would know. But we run across several of them going down si – when we left – left – we left the – the air – area there **Gera**. Now we were south. And we ran in – across several of those camps. Labor camps, I mean, there wasn't the killing then, there was just –

Q: Working.

A: – u – use their bodies, that's it. And then we got down to **Austria**, we stopped at the **Enz** river, that's – couldn't get no further cause we're supposed to meet the Russians there. They took three or four days getting there. But I – that – now, when this first started out, my daughter says, why don't you go? I says, no, I says, I – I

said, I had enough of it, and I didn't want to be reminded. You don't lose sight or track of it in your mind, of what went on over there, during the whole war. You try to, try to move everything back here. But di – you don't, you can't. And some people say they do, and I don't know, I'm aware they're li – they can't. Because it's something that happened to you. It turns you. And then, when we got these camps, we got the **Buchenwald**, we got the other camps, that really turns you off unto the German people. Although, there's a town up in – above **Hannover, Germany**, it's called **Brockmanville**. Due to the fact we had – the **Brockmans** were kicked out of **England** way back before th – it was Crusades times. And they went to **Germany**, lived in **Germany** for 200 years. And they come back over to **England** and they come back to **England**, then from there they went to **America**. I got a great-great-grandfather – well, a couple more greats, he's buried down there in **Chester** county, phi – **Philadelphia**. He was buried down there in 1690. That's how old we are.

Q: Sir, you said it – th-the whole experience in **Buchenwald** and the other camps, did it change how you felt about the war, and why you were fighting it, and your role in it?

A: Yes, I – it did, du-due to the fact that I was always a happy-go-lucky guy, e-even during the war. We got through **France**, I was still a happy-go-lucky guy. But then when I saw the **Buchenwald**, and I saw the bodies, and I saw everything there, it – and then you get to thinking about it, it'll change your mind real quick. You're not a happy-go-lucky guy, you're a killer then. Even though I was a wireman, I still had

to get rid of some guys in our way. And, well to this day, my daughter still don't know. All she knows is [indecipherable], and who was the other woman? And she started putting everything together. This picture here, this guy, that's him right there. That was taken on the 12th.

Q: You said it changed – the experiences in the camp changed the way you felt about the Germans and the German people.

A: Yes.

Q: 317 stayed on a little bit in **Germany** after the war was officially over. Did you stay on as well, for –

A: It was official over on – on the seventh. May the eighth was the official day. We pulled out of there, was it the – was it – **Kurtsdorf(ph), Austria**. And then we went over to **Spital am Pyhrn, Austria**. We stayed there, I think about two, three weeks. Then we moved down to **Füssen, Germany**, down that part down there. And I liked that part down there, because that's where they sent all the women, down there to get away from the bombing. So – but anyway, on June – June 23rd, I think it was, or 24th, I got a letter from my aunt, and she passed away now, but I got a letter from my aunt saying my brother had been killed over in **Europe**. He was killed on May the 10th. That's two days after the war he was killed. He was ground crew chief on a **B17** out of **England**. And their plane was flying over, dropping Care packages to **Holland** and **Belgium**. He was dropping Care packages there. An airplane was coming in, another plane was taking off, they come together. Two planes ti –

completely burn up. The only way you could identify him is by his teeth, after the – and he was buried in the cemetery, **Cambridge, England**. And then my uncle was a grange man, and he says, let's bring him back over to sir – so we got him arl – he's buried in **Arlington** now. And my sister, she was a – she retired as a lieutenant in the **WACs**, she spent her time down in **Japan** when occupation. So then, what did upset me about my brother, because they didn't no – the government didn't notify me, which they should have. And, we brought him back. But just a lot of things you – people ask me different questions, and then it starts coming back just plain as day. And I kind of hate that a little bit, because I was trying to forget it. But when I come back, I was – we come back on a Wednesday, but – see, my daughter had to go with me, she had to be my caretaker, you know, on the trip, on that trip. And, well, she wanted – so then, we flew back. We just got back in time when that volcano blew its stack over there, out there, you know. And so we made it in time. Well then, the next day, on Thursday, the ra-rabbi from synagogue in **Wa-Washington, PA**, he called. And he's a jolly fellow, real fat. Beard. Very jolly. And don't ask me his name, I can't remember. He says, would you like – would you speak in front of the congregation on Friday? I said, all right. So I got over there, I got to talking to him before he had this – we had the service on Friday night. And he says – and he – he made his talk at the service about us soldiers. He says we should talk and tell about the war. He says, when they don't, then – then his whole sermon was about that, we should talk. Well then, he introduced me, and I asked him, I says, how long you

want me to talk? He says, about 15 minutes. It was two and a half hours before I got out of there. Them people have all ears and everything else. And I passed out there – I passed 150 of these out to them. And my daughter got them, where she did I don't know, don't ask. But I'm – so then he called me again, he said, why don't you come back over and do it again, and he says, we'll tape it. He got – so I started, from the time I went in the service to almost what's – I come home. Took two and a half hours. I didn't cover all of it, but I cover most of it. And then the – what was the name of the lady? Sounds like tobacco. **Judy**, that was it. She called, she wanted me and my daughter to come over and have lunch with them. So we went over there. And it's quite – quite interesting. Especially doing the service. And the book was in English, so it's – songbook. I sang right around with them.

Q: You said – you said that you did not speak to your daughter about it, did you speak to – about – did you speak to anyone in your family about your experiences in the war?

A: I talked to no one.

Q: And why is that?

A: Not even friends, not even when I go down to American Legion or the vets, I never told about war. I never said that word to anybody. And, I had a good friend, by the name of **Worth, Danny Worth** from **Washington, PA**. Not **Washington** state. **Danny Worth**, he's buried over there in **Lorraine** cemetery. At **Saint Avoild**, he was killed [**indecipherable**]. They had an 88 up the road, straight up the road,

and I told him, I says, we gotta get in this other house, cause they got a better cellar in there. It was brick [indecipherable] brick and that. And he never made it. That 88 come down and took his throat right off. Now here's a guy that when I go down to **Columbia, Tennessee** – you know what **Columbia, Tennessee** is noted for, besides mules? And **Lansing, Michigan** the same way. They got the prettiest girls in the st – in the cou – in the **United States** there. And I drove a truck to **Lansing, Michigan** before the war, and then – then I found out. But he would be s – he would actually blush walking down the street with a girl. That's the type of man he was. He never swore, he never cussed or anything like that. He was a radioman in the – in the company, and that – he's sitting in the **Jeep** when a shell come in, took his throat off. He's buried over there. Now here's a guy here, he went to church and all this. An old reprobate like me is still alive and he's dead. Can you figure that out? Why the good persons go? I can't.

Q: Let's back up a bit to your actual training, when you were in training. Do you recall anyone – do you recall anybody visiting your training camp? Was there anybody important who visited your camp?

A: We had the President **Roosevelt** down there, driving through. We spent three days out in the drill – drill field putting up a pump that's – and everything was lined up with a string, all the way down through that whole camp, the whole division, that's 13,000 men. And he drove through there with that cigar in his mouth, that cigarette lighter – ha – holder, rather. He drove through that camp, boom, about 90

mile an hour I would say, you know. And that's the only one – so, like that.

Roosevelt, that's the only one come down sa – we saw.

Q: Was that a thrill for you? Did you enjoy seeing him, the president?

A: Well, I'm not a political man, I never liked politics. And, course they got politicians at home now, they're giving me awards and decorations, by a dozen now. I said – I just got one from **Tim Murphy** over here to – House of Representatives, and his secretary was there ya – last night, wasn't it? Yeah, yeah. She was there. And she hand that to me. I says, oh-oh, I says, did **Barbara** have something to do with that? That's my daughter. And she says, yup. And **Murphy**, **Tim Murphy**, because he's House of Representatives.

Q: I'm – I'm sorry to keep coming back to the issue of the camps, but after having seen the camps, labor camps, did it change how you interacted with the German people?

A: I can't tell that story, no.

Q: Tell us.

A: No. Yes, it did. It changed. Like, we moved in their houses, you got 10 minutes to get out of here, we're taking over. And we had one town in a part of the country of – part of **Germany**. It's where the people were ger – women wear their hair in a knot on top of their head. And I think it's above – it's up around **Kaiserslautern**, **Neustadt**. And this woman says, what are you doing over here to us? We were at the door, told her we will like, take your house, you know, and this. And she says,

what are you doing here? We didn't ask you to come over here. She never made it. She got a .45. That's when it start turns. And, if they didn't get out of our way, we knocked them out of our way. And we had to let them know we were soldiers, and we let them know the hard way. We got down to **Austria** in **Spital am Pyhrn**. We got in a house down there, and they had room for us, we didn't have to kick them out. And the one girl's name **Heidi**, very beautiful blonde. And she was – I'd say she was strictly a Nazi to begin with. Her mother was Swiss, her father was German, and he owned about two or three blocks of **Berlin** up there. That's where she's born and raised, in **Berlin**. And I asked her, I says, did you go out there and **heil** this that, **heil** this, the guy there, and the – when they had the big parade? She says no, I says, I don't believe you. Well, we left there and I come home, I got a letter from her. And she's telling about, you know, she's having rough time. So we collected a box of clothes, and my wife sent her her mother's je – coat, with fur around there. We sent the clothes over to her. And we was friends with her for all these years. And when we went over there – I've been over there seven times. We went back first time over in '72. And we went over there, we would always look her up. And she took us into **Austria** this last time we saw her, and her mother is in a nursing home, at that time, I think she's dead now, in **Austria** down at – at **Kitschdorf**. She had nice apartment, balcony overlooking the **Alps**, beautiful view from across that valley for **Kirshdorf** there. And it cost her 28 dollars a month to stay in that apartment building. And that's going downstairs to the kitchen to eat,

you know, free of charge. But it start – I started relax a little bit then when I got there, because the war was over then. And – but she also give me a good wine to drink too, when I want a drink of wine, or – she give me good wine. That's why I become friends with her. **[indecipherable]** But it's hard to say, you know, if I could do it over again, I probably would.

Q: Why?

A: Well, the same situation, everything else, I'd – being now, do it over again, you know something. You're a little bit sharper on what's going on in the world.

[coughs] Excuse me. Then, when I read that book about the Crystal Night over here, well that start tearing me right then, you know, could people do this? And then it started – the other book I read about the Jewish population over there, how they were be tr-treat like that. And I was never taught to be another nationality, or to be mean to them or anything like that. My mother was Irish. If I was – did anything wrong, I got clobbered. I mean, I got the paddle, more than once. And that kind of straightens you up a little bit. But then the – when the – is – in school, when **“Life”** magazine come out, first come out, and they had some pictures about over here, at that time, and I – I couldn't understand it, why people could do that. And that's what I told these we – people from **Weimar**, I couldn't understand. That's where **Hitler** got his start, out in **Weimar**. That the hotel was in, he did his speaker out of the balcony that hotel. That was – that was nice hotel. My daughter, she don't eat fish. First night was over there, she went like this to the waiter, you know. And she

says, I don't eat fish. Well, he got another plate. Boy, did she get a plate. Everybody says, we want that too. And so that go on for about three days like that, my daughter call him over. If she didn't like stuff, they'd change it. We got treated royal. So I called them over, I got my finger going, I called him over one day – one night. And I says, we can have anything, and you'll get anything for us? Anything you want, we'll get for you. I says, I want a **Mercedes** van. I says, I want a **Mercedes** van. I didn't get it.

Q: Do you remember hag – receiving your orders to go home?

A: I was down **Füssen, Germany** in the in **Schwangau-Horn Schwangau**, that's where I was at, and right below the castle neu, the **Neuschwanstein** castle. We had a whole hotel down there to ourselves, our communication wire section. And we was going – going out on a wire trip, was driving. And they say, **Brock**. I says, what? They says, pack up, you're going home. And it hit me real quick. I was surprised. I thought I was going to **Japan**. Says no, you're going home. And to tell you the truth, I was really sad. Those guys were down in that truck, which I had been driving all that time, and they're going out on a job, and I'm not going. It upset me. I was, I was – upset me. I never saw them guys until the-they come home. Was after they had families and everything else. This one had about four or five kids. **Siberelli**(ph) had about four or five kids. **Billman** had three. And I drove up there and saw them one time, and that's the last I saw of them. And one of the guys from the 80th, he said he was from **Williamsport**. He says, I think **Billman's** dead,

because he remembered reading a story about a **Billman** in the paper. And I know **Siberelli**(ph) probably dead, because he was a big drinker. And **Harry Eckrel**(ph), I don't know too much about him, cause he was a nut.

Q: What was acti – what was coming home like when you actually arrived stateside?

A: When I come home, I left [**indecipherable**]. They says come back, come back in five days, there's too many of us, they couldn't take care of us. So I went ma – went back to my hometown. You know, I didn't get a handshake, a greeting? Because I was coming home early, and their husbands were still in the service, they were a little mad about that. So then I got a job the next day after I was discharged, on October the 25th. I got – come home, next day I went and got a job in the mine 160 for **Consolidated Coal**. And I've – a year later I got married, I raised a family. I didn't cry in the booze about anything – about anything, cause I got a job. And – which was a good thing I got that job, cause my wife is handicapped now, she can't walk. She's down there now, riding around in an electric wheelchair. She's no – has no knee on her left leg, it's a – it's 17 inches of steel plates. And she come up to the place I was staying with – people I was staying with – my mother died when I was 16, and I lived with this other cou – family. And she come up there. She's a hairdresser and she's dressing this woman's hair. We become friends, we got married. Cause the boy where I was staying with, he come home from the service, and he had to have a place to stay with his wife, they were si – raising a family. So,

I says, we might as well get married. She was a telephone operator, worked out of **Delaware** during the war.

Q: This interview that we're conducting is – is for future generations. What would you most like future generations to know about what you experienced?

A: Boy, that's a rough question. I would like to have them experience that I had, so they know what war is about, then they'll know. Same experience. Maybe there won't be no more wars then. If everybody – everybody knows about them. But we're not – we're not go – we're gonna have wars, always. We've got it right now o-over there now. Now we got to worry about **China**. They've got a rocket going off and it goes 900 mile, knock out a ship out, out in the middle of the ocean. What are they gonna do about that?

Q: Is there anything you'd like to say in closing, sir? Is there anything you'd like to say in closing?

A: Oh, I don't know. Like this rabbi says, you should talk about it. If I had some maps here, you'd be here a couple days. So I'll s – I'll say to each and everybody else, stay out of the war. That's the only thing I can say, stay away from war. It don't do you any good. Physically, and mentally, it knocks ya. And you think sometimes you might forget about it, but then something happens, or you read something in the paper, or a magazine, it brings the memory back again. Course in my house, I've got books after books about the war. And **DVDs**, now it's **DVDs**, and I got a big stack of them. But they, like **Barbara** said, my daughter says, you

never tell me anything about the war. [indecipherable] I got the books, and the DVDs and all that, reading about it today. I watch everything that's on TV about the war. War as I knew it and everything else, those programs. And I cuss some of them, I says – that was my big mistake, you know. It was a big mistake in certain parts of the battle. When we crossed the **Moselle** river, we lost all those men due to the fact one man, he come down from division and he ordered a third battalion to go and attack at three o'clock in the afternoon. You don't go and attack three o'clock in the afternoon, you wait til morning or night. Broad daylight he ordered attack third battalion go in there. Colonel **Roberts**. He blamed – blamed the big wheels for that. He's dead. And there's certain instance like that happened during the battle, the whole time. The mistakes they made, I don't care if [indecipherable] was **O.C.S.**, come out of there, in 90 day wonders. You wonder how they got that, the rank. And they didn't know any better what I – what I know. Cause I had a high **I.Q.** When I went in to the – took the **I.Q.** exam out of Fort **Mead**, mine was very high. They says, oh you're – you're goo – eligible to go to **O.C.S.** And the one sergeant says, well, you can't go, you got glasses. Well, you see this medal right here, the one in the middle?

Q: Yes, sir.

A: That's a Good Conduct Medal. I got that the last day I was discharged. The sergeant says, you don't have a Good Conduct Medal, I says, no, I wasn't too good.

Q: We thank you for the interview, sir.

A: Yeah, I –

Q: Thank you very much.

A: I still say that – that we have the leadership, we won't have this trouble. But we don't – we don't have our leadership any more. If we had good leadership in – in – over there in Congress and that. They're sitting on their butts, that's it, they're not doing anything. We're going to get into it somepla – I guess. It's gonna happen. I don't know, I'm 90 now, and I – I won't – probably won't be around to see it. I'll try to stay around, but I ca – forget it.

Q: I hope you do.

A: Yeah.

Q: Thank you, sir.

A: Thank you.

Q: It is 14:22 hours.

Conclusion of Interview