**Interview 10/26/01**
**66 min.**

DB: This begins an interview with Bob Harmon on October 26, 2001 at Seattle University in Seattle Washington with Daniel Burnstein. So, Bob, I would like to begin to ask you just a little about your parents and growing up in Olympia and just a general question about that. I would like you to start off with that.

CRH: Okay, my parents are both Northwest natives. Both came from pioneer families. Pioneer out here doesn't mean what it means to you New Jersey people. It's anybody here before 1889, and their families were engaged in logging and railroading, that sort of thing. Hotel management, grocery stores that kind of thing. One of my grandfathers served as a logging supervisor up in Skagit County. He was also sheriff there for two terms. He owned the President Hotel for a while, retired to a small farm up there. So they had sort of a typical background. Both my mother and father were deeply devoted to family and to one another. They were both very strong, very special people in that regard. Neither one of them followed a career they wished to follow. Mother* had great dreams of being one of the first women around here to go to dental school and she was a fine enough student to do it.

DB: Dental school?

CRH: Dental school, yeah. That was changed once she met dad and dad wanted to go to med. school and his education was interfered with twice or changed twice. He helped – really - organize the Washington State National Guard unit at the University of Washington and they went to Mexico chasing Pancho Villa in 1916. He rowed on the crew out there and he was doing well in school and he hardly got back from that when it was time to go to the First World War. By the time he got out of that he decided he wasn't sure what he was going to do for a while, and he was in road construction crews. Mother's brother John was working in the same crews and John eventually, as these sort of things happen, said "Well, you should meet my sister." Well, it was love at first sight. I think dad proposed the first night or maybe the second I am not sure. Their lives were lived like that. They were very dedicated to one another and then they were very dedicated to the children. They had six children; only two of us lived. My brother and myself. The rest all died in infancy or in early childhood for one reason or another, which was very hard on our parents. Well, what it meant was that my brother and I were spoiled rotten in some ways. We were disciplined, certainly, but there was a great deal of care and concern and once you have children of your own, of course, you realize to have only two out of six survive was pretty impressive, I suppose, to my parents.

They both engaged very much in civic activities of one kind or another. Dad was engaged in a number of volunteer operations, American Legion, help to the poor, and that kind of thing. Mother was engaged in the same thing with Catholic Daughters of America and a number of other societies of one kind or another and we lived in these small towns, first,

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* Laura Barry Harmon: my Mother. Good mind; excellent at figures; shrewd and quick study at anything she tried. She, probably, would have made it through Dental School. CRH.

in Shelton and then Olympia. Those were days when to live in a small town was to have a certain kind of lifestyle that was different from what you see now. You knew everybody in town, you knew who could be trusted, you knew who couldn't. If you lived in Olympia you knew all the rotten gossip about the state house, the legislature and whatnot. It was a little world unto itself. It was a highly supportive world. When I went to school, I went to public schools for a while, then I graduated, or, rather took my eighth grade certificate from a Catholic school taught by the nuns in Olympia and my brother and I both felt that we got a very good grounding there. And then we were fortunate in most of the teachers we had in the Olympia public high school. It had a very fine faculty I think, with the usual people who you see. On most high school faculties there's always someone who is a little weak but we were fortunate with the people with whom we dealt. We had always known that we would go to college. It wasn't a question of our parents putting us through, they couldn't. It was just an assumption that college is what you do and you work your way through and it's four hungry years but you do it. And so, when we came out of the service and had the GI Bill, why, it made it a nice thing for us. I would say off hand, we were not typical kids. Although we did a lot of the usual things that you do including athletics and so on, school activities, but our parents were so supportive and so considerate of us and made a great deal of effort to try to educate us anyway they possibly could. Dad had a job all during the Depression and in Olympia, Washington, that wasn't common. Dad, as a matter of fact, made one of the better salaries. Dad made $125 a month during most of the Depression. That was a lot of money. And so we were fortunate in that. And when we went to the service our folks continued to be supportive one way or the other.

DB: What was your dad's job, Bob?

CRH: He was manager of a freight lines dock in Olympia and in the old days the freight used to come off the railroads and the ships up here in Seattle and then it would be transported to various destinations around the Puget Sound country. Well, now that's all done by truck. The truck either meets a container on a container ship or takes broken down cargo, a set of cargo, loads it on the truck with Oak Harbor Freight or Pacific Highway Transport, or somebody, who runs it off to Oak Harbor or some place. Well in those days, freight came off the boats. For southern Puget Sound, it came off the dock here in Seattle, went on small boats, little tiny freight boats that could carry several hundred tons of freight and had a crew of about five or six people…

DB: The ocean-going ships couldn't go further?

CRH: Just because it was cheaper and the highways were not what they are now. Ships went down to Tacoma and only sometimes sailed to Olympia. Docking fees, demurrage, longshore costs all had to figure into those decisions. If you think about it, the highway between Los Angeles and Vancouver B.C. was no wider than the streets out here, the Irish steps. It was one lane each way, so far as I know, all the way to the Mexican border and certainly all the way north from San Francisco up through here. And highway 99 I think is what you see. Highway 99 has been changed and the trucks were nowhere near what they are now. Now we have these big rigs.

DB: Why didn't they just take the ocean-going vessels, why didn't they keep going with their cargo all the way to Olympia?

CRH: There's always a number of accounting factors that come into that. One is demurrage. That's when the boat waits over. There's a charge, there's a dock charge for instance. Or if she is anchored out in the stream then the boat sitting there is not producing any income, it's rusting away and you are paying the crew and you are feeding the crew. So it's like an airplane; you want to keep in going all the time. Well it might be, and it was, more satisfactory to dump all that freight off here, in job lots especially, and then pick it up and put it on another, littler boat. The little boat went overnight, starting around midnight and next morning at dawn she was down in Olympia, and then, dump the freight down there, and then a little group of truck drivers would come pick it up from dad's dock. They all worked for dad, and then they would have their assigned routes either in the town or down to the harbor in Aberdeen or off to Shelton, that sort of thing. And it's interesting to see the way in which all that has changed because now it is much more efficient and the trucks pick it up here, but "efficiency" you couldn't do. Part of that involves the way in which freight was handled. Now we see different ways of putting freight together but in those days they used to use a little pallet, which could be picked up by a Clark forklift truck and the platform was literally, I would say, about four times the size of that area of your desk, almost perfectly. Well there's only so many cases of canned goods or sacks of sugar you can put on that and so that all got factored into the cost of your very good question of "why don't we just take the whole boat down to Olympia?" Well you trade off the cost and it was a niche.

He did other business. Dad got the Olympia Brewery, for instance, to send some of its freight, much of its beer that was going out, eventually went out on Puget Sound Freightlines. Dad got that contract for them. So that was another contact, so that meant you knew the people at the Brewery.

DB: The brewery down in Olympia.

CRH: Yeah a very good one.

DB: Oh yeah, that's right.

CRH: So during the Depression, having things like that kept your business together and you had several little stable incomes. If it was advertising you would think of it as stable accounts where you always had the money coming and dad was good at selling those. But anyway we were lucky. We always had food on the table, we had a refrigerator by 1935, we had a washing machine by 1933, we had a car by 1935 or '36.

DB: You had an icebox before that?

CRH: Of course. The iceman came around. He drove a horse and wagon with blocks of ice in the back of it, and you pick up the ice from him if you wanted to or otherwise he

would deliver it to your door. That's how it was done. Anyway, life has changed radically. We were in the upper echelons of what would be the middle, middle class no question about it. Just the fact that you had food and you had clothes all the time and you had some discretionary income. And in the middle of the Depression, mom began the purchase of the two lots, which became very valuable later on, which became our home on one of the bays outside of Olympia. Mother went out and she put down $50 apiece on those two lots. Well just the fact that we had $100 available was pretty strange in Olympia at that time. We lived well.

DB: So there was a high rate of unemployment in Olympia?

CRH: Yeah, right. If you didn't have any particular skills except those which had really supported the institutions, fishing and some farming and logging, if you didn't have something other than that, then it was difficult to get a job. People who had some knowledge of accounting because they had worked in logs, for instance, could switch, could go to work for Schwabacher Hardware maybe, but, if all you knew how to do was cut down a tree, well there were thousands of people who were unemployed, who could cut down trees. One of the things that made me and my brother want to get an education was that, right across from the dock, was a big hotel for loggers and other hardworking men and it had a veranda that ran all the way, around the corner of the block…

DB: And what was the name of the hotel?

CRH: Can't recall now, anyway it was lined, constantly on nice days, with guys sitting around with nothing to do, talking to one another. My brother and I got to know these people and we also realized what problems they were having. We always realized that we had to get some kind of skill. And so in my letters home you see me talking about engineering. Kind of thinking, oh, well, this is a guaranteed job. Or like mother's accounting skills. Mother was a crackerjack bookkeeper and she did all of dad's books.

DB: Oh. So it was sort of a partnership.

CRH: Yeah, the two of them. Once we began to go to school then mother began to use her skills. She worked for my dad for a long time and then she, eventually, was the credit manager for one of the big department stores in Olympia. She could read people. She was good at that. She knew everybody in town, too. So anyway, our lives went very well, I would say. We were fortunate. Very fortunate.

DB: Now, you said that you were not typical kids.

CRH: Well I think a lot of kids had a hard time and their parents had a hard time simply because there weren't jobs. If there were jobs, they weren't steady jobs, and so money was hard to come by. I think that we were also lucky because our parents were really interested in education and as you know, not every family is. Our parents were very good about it and they were consistently helpful to us in any way they could be. That I think was atypical. Living in the country where we did and living on acreage, we raised

strawberries, my brother and I. Dad made up a big strawberry patch for us and we sold berries.

DB: Now in the country…

CRH: Seven miles outside of Olympia. [*I used to run home, after working for Dad during that summer of '43 while awaiting call-up for service. In those days, very few people ran for exercise, and I always had cars stopping to offer me a ride, figuring that there must be some serious reason why I would be running along the state national highway-CRH*].

DB: So your dad would come into Olympia to work?

CRH: Everyday. Yeah, and we came with him because we were going to school either in the public high school or in the Catholic grade school. And eventually, when mother began to work with him, then mother started doing that too. And many times we didn't use a car. We used one of the company trucks because dad would have scrounged material of some kind from someplace for the house we were building. In those days, there used to be so much timber around Puget Sound that it was thrown away if there was the slightest imperfection or if somebody found it inconvenient to deal with. For instance, when sling loads of timber, 4x4, 2x4, 6x6, comes off of a ship, there has to be some way of getting the cables underneath the sling. Well they used to use spacers, and they still do, and the spacers were very good 2x4 or 2x6. Some of them 24 feet long and when the longshoreman would take that piece of timber which is, now, probably, worth $13 or $14 at least and he would simply heave it overboard off the boat. He didn't want it. Well one of things my brother and I were able to do, dad bought us a little row boat, and after school many days, on calm days when they were loading lumber in the harbor we would go down and paddle around outside these steamships making sure we didn't get hit by some flying 2x4 coming down from 80 feet above and then we would raft that stuff up and take it back to the Puget Sound Freightlines dock and dad would put it on the truck, take it home and it got built into our home, which we literally built around us over the course of about ten or fifteen years. Ten years all together I think. Yeah, my brother and uncle came home on leave, my brother from the Air Force and my uncle from the Navy, and did the last of the wiring in our Mud Bay (Eld Inlet) home; our stretch of beach was termed "Madrona Beach." We built that house right from the ground up.

DB: Did you live on the dock before then?

CRH: No. One of the houses was habitable and we had two little ones we bought. We moved them together and then tore one apart, built it into what we wanted, tore the other one apart. It is a silly way to do things and we realized afterwards that we would have been better off to simply rent a house, start right from the bottom, scrap those other two houses. We had to put in the foundations anyway. But we learned how to do that. I still have the house-moving winch with which you move a house.

DB: So are those properties still in your family?

CRH: No, we sold them. Dad died in ’69 of cancer and in 1980 mom just couldn’t stay there any longer so by that time she had sold the house and moved to Seattle. Neil (my brother) managed the proceeds so well that mom was financially okay for the rest of her life. Anyway, we were lucky. There were a lot of kids who didn’t have that sort of thing.

DB: Is your mom still alive?

CRH: No mom’s dead. Mom died almost 20 years ago.[*] Yeah, we were fortunate. Better cut this off until you have another question.

I had no idea that we knew what we were going to do. We knew that when we went off to the war we’d be gone a long time, so, my brother, particularly, had to fight off some girl who wanted to get engaged and I was going with a very lovely girl whom I would have been happy to marry but we both looked at each other and said “Who knows. You live your life and, if I get back, we’ll see what happens.”

DB: Now, what was her name?

CRH: Her name was Jean Macdonald. Her dad (Don Macdonald) was either Chief Law Clerk, or Librarian for the Supreme Court. She was our valedictorian. Lovely woman. I still correspond with her. She lives down in Carmel. As a matter of fact I told her that her name was going to show up in this book and I wrote to her and asked permission. I said “I have some Jeannie letters, some Jeannie stories to tell him.”

DB: You have some letters from her?

CRH: I have comments about her. I don’t know that I have any letters. I don’t know if I have any letters left anymore. But I have comments about writing to her and not writing to her. About just being too discouraged to write to her. [*Now, in 2001 / 2002, we write to one another – CRH*].

DB: Yeah. This is one of things I wanted to ask you about.

CRH: You know you might want to flip this back on again. Anyway, Neil fought off this good-looking blonde. She desperately wanted to get married and Neil finally had to tell her “Look, who knows if I will survive training in the Air Corps, let alone flying.”

DB: Is Neil still alive?

CRH: Yes. Very much so. He is a businessman. He is retired now but he is still manages a bunch of properties.

DB: Would he mind if I interviewed him?

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[*] Laura Mae Barry Harmon, 1895 – 1983.

CRH: No, he would love it. He is a very good talker. He is an excellent storyteller and he serves a nice wine, so you should get to know Neil. I will give you his phone number. You will have to get him fairly soon, I think they are going to go away somewhere around Christmas time. Maybe just afterwards. He likes to go down to Palm Springs and play golf. Get him before Christmas. Neil Laurence Harmon.

DB: Now Bob, you mentioned that…

CRH: And he is very bright. He is really intelligent in many ways and he is highly organized.

DB: You mentioned your Dad served with Pershing in Mexico.

CRH: Yeah, and they made a point of saying that there would only be so many National Guard units to go and the first ones that were fully up to strength and looked like they were half way prepared to move would be the ones selected. Well the Washington State National Guard got organized and the heart of soul of it was the University of Washington student body and dad was at the heart and soul of that organization.

DB: So he was going to UW at that time.

CRH: Yeah, right. Because he wanted to be a doctor, and they didn't have anyone formally teaching Latin, so one or two nights a week he took a street car and came over to Broadway, a Broadway alum…

DB: To Seattle U?

CRH: To Broadway, what is now the community college.

DB: Oh, ok.

CRH: Seattle Community College. There used to be a high school there. That has always been a famous and very good high school. So it's not strange that they were teaching Latin when UW wasn't.

DB: And eventually became a technical school?

CRH: I think it is a community college. I don't think it is what is thought of as a tech school.

DB: So, was your family traditionally, an Army family?

CRH: It served in every American war since 1760. Every major war. We have got all the records. And they have their own little graveyard in Maine, where the family came from, and the graves of two or three of the men who died in the Civil War. Harmons were in the first action against the British Navy. May, of 1775, and it's really funny because one

thinks of the combative nature of the Irish and here's all these taciturn Mainers from East Machias, Maine, but, they are led into battle by a guy named O'Brien. They got into a bunch of rowboats, I guess, and that was the first naval battle. They went out and attacked ships in the harbor near East Machias. There were Harmons in that. And then in those days, as I am sure you are aware, they served for short terms, as Washington found out, of course, several times in 1775, '76, and '77, the enlistments would be up and the men would go home. So we had guys who were Harmons who were in the army for a while and then in the navy for a while and privates for a while and captains for a while. Both sides of dad's family are eligible for membership in the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution.

DB: And in the Civil War you said.

CRH: Oh, yes. Definitely. I have often wondered if there wasn't somebody from the family at Little Round Top at Gettysburg* because that was a Maine operation.

DB: Right. Was it a tradition in your family to be a "lifer."

CRH: No, there is not a "lifer" in the outfit. None of them ever kept a steady job as far as I know. They were typical of that expanding America where you grabbed the opportunities as they came along and they may be completely different. Look at my grandpa Harmon, a logger, farmer, sheriff, hotel owner. When he finally quit he got to be the caretaker of a grade school across the street because he wanted something to do. He ended up his life as a janitor. Very appropriate in those days. He's done all of those things. Every one of the Harmons did that.

DB: That was your father's father.

CRH: My father's father.

DB: Had he come from Maine?

CRH: Yes. He was the last of 14 children and he was told when he was about 10 or 12 "We really can't keep you. There's no money here. You will have to make a life of your own." So they all left home – one after the other – in their mid-teens. Grandfather Charles followed logging all the way to Skagit County. He was born in 1854.

DB: Was he still around when you were a child?

CRH: Yeah. I knew him. He died while I was away in the service. So did my grandmother.

DB: That's right. You mention that in a letter.

* Colonel Joshua Chamberlain. Gettysburg (Little Round Top): July 2, 1863. Carried Great Round Top at the point of the bayonet.

CRH: They were extraordinary people. Very hard working, very capable.

DB: Now your high school faculty you mentioned. Now in those days it's often been said, I don't know if it is true in your case or not, but it's often been said that to have a high school education in those days was equivalent to a college education in some ways. Because most people didn't go to high school, if you were in high school you would often times get a very solid education. What would you say about that?

CRH: Well you didn't do the sorts of things that you and I, for instance, do. They didn't get that sort of education but it would be literally taught reading, writing and arithmetic and taught very well. And they would have very good instruction in things like penmanship, which really, I annoyed all those people who tried to teach me penmanship because – you have seen my writing – it's terrible. And learning their figures and so on and you didn't need a high school education. My father-in-law dropped out of high school (St. Martins High School) after one or two semesters and was a very successful small businessman, director of a bank, owned his own butcher shop, owned a share in a meat slaughtering house, that sort of thing. He was well read; sometimes you just couldn't afford to go to school. The high school was about as far as most people went and then after that, if you went to college for a year or two, that was pretty impressive, and I am sure that helped dad in his career, when he was looking for jobs, the idea that he had two years of college and had been an Army officer.

DB: He stopped after two years because of World War I.

CRH: Because of World War I and then he met mom and in those days you simply didn't let your wife put you through school, which mother wanted to do. Mother told Dad "I make good money, I can make good money as an accountant. You go to med school and by the time you get out of there and get started, then you support me, and I will go to dental school." Dad wouldn't have any of that. It just wasn't done, which was too bad, because he spent his life doing things he was good at but didn't really like. He would have made a hell of a family doctor. And mom would have made a great dentist. As a matter of fact she would have been wealthy because she wanted to be an orthodontist.

DB: You mentioned that you had some pretty good high school faculty.

CRH: Yes we did. And you can almost see them but the classic one for me will always be the woman who taught Shakespeare [*Lily Everton, an excellent teacher*]. She was really good. She knew what she was doing. She obviously put a great deal of thought into our classes and so on. Unfortunately for me I didn't appreciate her when I was taking her. It wasn't until the next year, I took her as a senior, the next year, in France, I wrote and asked for some heavy reading and that's when I started reading Shakespeare…

DB: You got the Judge's book [*Chief Justice Walter B. Beals, State Supreme Court and friend to Don and Laura Harmon*].

CRH: Yes. You know that story, right. Judge Beals' books. And I didn't appreciate her at the time and then there were a couple of crackerjack math teachers. Now, I was no good at math but I know enough to know how good they were. There was a very good chem.teacher.

DB: And you were able to enjoy those books in France in part because of what she had taught you.

CRH: Yeah. It came back, the things that she told me to look for and I was probably looking at the girl in front of me and not paying any attention to what Lily was saying and I didn't appreciate how skilled Shakespeare was with the language. I didn't really realize at that time that you could read Shakespeare and not make any sense at all, you could just love the way he strings the words together. Let alone what they mean. And his deep insights into human nature that I had let go by, well. The next year, when I was sitting in foxholes with this fireman from Johnstown, PA, my buddy Joe Ragno, we both were just trying to get out of ourselves so to speak, and get out of those foxholes, we began to realize what Shakespeare was.

DB: So Joe Ragno would read the Judge's books after you had read them.

CRH: Yeah. Or we would read them together.

DB: And you would talk about them?

CRH: Oh, yeah. And not knowing anything about what we were talking about I am sure. And no vocabulary. You have to have vocabulary to read Shakespeare. Those books aren't annotated.

DB: So you missed some things that you didn't know what they meant.

CRH: Right. And wouldn't know. Maybe not for years.

DB: Was he the fellow who got shot through his helmet, with the bullet hole?[*]

CRH: Yeah. You have a good memory. Yes. He had a bullet go through the helmet without, actually going through the helmet liner which kept it away from his head.

DB: Now what is the liner?

CRH: A very light plastic, literally in the old French, "cask". It's the same shape as the classic World War II helmet.

DB: To sit on the head.

[*] See Letter's Home June 14, 1945, for the "bullet-through-the-helmet" story of Joe Ragno.

CRH: Right so that you didn't have this steel pot sitting on your head. Underneath it was a light plastic liner that had a framework that was held with a series of straps as I recall. Almost like a worker's hardhat and then you could use that and it was nice enough that in many cases you used it in formal parades and that sort of thing. Just helmet liners. But then you could plunk the liner, which fit perfectly, it was almost like nesting teacups, and the helmet set down on the liner. It would shake loose if you bent forward and shook your head. That helmet would fall off. There were a million funny cases where something like that happened.

DB: And were the liners made out of…?

CRH: Plastic.

DB: There was already production, to some extent, of plastic at this time.

CRH: Right. Because it's a spin off, no pun intended, of rayon I think, and rayon is either late 1920's or very early 1930's. And they had something that your mother would remember, called "Bakelite," and it was a black plastic derivative, I think, out of limestone, coal. I think that's what that came from. And telephones were made from things like that. They were beginning. It's like that with television, which I guess, was invented, the idea anyway, in the 1930's. And what's his name did that tube a long time before that. Anyway, these were…Fortunately you didn't have to wear that helmet all the time.

DB: Now you graduated…

CRH: In '43.

DB: '43. That was June of '43 I guess and then when you were in high school what sort of activities, were there activities regarding the war when you were in high school? Bond drives or student rallies or organizations for supporting the troops?

CRH: That's an excellent idea. I don't recall any student activities where there would be some study of the war that way that our kids do now where they either protest or be in favor of war someplace. There would be explanations in various classes. Mr. Miller, who taught history, for instance went out of his way to keep talking about World War II, so much so that, with all due respect, he really didn't teach the history course he was being paid to teach. But he enjoyed what he was doing and he was very patient. And again, it was a small town. I lived across the street from him and he was the track coach. I ran track for four years, so I was willing to forgive him and I imagine most of the other kids didn't care whether or not they really learned Marbury vs. Madison.[*] There would be blood drives I think. And there would be a lot of support for local USO activities and that sort of thing but at what age kids would get involved, for instance, when did the girls start attending those dances, I don't know. I know that somewhere in my letters home, before I

[*] Marbury vs. Madison: 1803 1 Cranch 137, a "mandamus" case which resulted in the major foundation for Judicial Review by the US Supreme Court. Justice Fields, Justice John Marshall presiding.

went overseas I had written to my, maybe my parents, maybe to Jean MacDonald and said "stay away from them." People ordinarily at those dances were okay to go dance with, but many of them were simply just seeking some chance to go to bed with some girl. And I said that they are very blunt about it and they talked about it all the time, and I think they were not just talking.

DB: So, Jean, the woman who you were talking about a couple of minutes ago, her last name is Macdonald, is that the person you refer to as Mick?

CRH: Yes. Mickey.

DB: Ok. Now I understand. They were one and the same person.

CRH: Whether or not we had anything else, I think we always had those programs, bring GI's home for dinner and that sort of thing but with us it was kind of extraordinary because we were six miles out of town and gas was rationed. It was hard to get gasoline. We had the food. There wasn't any question about that, and we had an inexhaustible supply of sugar because of the sugar coming over the dock. Its funny but it was always a joke, it's amazing how fragile those sugar sacks are. [*We also got a few extra gallons of gas each month for the outboard motor on our little boat. Most of that 'boat gas' went into the family car*].

DB: So when you were in high school did you and your friends expect that right after high school you would be going into the military?

CRH: Yes. As a matter of fact, most of us, including myself, at one time made an effort to get in before graduation.

DB: Including yourself.

CRH: Yes. I had two things I had thought about. One was joining the Marine Corps and the other was, because of being associated with the freight business, going to the Merchant Marine officers' school down in southern California thinking that that would be a good post-war career. And it would be of course. So we came to Seattle. Dad and I drove up to Seattle and we went to the Marine Corps recruiters, I think…

DB: This was while you were in high school.

CRH: Yes. I would have been a junior. And I know we came to the Merchant Marine school recruiters and talked with them. And Dad encouraged me to go ahead and do all of this but, then, when we were driving home from here to Olympia, he said something very interesting which has always stuck with me. He didn't say anything about joining these services he just, (but he was thinking primarily of the Merchant Marines I think) said, "If you've not been in the military, you simply haven't been in the military. You either have or you haven't."

DB: With regard to the Merchant Marine?

CRH: Right. That's all he said, but, later on, we talked about what he was trying to tell me was, that if you want to say you were in the Armed Forces, then you joined the Armed Forces and he knew I wanted to join the Merchant Marine. Of course that was the most dangerous branch of service.

DB: Yeah. It was very dangerous.

CRH: Indeed. One of the last of the teachers around here (Seattle University) from my group had been a Merchant Marine engineering officer. Bill Guppy was academic vice president, taught psych here. Bill was an engineer during the war and he made some pretty good money but he also ran some big risks serving for four years. It was dangerous for sure. Anyway. I took the examination to go to engineering school for the Army and then that sort of headed me to the Army.

DB: Now you took that in high school?

CRH: Yes. Everybody took that in either late 1943 or early 1944. Or late 1942 early 1943 excuse me.

DB: As you were going into your graduating year.

CRH: If you wanted to take it, you could.

DB: So the students were sort of trying to position themselves into being in the branch or part of the service that most suited them. Because they knew they would have to go in anyway.

CRH: Right. If you wanted to join the Marines you could join at 17 and a lot of people did.

DB: A lot of people dropped out of high school.

CRH: Oh yeah. To join the Marine Corps. If you wanted to go to the Navy it definitely paid to join the Navy before you were drafted because you didn't have any assurance that you'd get sent to the Navy once you were drafted. Once you got your draft notice, heaven knows what would happen. But, if you volunteered for the Navy before they drafted you, then you went to the Navy and an awful lot of people in Olympia are Navy guys. An awful lot of them.

DB: Were you thinking about, you said you were thinking about the Marine Corps. Were you thinking about leaving high school early then?

CRH: Right. Yeah. That shows how little I knew.

DB: Well, what was going on inside your head to make you want to do that?

CRH: Especially all the Marines have, I think very justifiably, a great reputation and I wanted to see if I could be a Marine. They are some of the very best. I thought that would be a nice thing to do. I had no idea what they really did for a living. Once I began to find out what it means to be with a rifle company I began to see what the Marines really were and I am grateful to those who could do that, but, they also took horrible casualties and I probably would have been one of them.

DB: Was part of your motivation a desire to get in there and do your bit?

CRH: Oh yeah. Exactly. You (Dan) would have had to have been there. In our trade, teaching, we know that empathy can tell you what things are like, but there really was an enormous hatred of the Japanese. Not just Pearl Harbor. We had known about the Rape of Nanking. *LIFE* magazine published those wonderful pictures, horrible pictures of Nanking. So there was an anxiety to get in to do something and I think that I also felt that I just wanted to see if I could do this. And I was kind of an insecure kid in many ways and I think that I was trying to establish something about myself by doing that. I had this romanticized notion of what it would be like and of course, one of the saving graces in rifle fighting is that you always think somebody else will get killed. You don't think you will. At least for a long time. After a while, you begin to realize that you probably will get killed. But for a long time you get by with the notion that it's not going to be you. So I am sure that was part of my ideal about joining the Marines. I had the same sort of feeling about joining the paratroopers. I volunteered for the paratroopers in the fall of 1943 which is one of the reasons they bumped me out of engineering school because it was impossible once I had done that to insist that "well really I'd enjoy this engineering school." There's a note about that in my Letters Home.

DB: Now the hatred of the Japanese you mention. So that was stronger than the hatred of the Germans?

CRH: Probably. The hatred of the Germans was, in part, abstract, because we were well-educated enough to know, at least I was, what they were saying. The kinds of things they were preaching, particularly in terms of race discrimination. I understood that quite well I think. You could also see, in the abstract, for somebody like Hitler to run the continent was not going to be good for us. I would say the immediacy of hatred was toward the Japanese.

DB: Because of the things like the Rape of Nanking and Pearl Harbor.

CRH: And of course, I am old enough to remember when they machine-gunned the U.S.S. Panay on the Yangtze River. Shot at the Panay and killed a bunch of people. Two of dad's drivers had served in the Pacific fleet. One of them had been a Marine and the other a sailor and they had both been in Shanghai.

DB: So part of your feelings were an immediacy born of your experience from living on the west coast.

CRH: Right. But not with my fellow citizens here who were Japanese. You have to realize they were our great friends. My chief boxing opponent all during high school was Sho Imori. He was a friend. He wasn't a Japanese national. He was from Olympia, Washington.

DB: You didn't think of him as that.

CRH: You didn't think of his as a Japanese national. You thought of him as one of the guys whose family worked the oysters. And we went to high school together. Same thing was true of the other Japanese. In the grade school there were two or three absolutely charming little Japanese girls whom I still know. These were our friends. But there weren't Japanese in the sense of the people who were in the Rape of Nanking. A lot of people probably couldn't make that distinction but we did.

DB: So it was shocking when they were interned?

CRH: Oh yeah. Really disappointing, but on the other hand we all felt - and they did too - that we understood what was going on. I think a lot of that, now, is sort of history re-written. There *was* a war: there was Pearl Harbor, and FDR and his folks were trying to avoid any more nasty surprises.

DB: Your friends who were Japanese understood that, I am sure they didn't like what was happening but they understood it.

CRH: They understood it. That didn't mean they approved of it or accepted it but they knew they had to do it. You felt that way about it and you trusted the government and said, "Well that's a decision they had to make". And of course the west coast, in national literature, had been rife with stories of Japanese espionage. And all you have to do is look back to some of the old Liberty magazines, a perfect example, published by Bernard Macfadden, always had stories in it about the Japanese and what bad folks they were. They were spying or they were doing this or that. The villains could be Japanese. There was a lot of that literature around and then there was a lot of this sort of folk wisdom that said "well we don't have any spies in Olympia but Tacoma has got them." The Japanese meant "the Harbor at Honolulu" and that sort of thing. Everybody just sort of accepted that. There was a resentment, a very interesting one that you ought to know about when you are teaching, and that was specific here. Japanese would come and they would work on the oysters, work on any other job they could get, but they often kept their nationality and never became US citizens, a lot of them, and then they went home. And in Olympia, Dad dealt with this personally because they would accumulate, after 20, 30, or 40 years, a small treasury of money and an inventory of household goods. Chairs or tables or electric lamps or whatever, stuff that they ordinarily could have never afforded in Japan. So they would have that here. So I mentioned these skips (pallets) earlier using Clark forklifts we loaded all this stuff. You would get so many dining room tables and chairs and something

on these skips and there would be in the corner, one corner of the dock, off and on, in the late 1930's, one or two households and maybe two or three or four skips with their furniture and those would eventually end up on the Puget Sound Freightlines to Seattle. From Seattle on to some route to Japan, and so-an-so was going home, and so a lot of people would say "Well that son-of-a-bitch, he comes here, and he makes his money, and they don't stay." Their kids stay.

DB: Their kids would stay?

CRH: The kids would stay in most cases. Right, because there wasn't any future at home.

DB: And you would know the kids then.

CRH: We knew the kids, yeah. Went to high school with them. A lot of the kids we knew in grade school. They literally were our favorites. You ask Neil about this. Don't tell him what I've said. When you talk to Neil, ask him about the Japanese kids in the grade school. See what he tells you.

DB: It sounds like you knew some of your fellow high school or grade school kids and they were not as tolerant as you were toward the Japanese?

CRH: Well, not necessarily amongst our friends. I think as we moved out into the world as we went into the service, for instance, we began to see people from back east, that kind of thing. But I am sure that there was only one black boy in Olympia in high school so far as I know. Again you could ask Neil. He'll have a good recollection. Johnny Hamilton. John Hamilton was very popular. But God knows what he did for dates. There wasn't a black girl for miles. I don't know what he did for his social life but he was really popular with everybody. All the white girls all wanted to dance with him at the dances and things like that but I bet nobody ever went home with him, you know, and I bet he never took a girl home to meet his parents. I bet he never went to a movie. There was discrimination. And some people handle those things better than others. One of the most popular people in town was Abe Bean, a Jewish guy and his kids. And they were in the junkyard business. He was the junkman. And Abe Bean was loved by everybody including the Catholic priest[*] and I imagine John Hamilton looked at him and thought "Why can't I have the same type of acceptance that Abe and his kids get?" And of course Abe and his kids didn't get that sort of acceptance in a lot of places. He was popular in Olympia but I don't know how he got along. People knew him and they liked him and they liked his kids.

DB: His name…

CRH: Bean. B-E-A-N. A lot of them ended up living here on Capitol Hill. For a while one of the boys, Benny Bean, was on Capitol Hill when I was going to school. Anyway the most popular oriental family in town was, hands down, the Kay family. Chinese and

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[*] The Rev. Michael Patrick O'Dwyer was Pastor of St. Michael's Church in Olympia and – usually – much admired.

they owned the Chinese restaurant. Jenny Kay is still one of the great girls of my high school class. Everybody in the class of '43 knew Jenny Kay and liked her. She married a Seattle U. grad, an engineering kid, a Chinese boy who served in the Second World War. He lived here and he graduated as an engineer in 1951.

DB: Now were the Chinese often portrayed as being victims of the Japanese?

CRH: Very much so and the key to that was probably Henry Luce (Ed., *Time* magazine). So there was a lot of sympathy for the Chinese and every publication of Time was literally the most exciting and demanding popular weekly, commercial journal in the country.

DB: Now you mention missionary training.

CRH: Henry Luce was a missionary kid and grew up in China. He had this enormous empathy (END OF SIDE A).

[*Interview moves on to Neil Harmon*]

CRH: Tenth Rescue Squad in Alaska, with the Air Force. He wanted to be a sociology major, he thought at the time, and I told him "You really should see one of the great social problems of our lifetime in Europe right now because of the destruction there", the necessary rebuilding and so on. And we both liked athletics, why don't we arrange to go to the first Olympics, which were to be held in '48?

DB: In what city?

CRH: London. And if you know London you know that one of the tracks is the White City, the dog tracks, and they were held at the White City. We, Bobby Dinsmore and I and Neil were sitting around a track meet, in the spring of '47, I guess, and we got to talking about this and we all agreed we had some money that we had saved during the war and we thought we ought to go to those. And Dinsmore had, because he was a theater major over at the UW amongst other things, had some friends who knew people in London and one of the great teachers out there had done some training in London with the British schools and this guys says to Dinsmore, "If you really want to do that, I have a friend who is the principal of a very fine private school in Bedford, England, the best school in the area and I will write to him and see if he will sort of shepherd you around." Well we ended up living with those people off and on and we joined the youth hostels and we would bicycle around. Eventually we would come back to them and we would spend a few days with them and we always worked for them when we were there. They had about an acre of land, I guess, and so we helped paint the house and I remember my brother and I took down two enormous trees. That was the focal point of a week I think. There was an army base right next door and these trees were (our friend was Harry Carnell, a local Headmaster, at the private school in Bedford, England) in Harry's garden and he wanted to drop them but he didn't dare because he thought he would drop them on the fence or drop them on his house, and my brother and I said "we'll take these down for

you" and we did. Word got around to the Brit soldiers right next door, literally as Connolly field is right next door, so they were all standing around watching this and of course my brother and I were keeping our fingers crossed but we dropped those trees perfectly. And we thought we could but you never know, when a tree falls, exactly where it is going. Anyway, that was something that Harry thought was just great.

DB: Did you learn how to cut down trees…

CRH: There were trees on our property [*refers to Madrona Beach property, Mud Bay*] that we had to cut to get a view. So that became firewood. I still have the eight-foot crosscut saw with which we cut those.

DB: Did you learn from your dad how to do that?

CRH: Yeah. And you learned why you do that sometimes, when you are trying to teach a kid something, a lot of that is not fun. You just do it because it is good to learn. But how to drop a tree is quite an art and I am not perfect at it. I was teaching my own boys one time and dropped a tree 180 degrees exactly backward from where I told them it was going to go. And I explained that I blew it. It was funny because it was supposed to go that way and it went this way.

DB: So this was in '48.

CRH: '48 yeah. We painted the house. That was my introduction to most of the Irish poets and playwrights. Harry Carnell was a hotshot in them and one of his friends was the secretary, the formal secretary, of the British Amateur Athletic Association, so he arranged all our tickets, whatever we wanted, for the Olympics. And we traveled with the Bedford County team. They had a series of run-up meets, running up to the Olympics, and some of the Brits qualified as a matter of fact. They were countrywide meets, so we traveled all over England with the Bedford team. We rode the bus and got to meet them all. And this captain, this fellow who was running this thing, had been a Marine Corps captain for the British and he was one of the Marine captains who was on the raid on Zeebruge (Belgium),[*] the German port where they ran the destroyers right in there and blew up, tried to blow up the locks. He was in that. It was really something to hear him talk about this. And then Harry gave us access to a lot of things. We saw the, I think 16th century, maybe 17th century, seals on the School Charter. You could open up the treasury and unfold all of these pieces of cloth and to have those people accessible to us was wonderful. One of things I did there, my brother and I used to go play, not bridge the game before bridge…

DB: Pinochle?

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[*] German sub raids out of Ostend and Zeebruge led the British, under Admiral R.J.B. Keyes (see Commandoes, WW II), to send in block ships and ships loaded with high explosives to wreck the lock gates and docks and block the channels at Ostend and Zeebruge, April 28 and May 9, 1918.

CRH: No, Pinochle is a great game too. Something like bridge. Anyway, we played with the neighborhood ladies.

DB: Canasta?

CRH: No. This is a fun bridge game. Anyway, it's a very popular…Whist.

DB: Whist.

CRH: These little old ladies who drank tea and we would play Whist with them one or two nights a week when we stayed with Carnell and it was marvelous.

DB: I imagine they knew how to play well.

CRH: Yes. Mostly it was just to hear them talk. The people you met there, one of the men who played there was a manufacturer of leather goods and all of his leather came from India. Well the great change in India's administration was '47-'48 and he never knew exactly what this would mean in terms of his leather supplies so it was interesting to get an idea about this aspect of international trade from a very personal point of view. He was really interested and particularly when Pakistan, when Jinnah[*] said that Pakistan had to split off from India, it left this leather guy wondering what does this mean. "How many cows do I get?" So a lot of people like that who were fascinating and very interesting to us and very helpful to us. Mrs. Carnell was a graduate of the Slade Art School. Your wife will know what that is. She was a Slade grad and I had never heard of the Slade until I met her and she told us what that meant.

DB: That's in London?

CRH: Yeah.

DB: Now you all went to the continent too?

CRH: Oh yeah, right. We had been at the Olympics for a while and watched the Olympics depending on what we wanted to see. We pretty much waited until they were over but not all and came back at least once. Then we went - we didn't know where we were going to go - but we ended up in the French Riviera and in Switzerland. Couldn't get into Germany, there was no food. Unless you had some real reason to go to Germany, not under the occupying powers, British, French, and Americans and of course we didn't deal with Russians.

DB: They wouldn't let civilians in.

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[*] Pakistan was established August 15, 1947, with Liaqat Ali Khan as Prime Minister and Mohammed Ali Jinnah as Governor General. P.M. Ali Khan was assassinated October 16, 1951. 1959 / 1964: Kashmir Vale situation (China is involved) turns nasty. Kashmir has been in turmoil ever since.

CRH: No because you were a drain on the economy and you didn't have anything to contribute. We were just sightseers.

DB: Did you all go to any of the sites, either review some of the things you had seen during the war? Did you go there?

CRH: No.

DB: It wasn't for that purpose.

CRH: No it wasn't and it would not have been an easy thing to do. There is no such thing as renting a car, and we knew enough by that time not to go bicycling around. Bicycling was a lot more work than a lot of people think it is and we learned a lot about that so we eventually learned to hitchhike with our bicycles by waiting until big flatbed trucks came along. We rode the trucks, put the bikes in the back. Like right around Seattle, while you are in Seattle if you wanted to go to Richland then you go out on I-90 and hitchhike a ride. That's what we did and we didn't take the bikes to the continent. So we were riding trains and trying to hitch but we really couldn't hitch because in those days, everybody who had a car also had an enormous supply of relatives who wanted to go to Lyons or wherever it was Uncle Jacques was going and the car would be jammed. We got a couple of rides in Switzerland and I will always remember the man named Moore, believe it or not, who gave us a ride over the pass outside Montreaux, over the Col de Pilon, and he stopped and bought us a drink and something and I still have pictures of us with him. But he was one of the few who had an empty car. So we could really not go to the battle scenes. I had the pleasure of taking Neil to three selective battlefields in 1994 for the 50th Anniversary; I picked out three typical kinds of small battles.

DB: Now, Bob, you mentioned about engineering school. Basically you signed up for that while you were in high school with the anticipation that you would get into that when you got out of high school.

CRH: Yes. You passed an examination and then you were asked to take a physical and so before graduation I had passed this examination which was a general knowledge exam, kind of like state department but not as complicated, and insofar as it was a general knowledge exam it was a typical government boondoggle. I mean there were people in there with no business and I am one of them, I can't do math. Well neither could Bobby Dinsmore. Bobby was in the same training regiment. One of my friends (Frank Kneller) became a very successful hotshot executive with soap companies, a New Jersey kid. He ended up in Fort Benning. He can't do math. He can do a lot of other things.

DB: What was your motive for going into engineering school?

CRH: A trade. You would get a commission, but, mostly, you would learn a trade, a very respectable one and you could use it post-war. And we figured the war will last for five, six, seven, eight years, we don't know how long it will last, but we will at least put in two and a half or three years of concentrated studies, kind of like a very advanced Matteo

Ricci[*] if you will, for engineers and three years at the most we would get this bachelor's of science degree.

DB: So that was your anticipated goal; the schools were called ASTP?

CRH: Army Specialized Training Program.

DB: And they would often last two years or so?

CRH: They were designed to last more than that. Minimal would be about three to train anybody for a bachelor's degree in engineering.

DB: And you would not go into, you would not actually work for the Army until after?

CRH: No, you were in the Army. You weren't doing any fighting or anything. You were just going to college.

DB: And then after the two or three years you would do the fighting.

CRH: Yes, right. Or the building in that case, or, in the case of "Combat Engineers," both.[*]

DB: You would be in the Army's equivalent of the CB's something like that.

CRH: Yeah well you would be an engineering officer and with a great deal more training and responsibility. And it offered all sorts of attractions. One of them would be working all over the world. We had a woman relative from here, as a matter of fact, from Seattle who worked in the oil industry in Caracas. And I thought "Well gee, it would be fun to go do what Mary did." Anyway there would be training, in civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering.

DB: What were you in?

CRH: I was in a general program. I hadn't specialized yet, but I couldn't specialize eventually because I can't do math and so, eventually, they just threw me out along with a bunch of other people who couldn't do math. [*And one who surely could. J.S. Gwinn, an ASTP soldier-student who coached us (his fellow students) in Math. I don't know why Gwinn was dropped. He went to the 80th with me and Bob Dinsmore and others*].

DB: That was in Arkansas?

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[*] Reference is to the famous Rev. Matteo Ricci, of the Society of Jesus, 1552 – 1610. Father Ricci was in Macao in 1582 and at Peking / Beijing, 1601. Talented in math, astronomy. Effective missionary. Seattle U. has a special program named for him and operates a Matteo Ricci degree program in association with Seattle University Preparatory School (High School).

[*] In reference to Combat Engineers, see esp., *First Across the Rhine*, by Colonel (Retired) David E. Peregrin, who led the 291st Combat Engineers in the ETO, 1944 – 1945. The 291st was highly regarded by Eisenhower, et alia. Call number (Dewey) is 940.5412, Peregrin 1989.

CRH: Yeah, right.

DB: So that’s when you first went into the service, you went to Arkansas?

CRH: No, you went to Benning first. Not everybody in ASTP did this but everybody sooner or later ended up going to some sort of a training school. Infantry training or armor or whatever, but I was lucky I got sent to a whole regiment, probably two or three thousand men all training to be infantry people for 13 or 14 weeks and very good training but a very specialized, I have written something on this, I will give it to you. A very specialized cadre, especially of non-commissioned officers.

DB: To train to be infantry.

CRH: Yeah, to train to be infantry. But these NCO’s had been picked because they were very good. Most of them had college themselves.

DB: And where was this?

CRH: Benning. Right. Fort Benning. So we didn’t get a typical, we got a very good infantry training but I don’t think we got a typical infantry training because we didn’t get typical trainers. We had very good officers, college grads.

DB: Let me ask you this Bob. If they knew you were going to engineering school why did they want to give you infantry training?

CRH: Well we were soldiers first. They had also began by 1943, and you have to read George Marshall, General Marshall, to understand this; they began to realize that the war might not last as long as we thought it would. At first, the thought was we “can afford to spend three years training these guys because war is going to go on forever and we will need them.” And the other component of that was “Let’s keep the engineering and the other schools alive.” There’s sort of, I won’t say conspiracy, there was simply the activity…

DB: For the future of the country.

CRH: Yeah. And the future of the academic world. They wanted to keep the colleges going and the colleges wanted to be kept going. So, there is a whole literature on this specialized training. By 1943, spring of ’43 when I was getting ready to go in, General Marshall was already seeing that he might not need us, and by ’44, that’s for sure. So I think in March of ’44 or something they put out an order that there won’t be anymore of this and we will cut off all this ASTP pretty quick.

DB: So they put a real high bar on the ASTP for staying in it or they just cut it all off?

CRH: For most students, they just cut it, period, which ticked off a lot of guys because a lot of people had turned down even the possibility of an Air Corps commission so they could go to engineering school.

DB: But you had already left, right?

CRH: Yeah, well I left, I think, in January or February. I have just written this today, as a matter of fact, a note that went in the mail to Arkansas State saying "When did I leave you people?" I know when they sent me a grade sheet but I don't think that was the day I left school.

DB: But roughly around very early…

CRH: Yeah. Very early. Early winter of '44. And I went to the desert, down in Arizona where the 80th was. I joined the 80th down there.

DB: Now Bob, let me just get this straight. You left the Arkansas training school because…

CRH: I was failing physics. Theoretically I should have been failing math also because, of course, if you can't do math you can't do physics.

DB: It was a very tough subject so far as I know.

CRH: Yeah, well certainly to me they were. A lot of the guys found them very easy. I mean if you can do math you can do all of the rest of it.

DB: My reading in this seems to indicate that they were very tough.

CRH: I suppose they were. It was mostly the hurry-up business. We had one fellow, J.S. Gwinn, one of the students who could do all of the math problems in his head.

DB: Well for him it must have been easy.

CRH: He taught us math, I mean he coached us at the math. There were five or six dummies like myself and Bobby Dinsmore, and he coached us, so I was passing – theoretically passing – calculus.

DB: Physics was the…

CRH: Physics was the concrete test. I didn't care what you are doing in math, if you are not a math man. But that was accompanied by the idea that I had - sort of behind the back of the school - applied for the jump school at Benning. When I went to my first review board they knew that I had applied for jump school and they said "Well, hell, you are not really interested in engineering and we need an infantry guy so you are out of here." Which was fair.

DB: And they sent you to Arizona.

CRH: Right. Which was great because it meant I was one of these GI's who went overseas with his own unit instead of coming through the replacement Reppledepple.

DB: Now in Arizona you joined the 80th division.

CRH: Right. 80th division, 319th Infantry, anti-tank company. I got assigned all in the same moment by some personnel officer.

DB: Why didn't they send you to jump school?

CRH: I don't know. It just didn't suit them at the time.

DB: But you did apply.

CRH: Yeah.

DB: Why did you want to go to jump school Bob?

CRH: Again, the same little romanticism I think that had made me think I wanted to join the Marine Corps. I didn't understand just how dangerous jumping out of airplanes was. When we were at Benning we began to find out just by talking to people because they were jumping right next to us. You know when you finally talk to the guy who fell in the river, you talk to the guy who landed on the highway, broken legs, that sort of thing. The broken backs, that sort of thing from night landings. A lot of the charm went out of it and, of course, after Normandy everybody realized this was dangerous. I lost my urge to join them and by that time I realized just how sweet a deal the anti-tank company deal was, because the difference between life and death is whether or not you attack every day or you are on the line or patrolling everyday. If you are not, every day, then you have got a shot. If you are out there every day the odds are completely against you.

DB: Well that might be a good time to stop for today then.
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**Interview 11/1/01**
**90 min.**

DB: So Bob, when's your birthday?

CRH: April 12, 1925.

DB: And I wanted to ask you about Fort Benning, which was a 12-week infantry training…

CRH: 12 to 13 or 14. I forget exactly now.

DB: And what was training like? Were there particular personalities or events that you recall? Did you like this training? Did you get homesick? If you could expand on these types of questions.

CHR: The first question was "What was the training like?" It's regular infantry training and when you take people into the military of course the first thing they have to do is learn to cooperate. I don't care if that is housekeeping in the places where we were housed or if it was learning to march together or learning to be considerate of one another in one way or another. For instance, on the rifle range it's rather important that nobody fire down range unless they are supposed to. And you learn military discipline, learned about the military uniforms, learned whom to salute, that sort of thing. The first time I ever saw the captain in my training company I simply said "Good morning." And he was very gracious. He smiled and said "Good morning." Of course the next day if I had done that, on the second day I was there, he probably would have put me on KP but the first morning he was just "This clown doesn't know what he is doing." So you had to learn to cooperate and to live with others. You definitely had to learn to march. There is a real art to moving people from one place to another and one of the reasons for repetitive marching is to learn to take orders and pay attention to what's going to happen in a long sequence of events. So for instance, it may sound silly but if you are marching on parade ground and you learn that, 16 steps down the line you will be doing something else, that gets transferred to the idea that if you get a simple hand signal on a patrol that says "Go left, go right, stop, go forward" that there may be, given the circumstances and from the way in which that hand signal was given, a whole series of events that are supposed to follow on that. Particularly when you are attacking, and so there is a lot of significance in learning to just pay attention to the orders. And you also have the question of moving a whole series of young men from one place to another as expeditiously as possible and having them look half way neat and taking pride in the fact that they can do this. So a drill is a very definitely, a 16$^{th}$ certainly 17$^{th}$ and 18$^{th}$ century development but it has its very practical uses and its also laborious. There is a reason for the idea that the Navy, for instance, down south there in San Diego, calls this the "grinder." They don't call them drill grounds you are out on the "grinder" and you do get tired. It is kind of fun to do some of those rifle exercises and so on. As far as the training is concerned, we were training in what you would think of as general infantry qualities and abilities.

DB: Now Bob is this what's known as boot camp?

CRH: No, that's Navy and I think it's also Marine Corps talk, but, it's Army Basic. I think Air Force is Basic now, too, but the Army is always Basic Training. And the idea was that they translate you from a citizen into the beginning of a citizen soldier. Certainly not a professional, but someone who is familiar with how to deal with the organization because you understand what the organization is from you on up through the chain of command, at least to really important people, like your Mess Sergeant.

DB: Did they teach you that?

CRH: Oh yes. Absolutely because you need to know who is doing what and who is responsible for what. You need to be able to watch the officers as they deal with their superiors and know what's going on with them.

DB: And the person in charge of you was called a drill instructor?

CRH: No. The drill instructors, they may use those in the Army now, but as far as I know, that is Marine Corps. We were called, our people were called, drill sergeants or just something by the regular title. We had corporals. I remember Corporal Thomas from the University of Maine and he was just Corporal Thomas. But there was a hard-boiled and very good sergeant from New York who was a drill sergeant and you could refer to him in that way and people were supposed to know whom you meant. Otherwise you referred to your officers usually by name so that, Lieutenant So an So. The idea also was that you would learn your weapons. Basic weapons in the infantry probably comprised an array of half a dozen weapons and two or three of those you learned to take apart and care for and put back together, blindfolded or in the dark, and you just absolutely had to learn the rifle for instance.

DB: Is that the M-1 rifle?

CRH: Yes the M-1 rifle. The Garand Rifle which was developed late in the 1920's, really the beginning of it, and then throughout the 1930's and it replaced the old Springfield 1903 which was a very fine rifle but was clip-fed and hand-operated whereas the M-1 rifle would fire all of its rounds, I think it was seven or eight, with one in the chamber maybe, fire all of its rounds by simply pulling the trigger. And it was gas operated and spring operated so the gas from the exploding cartridge drove a rod back, which kicked out the expended cartridge and lifted the new one into the chamber and slammed the bolt home so that we could fire much more rapidly.

DB: So you could put in eight at a time.

CRH: I think it's eight yeah. It might have been seven in the clip and one in the chamber.

DB: (Unclear)

CRH: Right. Yes. As a matter of fact it looked almost like your recorder here only about half the size and then the rounds were sort of staggered one off of the other like a little pile of logs or crayons in there. Then there was a spring at the bottom of that called the ejector spring, below that rather, and when the clip was empty the ejector spring in the rifle flipped the clip right out so all you had to do was slam another clip down in there and we could just simply load and fire much more rapidly.

DB: And you kept clips in your pocket.

CRH: Yes. They issues you an ammunition belt and it was vaguely like the old Pancho Villa movies only each round was in a particular receptacle which would receive it and the ammunition belts that we wore, were set up so that you would put a clip in each one of those little pockets. And you also had your first aid packet which, again ,is not much larger than your recorder on it, and it had your water canteen and if you were carrying a .45 it had a holster clip for the .45 and then if you wanted to carry a trench knife that also had a clip on it which would fit into little receptacle holes.

DB: It was canvas.

CRH: It is a canvas device.

DB: Around your waist.

CRH: Yeah. And I think those are absolutely standard or were in the military in the second World War so that any Air Force guy happened to have one or Navy or Marine Corps or Army, Coast Guard. They all had the same particular piece. It's very utilitarian piece of equipment. We would learn to fire the rifle and the pistol and what was called a carbine. A carbine was really an attempt to give officers, mortar people and machine gunners, maybe jeep drivers, a little better range and a little more accuracy than you could get with the old .45 pistol. Most people cannot shoot a pistol despite what you see in the movies and most people can be taught to shoot a rifle. So this was an effort to have a rifle, which is not really a rifle. It's a lot lighter and for a person, for instance, carrying the base plate of an 81-millimeter mortar that's a very heavy weight. It's kind of like picking up your computer and running around with it. So he wouldn't want also to carry around a 10 lb. M-1 rifle but he would carry, perhaps, the carbine so you would learn to shoot that.

DB: Was the carbine automatic as well?

CRH: Semi-automatic. These were all semi-automatic weapons. The machine gun is the automatic weapon. That is, once, you pressed the trigger down with the round in there, it fires, then it automatically keeps, as a result of gas and springs, keeps firing until you take your hand off the trigger. Or if you hold it on very long it will simply just seize up.

DB: So the carbine wasn't as useful for the average soldier because it would go as far.

CRH: Didn't go as far, didn't have as much…

DB: Power.

CRH: Smacking power. But all of those tools are highly dependent on the hands of the user. So there was a rumor, for instance, amongst the Americans that the Germans could not fire their famous Schmeisser 'burp' guns - a really high-speed burp gun - on single fire. One of the captains with whom, as a matter of fact, I was isolated in a village one time, and there were four or five of us in this place, we were surrounded by Germans, and

he had been using a captured German burp gun on single fire and was sniping with it. He was a good shot. In other words, there is a mystique about all these weapons about what they will do and not do. The other weapons you would learn something about would be the mortars, the 60 and the 81-millimeter mortars…

DB: In case you needed to…?

CRH: Yeah, you needed to know how to use those.

DB: If the mortar guy died or something like that.

CRH: Or if by some chance - we wouldn't have mortars in the anti-tank platoon but we would be around them all the time - and if you needed to use one you should be able to do so. Another weapon that I never really did know at all, but a very standard one, was the 20-shot Browning automatic rifle. That goes back to the First World War. That's a very fine rifle. It's out of date now and no one uses them anymore as far as I know but they were excellent for their time.

DB: That's the one that used the tripod?

CRH: They did have a tripod for some uses, yeah. It's up near the front of the barrel. You could see it and it had a very heavy clip on it. About four or five times the size of your microphone here, recorder, because it had to hold 20 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition in it. A very sturdy rifle. I never used that in combat. Another thing we used and I did use in combat on patrol was the .30 caliber Thompson sub-machine gun.

DB: Hold on let me go back a second to the BAR. That was automatic or semi-automatic?

CRH: Semi-automatic. No it was automatic. Once you pulled the trigger it would keep firing.

DB: Like 30 rounds?

CRH: 20.

DB: 20. And then you would have to put in a new clip.

CRH: Put a new clip in but that is a lot of rounds and you are taught, after a while, if you have any smarts at all, you realize that you only fire two or three rounds at a time. In your own lifetime you have seen in the movies and in the news, any armaments news, the move to more and more automatic weapons, not even sub-automatic weapons because it is probably easier to supply ammunition, particularly small high-speed calibers such as NATO uses and such as we use now. 7.62 rounds. It's easier to have a lot of those flying out rather then trying to turn people into Daniel Boone. So, the Marine Corps, I think, still prides itself on shooting. I suppose the Army does too I don't know, but the idea was

that if you take the average kid off the street he ought to be able to hit something with four, five, or six rounds. Just aim, and with any luck at all, rather than learning to shoot very precisely. But that carbine for instance shot very well. When I left the desert, which we will be talking about later, and coming home I knew that my dad, who had been and instructor, amongst other things in the Army in 1917, on rifle shooting, and had been on the instruction team at Camp Perry, which is the crème de la crème of shooting in the United States. So I knew dad would like to shoot that carbine. I simply rounded up a bunch of rounds on the firing range instead of turning them in and then I took a carbine, illegally, and broke it down into its stock and barrel and just brought it home. I put it together for dad and then we went out and (we lived out in the country where you could do this sort of thing). Dad was eventually so pleased with it that he was shooting fir cones off the fir trees around our place. He was that good. He said, "Boy, this is a good weapon."

DB: This is the carbine.

CRH: The carbine, yes. I think we shot up all the ammunition. There wasn't any point in saving any because I had to take the carbine back and surreptitiously get it back into the inventory when I got back to Fort Dix, which is where I was going. I know my mother said, "Gee, you could really get in trouble for doing that." I remember telling my mother "I am going overseas with an infantry unit. What can they do to me?" The other things we did at Benning, I think, were simply learning how to be soldiers and that helped a lot.

DB: Let me just clarify one thing Bob, before you go on. The Browning automatic, was it a very powerful, smacking is that what you called it?

CRH: Yes. Striking power. It's foot-pound energy. If you want to, as a matter of fact, you could have some fun getting the ROTC to give you the details on that because they would know. They will have books over there that will tell you. Somebody over there will know off-hand.

DB: Well go ahead. You were talking more about Fort Benning. You got trained on the 30 millimeter you said?

CRH: No it would be the .30 caliber rifle. On the carbine. I never fired, at Benning, I never fired the sub-machine gun and I don't know when I learned to take apart and use a sub-machine gun. I think it was overseas. I am not sure. But I acquired one somewhere in the winter, I suppose, or early spring of 1945 and I used it a few times, partly because it is so intimidating just for people to look at.

DB: What is a sub-machine gun?

CRH: Well, the actual sub-machine gun is one that is not really equipped to run a belt of rounds. In other words, 150 or something through it. It has a limited amount of rounds, maybe 30 or 40 in a drum, and you would see them in the old George Raft movies, pre-World War. That's a Thompson sub-machine gun. And they were called Tommy guns.

They are irreplaceable in movies about Prohibition in Chicago and they can either have a round drum or they can have a straight stick of cartridges which you would simply stick up into the gun. They were good for intimidation purposes but they tend to climb when you fire them. If you fire three or four rounds, unless you hold it down very steadily it tends to go up and of course all accuracy is lost. I finally decided to quit carrying that thing entirely and I suppose I gave it to somebody in the platoon, I don't know. I know I didn't carry it on patrols anymore because, frankly, I was very good with the rifle so there wasn't any point in carrying that Thompson.

DB: Bob, I get a little confused sometimes with the terminology. How big is a platoon compared to a company?

CRH: That's a good question. Let's run through them from the smallest and so you can diagram from the ground up if you want. The smallest unit, ordinarily, in the World War II infantry division, is going to be what is called a squad. And what you are usually looking at there is elements, which can be used to move separately or move in concert or to move in a complimentary fashion. So what you are looking at eventually is what is called a triangular division. That is you had three major regiments in the division and below that every group from the ground up, which we will now build, is going to be in units of three. So we had, ordinarily, three guns in a platoon. Each gun would be served by 12 or 13 men and would have a corporal and a sergeant. The platoon would be the sum of the three of those guns and their crews. So you are looking at 36-40 men together with the platoon sergeant who usually was a five-stripe technical sergeant, three up and two down, and a lieutenant. Sometimes a second lieutenant, sometimes a first. Usually a young second lieutenant.

DB: So the 12 or 13 men are the squad.

CRH: Yes. We're a squad. Say 12 men are a squad.

DB: But these squads are not a technical term that is used like a platoon or a company.

CRH: No, it is a technical term.

DB: It is a technical term. And it's meaning us would be inferred from what is it's ambient surroundings, what sort of unit it is in. So I presume a tanker squad, for instance, in the armored forces is not what we would think of squad. I doubt that the Air Force uses the term at all but for us it was essentially 12-15 men.

DB: So, for example, you were about a dozen with your anti-tank gun.

CRH: Exactly, right. And you could have another 10-12 men with an 81-millimeter mortar or a heavy water-cooled machine gun.

DB: Or 12 or 13 riflemen?

CRH: Oh yes. Right. They would be the basic building block. And there would be three of those squads in a platoon. So a platoon is going to be somewhere around 36-40 men. Officers, non-coms, and the men themselves. That's why there is reference, a famous literary reference, to the little platoons. It's American Revolutionary and it's what's his name from England who wrote two of the great documents in the American Revolutionary history. What was the name of the wig maker? Thomas?

DB: Thomas Paine.

CRH: Thomas Paine, yeah. He refers to the little platoons in one of those documents. And by definition it means little. That is you don't have a hell of a lot of people. 36-40 people. And then you put three of those platoons together and you had a company. So now you are looking at somewhere between 100-180 men depending on what else you have got. There was a…

DB: Let me ask you this. The platoons would typically specialize; for example, your platoon was…

CRH: Anti-tanks.

DB: Anti-tank platoon. So you had several squads of anti-tank men. Two or three squads of anti-tank men.

CRH: Three. Three guns. Three squads.

DB: And you all would mix in with platoons of riflemen an so on?

CRH: In the sense of setting up where they did to defend them. Or to patrol a crossroads, to stop German tanks on a crossroads or to shoot up a town of some kind.

DB: So there would be integration.

CRH: We would be integrated and we would be on the same front lines, many times, in static positions but they would not ordinarily move to our orders and we would not move to theirs. We would all move cooperatively.

DB: In a company.

CRH: Dependent upon what the circumstances are. If we were defending a tree line, for instance, we would be expected to be just like a regular rifle squad at night, for instance. So you would all have your weapons at night. There would be somebody on guard. If you heard a patrol go by, if you heard horses go by out in the field, you would challenge them just like a regular riflemen.

DB: With the rifle.

CRH: And we would be tied into the platoon's rifle guys on our left and right with sound power telephones. We would be able to talk to them, ordinarily, so that they would be able to say, "What's going on over where you are?"

DB: And would you have a rifle?

CRH: Oh yes. Absolutely. You wouldn't be without it. You never went anywhere without it. You wouldn't move five feet without that rifle.

DB: So you had to carry this ten-pound rifle plus anti-tank equipment?

CRH: No. That was the beauty of being in the anti-tanks, the truck carried all that weight. It carried all the shells, everything. And so we were just responsible for our weight whereas the poor rifleman, who was an attack person, would have everything. Everything he owned would be on his back. Anything that was extra that he didn't need would be kept in a duffel bag or a barracks bag. So big and it stood about this high and there would be a warehouse full of those somewhere. When we were in England it was somewhere in England. When we went to France, and they finally had room for them, it would come to France. But you rarely, if ever, saw those. I doubt that I saw my barracks bag between June, well, July, August of 1944 and, probably, the end of the war.

DB: But you didn't have to carry some things that a rifleman would have to carry around. Such as?

CRH: Well the rifleman, for instance, always carried his bedroll. If he managed to find any extra equipment of one kind or another. For instance, if he didn't like the pick and shovel, the little combination of pick and shovel that we could get…

DB: To dig foxholes.

CRH: To dig foxholes, that was too bad. If he wanted to carry extra bigger ones that he stole from some French farmer, fine. With us, we acquired a whole inventory of those picks and shovels. We just stole them.

DB: French farmer ones.

CRH: Yes. Or German or whoever it was. We would throw them on the truck.

DB: So they would dig you big foxholes.

CRH: Well, not only the foxholes but digging in that gun. Digging in the gun took a place as big as your office Dan. By the time you spread the trails on the gun and it got down two and half or three feet so that you had only the barrel and part of the shield up above the ground, you would move a lot of dirt.

DB: What if you were in a forest? How could a truck get through a forest?

CRH: There are an amazing number of little forest roads, as you know just from hiking around here. Foresters are crazy about little roads. Usually the regimental scouts or the divisional people, intelligence people, somebody, they would know and sometimes they would show on our maps. And a lot of times, French roads particularly, are very, very clear. France really does look like the postcards. That is that they plant all these forests in very straight lines and you can look for a mile down a line of those trees that they have groomed. So you would just poke around and find those. Every farmer would have lots of little roads on his land that didn't show on any map but you knew that he had to get his mowing equipment or his plowing equipment or move his cattle to be milked at night he had to get those somehow to the main road. And so you knew that he had a main road or he had a road for him and it was probably just big enough, wide enough, for a truck. So, for instance, I have dug that gun in many a time right at the edge of a forest and you'd think, "Well, there's no road in there." But there would be.

DB: Was there a danger that the truck would be hit by a shell?

CRH: Oh yes. Constantly. So they didn't keep the trucks with the guns. The truck would push the gun in. Or, Frank would drive in close to the designated site and we would, then, push the gun into place.

DB: Once unloaded?

CRH: It would dump it off and then the truck driver would be expected to know someplace that would be deep enough in a little fold, what's called 'defilade', deep enough in a little fold so that at least the tires and the engine would not get hit if a shell exploded near it, theoretically. And better than that if you possibly could. It would be hidden.

DB: Somewhat behind the line.

CRH: Yeah, he might be two, three, four hundred yards away.

DB: Is that near the supply dump?

CRH: It would depend on what you are doing. If you moving rapidly, there probably aren't very many supply dumps. There might be some but he, ordinarily, would not be near a supply dump. He would be just as far away as would make sense and close enough as possible to protect that truck so that if shelling did come in or if there was stray rifle or machine gun fire it would not hit the truck. So, our driver was a very engaging Polish fellow from Scranton, a Pennsylvania farmer, or coal miner. Frank Marzek. So Frank's job was to find someplace to hide the truck and also to keep working on it all the time. Each driver was responsible for maintaining his own truck. There was something called the motor pool or the motor sergeant who, you hoped, had run some little gas station during peacetime and really knew the old fashioned engines and that if you had a problem that you couldn't handle that he would come up and say "Oh well, it's your

distributor." But Frank was responsible for knowing all that stuff and he was very good at it. The truck, ordinarily, was as spotlessly clean as he could possibly keep it. Not all of them were like that. Frank was a neat-nik. And I liked that. I dug in with him some of the time. Usually we shared a foxhole. So Frank would be hiding the truck and if I wasn't digging a hole for the gun I would be digging a hole for the two of us and then when Frank had gotten the truck hidden away he would find his way back to where we were. And then he would either take over digging my hole and I would do something else or he would pick up a shovel and start digging in.

DB: So he wouldn't stay with the truck at night?

CRH: No, no. But he was responsible for knowing what was going on with it. A very funny incident, one time, on the edge of a forest in France, in the fall of 1944: there was an infantry attack jumping off through our forest and when they got to our forest line then the Germans started firing at the forest line. They didn't even have to register the guns. They knew where it was and just an order would have come down over there: "Put 15 or 20 rounds of artillery right on the tree line." Well, all of that was falling on us and falling right around our gun. This is a Bill Corolus story. I was cussing because Frank wasn't there and I knew Frank was back at the truck doing something. Well Frank happened to have moved the truck and he was caught on a crossroads when that fire started coming in. So there were shells exploding everywhere, so, he bailed out of the truck and landed in a ditch and he told me later he had spent a lot of his time cussing because he wasn't in this nice deep foxhole we had. Old Harmon was in the hole, you know, and I was furious because Frank wasn't there. I knew he was safe back with his damn truck. He was in danger. He was in more danger than I was. Anyway, that's what would happen with that equipment. Being in the anti-tank squad was really wonderful because you had all of this mechanical help around you all the time. In the other companies, it's as though you were going camping and you had to literally carry everything.

DB: Would you drive on the truck, ride on the truck instead of having to march between?

CRH: Yes. We rarely walked. That was another thing that was quickly pointed out to me down in the desert when I got there that you don't ever engage in any kind of teasing with the riflemen when you pass them because we are damn lucky. We are riding and those poor bastards are walking and they are carrying everything they have got and it's ok to make a few wisecracks amongst ourselves but don't even make any kind of comment when you are dealing with them. And don't respond to teasing, just be very pleasant because we have got it made, and we did.

DB: So you all had respect for the riflemen.

CRH: Oh, very much so. We knew that their chore was extremely laborious, here in the States, and later on we began to realize how murderous it was overseas. You said, "I don't want to be one of those." Very sympathetic.

DB: So, Bob, there were three squads to a platoon, three platoons to a company…

CRH: Right, three platoons of guns and then every platoon, ordinarily, would have a kind of little service, or every company rather, excuse me, would have a kind of little service unit which might be platoon sized, 20-30 people. And they would do everything from being the cooks to the wiremen who were responsible for tying the platoon to the company. They would be responsible for supply. There was a supply sergeant. And then there would be a group called the mine platoon in an anti-tank company and those were 15 or 20 or 30 men who understood how to lay and lift mines and how to probe for the German mines. That was another dangerous job. And the Mine Platoon always had some explosive experts. Our coal miners and Blue Ridge farm boys were really handy with high explosives.

DB: I'll bet.

CRH: Very much so.

DB: So you all had an anti-tank platoon and company.

CRH: Right. So, for instance, I just put a letter in the mail this morning to one of the few survivors of the mine platoon. A close friend of mine back in Rochester, New York. And there were about 20 or 30 people and they would do all sorts of assorted chores. You'd have four regular platoons you might say. Three platoons of guns, a mine platoon and then a group almost platoon sized called the service company, or the service platoon. So that's how you get to around 150 or 160 people. As a matter of fact we were over-strength. I wouldn't be surprised if we ended up with about 180 people before we went into combat. But I think our regular unit was around 150. Then there would be, the anti-tank company would serve the whole regiment and the regiment would have three battalions. And they would be divided into rifle companies and heavy weapons companies. The heavy weapons, there would be three of those, would have water-cooled machine guns and 81 millimeter mortars. The big ones that look like stovepipes. Then there would be three rifle companies and to give you an idea of how that works, Dan, if you just turn to a separate sheet of paper, you'll probably want, but you have A, B, C and you just put them one after the other in line. Those would be the rifle companies. D is the weapons company. Heavy weapons. Then E, F, G, H. H is another heavy weapons company. And there was never an N and there was never a J. Ok.

DB: Superstition?

CRH: No. A question of trying to understand carefully. When you are talking on one of the phones you don't want to be screaming "Bring up J Company." They wanted to make sure, so somebody arbitrarily chose, maybe at the time of the Revolution, no N companies. M company yes; no N's. The Germans, for instance, to count to three in German you go Ein, Zwei, Drei. The Germans were very careful never to do that in the military and today you can say this to an old German soldier and they know exactly, Ein, Svo, Drei.

DB: A different way of saying two.

CRH: A different way of saying two so that Zwei could not be confused with Drei. Ein, Svo, Drei is the German military term. And still is as far as I know. Anyway, that's the way the companies went.

DB: And E company was…

CRH: The next rifle company. E, F, G were the next rifle companies and then H is the next heavy weapons company and so on down to M company, was the last one. And there were three battalions set up like that. Those three battalions form a regiment of about 35-3600 men. Or 3300 depending on what time, you know, how many you have got around. Three battalions in a regiment and three regiments in the division. And what you have there when you have done that, Dan, is called elements of maneuver. So you have two battalions and they can be maneuvered one against the other. And there's another one back here in reserve. And then you could have three companies, A, B, C, two up on the line and one back in reserve. The company up here would have two platoons forward and one in reserve. It's called triangular all the way through from the squads to the division. Then the divisions would be able to be joined together in groups that are called Corps. But they wouldn't necessarily have three. They might be two. Minimum of two and there could be far more. Could be four or five.

DB: A Corps is smaller than an Army?

CRH: Yes. It's Corps, and then, Army. So divisions, corps, army and then if you had a couple of armies running under some person like under General Bradley, they became an army group. So Bradley was responsible, I think, for I guess he was responsible for the 1$^{st}$, 9$^{th}$, and 3$^{rd}$ armies. I think. And an army could be any size. At one time, there were over 300,000 men in Patton's army because Patton was doing what needed to be done and he was in the hot spot so people would be arbitrarily, divisions would be taken from elsewhere, and temporarily assigned to Patton.

DB: And you were in Patton's army.

CRH: All the way. Yeah.

DB: What was the number of that army?

CRH: 3$^{rd}$ and it's famous as the only one that is identified by its General. All the rest of them, by the number, the 7$^{th}$ army, or, whatever.

DB: Is it called that to this day?

CRH: Oh yeah. Right.

DB: Instead of 3$^{rd}$.

CRH: Well, we will say 3rd.

DB: Interchangeably.

CRH: That's right. And if you are trying to identify yourself in Europe and you tell people that you were in the war and they want to know the unit you usually tell them General Patton's Army. They might not know the 3rd army, but they will certainly know Patton . But nobody else does that. Nobody else is that proud of their commander. It's like in the Air Force. You were an 8th Air Force or a 15th that sort of thing. Each had its own tremendous unity. So the 8th Air Force or the people who supported us with fighter aircraft, ordinarily, were 19th tactical air force. That is P-47 and P-38 and they were always the Tac of course. The 19th Tac.

DB: And they were part of the Army at that time right?

CRH: They were part of the United States Army Air Force. The song, I think, was the Army Air Corps. If you think about that old Army song. Yeah, that's it. They were the United States Army Air Force, the USAAF. And they wanted to be independent, as well they should.

DB: Which they eventually were.

CRH: They were, I think, as a result of a 194… somewhere between '47 and '49 when all the machinations took place. Anyway, that's the sort of the thing we did. You wanted to talk a little bit about the desert.

DB: Well let me ask you…

CRH: Yeah sure, go ahead.

DB: …A little bit more about Fort Benning. Did you…

CRH: I should say that training was good there and the men who trained us were very good. They were very good.

DB: Which helped later on when you were fighting.

CRH: Yes. And also I think they had all been carefully instructed to realize that they were dealing with a whole regiment of pretty bright guys. They knew that we were the 13th or 14th Army Specialized Training Program regiment. They knew that everyone of these kids was a high IQ kid.

DB: You all were going on to be ASTP.

CRH: We all were supposed to go to engineering school. And to give you and idea of what could happen, there was a very bright boy from Oregon, from Portland, named Gillette and Gillette fell asleep. It looked like he was asleep in one of those stupid lectures they give after, they feed you full of food and then instead of having you march for at least an hour, they sit you down and give you a lecture and all of those young guys went to sleep. And there was a young lieutenant there who was just barely learning his way around and he knew Gillette was asleep and he said something to Gillette by name and Gillette jumped to attention of course and he had just used the word "Ubiquitous" and he said, "Private Gillette, do you know what ubiquitous means?" And Gillette said, "Sir, ubiquitous means omnipresent."

DB: Wow.

CRH: And the company burst into laughter. That lieutenant never did that again. These were bright kids. I have never forgotten that. And I am sure that is the first time I ever found out what either word meant. I always treasured that. To come out of a sound sleep with a crack like that.

DB: That's pretty good.

CRH: I was one of the less bright in the whole unit and I am not bad. There were some bright kids in there. Because you got there by taking this specialized general examination. State department type exam which was a silly way to pick engineers. They should have given us all a math exam.

DB: Did you enjoy the training?

CRH: Yes. Very much. I was young and strong. I knew, I had been a track athlete, that's a strong word but I lettered in track in high school, and I was in fantastic shape and I knew it and I really worked that summer before I went in to get in even better physical condition partly because everybody said to, and partly, because my old man had already been to two wars and he knew what to do and he told me. He said watch for this and watch for that. You will enjoy doing this, you won't like this.

DB: Did that help?

CRH: Oh yes. Very much so. Just get in and do this. One of the things I did and you can appreciate was I decided that my finicky appetite was not going to be indulged and I would eat what was put in front of me so I gobbled up, and I will never forget it, I can't stand cold beets for some reason. I never do eat beet soup. I like the cherry soup the Hungarians make but I don't like cold beets and I still remember scarffing down a big pan of cold beets at Fort Lewis my first night.

DB: You made yourself do it, huh.

CRH: You bet.

DB: Were there a lot of beets served?

CRH: I don't remember I just remember that one big heaping spoonful thrown on my mess kit and I thought, I am not here to reform the Army. I am going to eat this stuff.

DB: Were there men who were not in such good shape, and it was harder on them?

CRH: Oh yes. Right. There were the typical kids who were 10 or 12 or 15 pounds overweight and they usually ran that off of them. Not always. There were a lot of fat kids who have got a lot of muscle under there and they are never going to get rid of their fat. I feel sort of sorry for them when you see the archetypal guy with a weight problem. But there are people who simply have fat on them period and they are still powerful. But most kids, the fat kids, ran it off right away. Also, I had spent a lot of time working on the parallel bars and I had been a pole-vaulter I had spent a lot of time on upper body strength so I could do the parallel bars and I could walk around on my hands and that sort of thing. There was a lot of stuff you have to do in the military that is upper body strength.

DB: Like hold a 10lb rifle.

CRH: Right. When I grew up on the docks, the strong men on the docks didn't do any of these things that you see now where they show people working in gyms and that kind of stuff, but the mark of a strong man on the docks was to be able to take a 100 pound sugar sack put it on one hand and lift that over your head with one hand. By the time I entered the Army I could do that with either hand. I could do one-hand push-ups.

DB: So you trained yourself over the summer in part to be able to do that because you knew.

CRH: Right. But also I had done a lot of it simply because I was trying to get to be able to stand on my hands on that vaulting pole, which was what you have to do, and you put all your weight on your wrists. For years I carried a little rubber ball everywhere I went to work on my wrists. I had the upper body strength and I could, when I was 50 years old, I was still climbing the ropes in the old gym down here and that was a 30-foot rope or something. Hoist your feet off the floor and go up the rope. I could do that. So that strength helped and then I was fast enough so that I was usually one of the top four or five finishers in any race I was in. The sprints for sure. [*There were people who did lift weights, but, they were few and far between. Frankly, my generation would have looked with amazement upon anyone who had the time and energy to use a Stair Master or a home gym. In track, I lettered – at Olympia High School and, later, Saint Martins College – in selected events at each meet. The 100 yards, 220, high jump, broad jump, pole vault (high school only) and relays (440, 880, mile. I usually anchored the relay teams (I was never a good starter). Rarely good enough to win; usually could place. Always enjoyed* it]. And, I could run all day. And that helps. I was just in good physical

condition and you had to be able to do sit-ups. I had worked on that too, again, partly for track.

DB: Was it a friendly atmosphere?

CRH: Oh yes. Very helpful. There was a certain amount of real jibes directed at those who couldn't, because in order to instill that sense of unit cooperation, a lot of times the unit was responsible for every man in the unit so that, for instance, if you made a road march, you were carrying a heavy weight, a 25 pound pack or something, and it was a matter of pride that everybody in the squad finished. A lot of times the squad leader or sergeant would say, "If anybody falls out everybody in this squad is on KP." Or "We are going to scrub down the barracks again tonight after inspection. Before inspection and after inspection."

DB: So there was peer pressure.

CRH: You had peer pressure and a lot of yelling and screaming sometimes.

DB: If a guy wasn't keeping up.

CRH: Right. And then sometimes you would see that somebody couldn't and so you would help them out. And I had a really dumb incident with that one night during the attack on the Siegfried Line. I had a little Italian buddy, Joe Ragno, I worked with a lot, and we were trying to carry an assault boat down to the river we were going to cross and I said, "Joe, give me your rifle." Well about that time we got separated. So Joe ran around without a rifle. Fortunately we didn't get across the river where the Germans were, but that was one of those "Don't help me out" incidents and we realized right away, boy, never give that weapon away again. I don't care what happens. You don't want to be without a weapon.

DB: Unless you have a spare.

CRH: Yeah. If you had a spare. There is nothing like a rifle as being your particular companion because you have zeroed it already and you know where it will shoot and it's not like any other rifle. So if you have to get another one because you lost one or something went wrong, then you knew that, until you zeroed a new one, at least 100 yards, you are not going to be comfortable. Your life depends on it. Also it's a matter of pride,. being able to shoot in the military, and you either can or you can't, and I have terrible eyes, but even with my bad eyes the Army wouldn't give me any glasses and I didn't have any for some reason. All the time I was in the military I didn't have glasses.

DB: Did you have glasses before you went in?

CRH: Yes. Right. But on the range with these big black and white targets where you are shooting at something as big as your window at 100 or 300 yards of whatever, I was good at that. I fired expert. I was picked as a member of a demonstration team to shoot at pop-

up targets and my company commander was confident that I and this close friend of mine from New Jersey, Frank Kneller…

DB: Was this at Fort Benning?

CRH: Yes. And we were representing the company. There were three or four others of us and we were supposed to lie down in the grass and shoot at these pop-up targets. Well hell I couldn't even see the targets and I didn't realize until I lay down there and I started firing that I don't know what I am doing and my sergeant was just really disappointed. I went, after that was all done, I went to the medics again and said I really should have glasses but they wouldn't give them to me.

DB: They didn't give you glasses.

CRH: I don't know why.

DB: You didn't have glasses in Europe?

CRH: No. So any of the shooting that I did that was really good was, partly, attributed to my abilities, but one of the things I did and somebody stopped me one time. I was firing at several hundred yards at some people who were running down, desperately running down, an outdoor fire escape in one of those five or six story buildings and I was shooting and fortunately I was missing and finally after the second or third shot one of my friends said "I think those are civilians." And they told me that they were civilians. Well for me they were little blacks dots and I had thought that they were German soldiers.

DB: Wow. I am just shocked that they didn't give you glasses.

CRH: I don't know why they didn't.

DB: Did you ask your parents to send you glasses?

CRH: No and I don't know why. That's an interesting thought and I have never really explored it very much. I kick myself. Mom would have gone to a great deal of trouble to make sure that I got my glasses. I probably carried them into the military and lost them. There is doubt what happened but I never replaced them.

DB: But you can read without them.

CRH: Yeah, I can read without glasses now.

DB: So it was more far distance that was the trouble for you.

CRH: But you know what I can't read, this has nothing to do with this interview anymore; tiny, tiny print in the phone book. Certainly in the last year or so I have lost that

ability to read those tiny letters. I was always peering at them but it was always a matter of pride that I didn't need to do that until this year.

DB: Time to go to the optometrist again.

CRH: Where are we? Benning yet?

DB: Yeah, so people were pretty helpful toward each other.

CRH: Very much so, yeah.

DB: And were the sergeants helpful?

CRH: Yes. As much as they could be. On the other hand they were also trying to train us to take orders and they were dealing with a bunch of people who were good, or, not too good, at taking orders, so, they could be pretty strict.

DB: Were they mean or were they strict?

CRH: No, strict. I never saw any of them do anything mean. Partly because they didn't have to but they didn't mind just arbitrarily assigning you; you give them some grief, and the secret in the military is if you get your superior in trouble he's going to make sure you wish you hadn't done it. And he either may do that himself or he may, if he has an underling like a lieutenant with a sergeant, then he will be make sure that the sergeant makes you wish you hadn't done that. Usually they were very, very good and we were quite pleased with it. And we were appreciative of them. Another thing about Benning was that you knew the paratroopers were training there.

DB: So the 101st?

CRH: No, they were just generic paratroopers being sent through jump school. They came there after they had had their other training and I think jump school was 5 weeks or something like that. And they were all tough and they were pretty combative people so ordinarily you would have to pay attention if you went into Columbus, Georgia, because they would be looking for fights. I never went into Columbus in part because of that.

DB: So the paratroopers were sort of prone to fighting.

CRH: The paratroopers and the rangers, the Marines, now the Seals. They just, you know, they are young men and they have got a lot of ginger in them and it's just part of the culture just to see what was going to happen. I have never liked that. I've been in certain mass fights and I have broken up a couple of them.

DB: In the Army?

CRH: Well, one of them in civilian life after the war. In Olympia, we were at a dance one night at some lake resort and there was a guy who could box pretty well and he and I just stood back to back and informed the crowd that the fights were over. That was the end of it. I don't like that sort of thing. I have never stayed in a bar when a bar fight started. I just figured anybody who is going to do that doesn't get any sympathy from me. I have been in plenty of fights. The last one was when I was probably 65 or 70 years old. I don't know if you know that story. I took a rifle and a knife away from some kid who was trying to kill his mother in England.

DB: Oh my god.

CRH: In a B&B. And I did it by psychology. First of all I was a lot bigger than this kid and he knew it…

DB: Let me just clarify this that you are talking about how they would teach you to fight at Fort Benning.

CRH: What you learn is a few basic combination of Judo and other sorts of hand to hand combat tricks and you also are supposed to learn a little bit about how to disarm somebody who either has a rifle or a knife. But I never figured that that was a very safe thing to do so that's the reason that I got a .45 as quickly as I possibly could. Before, I had a .45, I had carried a Belgian .38 I found. I carried that one around for a while.

DB: But they did issue you sidearms?

CRH: No. Some people got sidearms. Depends on what your job was.

DB: Right.

CRH: So that some people would get sidearms and some wouldn't.

DB: But not typically.

CRH: No. Every machine gunner. Every officer. Probably every mortar man come to think of it would be carrying a .45.

DB: Because they didn't have rifles.

CRH: Right. And they wouldn't have room for them. Their job description wouldn't make it useful for them to be carrying a rifle. They should be doing something else but they wanted some protection so when our squad sergeant, who was entitled to a pistol, was wounded, all of us went to help him and I certainly helped him but I also took his pistol. And he had lost an eye. He was out of it so I knew he wouldn't be back.

DB: I remember you telling about that in your letters.

CRH: John Mitchell. He was a great man.

DB: Sounds like it, yeah.

CRH: He was one of those special people. Anyway, I had Mitchell's pistol and I tried to bring it home. I built it into a box and I left the damn box on a railroad siding. I had a bunch of stuff to carry and I didn't pick up the little box.

DB: And they only let you bring one pistol home right.

CRH: Right. But I wanted that issue .45, which they would not have let me bring home. I wanted that for all sorts of reasons.

DB: Why wouldn't they let you bring that home?

CRH: Well it belonged to the army and it was in perfectly good shape but nobody officially knew I had it.

DB: Right.

CRH: So, in Czechoslovakia I had a local cabinetmaker make me a box big enough to hold the German typewrite I had gotten. By that time I knew I would be working in German, probably, so I had this typewriter that had all sorts of neat stuff on it. And so he made up this box but there was this small panel in the bottom which was a false panel and in that was a good, very special target pistol. I forget what it was. And John Mitchell's .45 pistol and I had my typewriter, because I was the company typist and God knows what else, and we got off the train at Camp Lucky Strike and somehow or other I didn't transfer all of my baggage from wherever to the truck that took us to Lucky Strike and what I didn't transfer was the pistol. So somewhere, someday, somebody opened up the box with the German typewriter and got to feeling that the bottom of this thing was false.

DB: So they would teach you all to do things like poke people in the eye and stuff like that?

CRH: Yes. The usual two or three standard things that you would learn about blows to the genitals, cross blows with your elbows…

DB: Cross blows with your elbows?

CRH: Well, you never want to hit anybody with your fist. Did you ever box?

DB: I learned how.

CRH: Ok, well, you were probably told, "Don't do this" unless you have to. These are all very vulnerable bones and so you don't want to hit anybody with your fist if you possibly

can, so you hit them on the side or you hit them like that or you hit them with your elbow. Of course and elbow moving like that or an elbow back here is very harmful indeed.

DB: And did they tell you to hit them with the elbow in a particular spot?

CRH: Mostly, as you may remember, across the bridge of the nose and across the teeth but the bridge of the nose particularly. And then the throat if you could do it, but hitting somebody in the throat is not all that easy. Across the bridge of the face is easier. And another thing you learned of course was to smack your hands from behind, to smack your hands on their ears. That will really just put you down right now, like stone cold. I guess it punctures your eardrums, I don't know what else it does but it sounds painful.

DB: It sure does.

CRH: And then I learned two or three throws.

DB: Jujitsu type.

CRH: Yes. Right. I never really thought about it but the last time I used it I must have been about, probably 45, maybe 50 years old. I threw a University of Washington football player into a pool. He was getting, he was a big kid, and he was getting pushy and he just figured he was going to push around all of these old men and they get, at weddings, you know how they do…

DB: He was drunk or something?

CRH: He had probably had more champagne than he needed, but he and some of the other kids there, youngsters, were throwing, they threw the bride and groom in the swimming pool, the groom was my nephew. I didn't like that, but, at his wedding I wasn't going to do anything, and then a couple of other comments were made about "Well let's throw some of the rest of the family in." Well my brother and I had been doing this since we were little kids so we ended up back to back and to make a long story short, we threw two or three of them in the pool. The last one I threw, he grabbed me and he did a foolish thing, he reached down like this and we he did I put my arm up like this and you know you come right around underneath their elbow and into the pool he went. That was the end of that. But he was astounded because he was, physically, a lot bigger than I am. He had never seen a little guy do this. There was a tiny kid on this campus about 20 years ago who was good enough…

CRH: That was the amount of stuff that you were taught about hand to hand but as I said I was always afraid of it. I had boxed enough so that I knew there were lots of guys I couldn't box with and I thought, "I don't want to get killed. I am going to carry a gun." A pistol, which I did.

DB: Now, did you get homesick?

CRH: No.

DB: You had been away from home before?

CRH: No. I had never been away from home but it was all very exciting and when we went off to the war we realized that we were gone forever. When you are 18, you think 6 months is a long time, and I just made up my mind that this is the job and this is what I am doing. I was perfectly happy to get home on leave the one time I went. I was thrilled to do it. I was delighted to see my parents. We had a wonderful family as I have told you and was delighted to see them again and to share with them what I was doing. The job was with the military, period.[*Error: I had two leaves; one after Basic, and one after the desert*].

DB: So you adjusted pretty quickly.

CRH: Yeah. There were those who didn't and we had one kid – at Benning - who cried himself out of the Army. I don't know how he did it. His dad came and got him. I have never forgotten that.

DB: He purposely cried himself out?

CRH: No. He just couldn't stand being away from home and eventually someone high enough certified him while he was still in the unit. He was still in the ASTP Company I was in and I will never forget his father came to what they called the day room or the first sergeant's room - behind that ordinarily would be the officers - and his father came there and he collected his kid. I remember watching that boy walk out of there and you would think that the Army would say, "We are not going to discharge you just because you are not happy. We will give you some other duty but you are stuck with us." But they just discharged him and he must have been a serious psych case. I never was around him when he gave any evidence of this. I didn't hear him sobbing at night or something but those who knew him said that he did.

DB: Did other people do things toward people like that like make fun of them?

CRH: Sometimes.

DB: Or did they try to support them?

CRH: You would get both.

DB: You would get both. Dependent on the personalities in your group.

CRH: Yeah. We had a magnificent man named Johnson, from Portland, who was a very religious man and he, somehow or another, was not popular. That's all there was to it and people would tease him and they would make comments about him and I was guilty of that too.

DB: Tease him about being religious?

CRH: No, not about being religious. Just, I don't know. It's the way we do things, here in the history department, the way a person lectures or Al Mann with his pipe when Al was around with his pipe. Johnson had little mannerisms and he was just one of those kids who was born to be teased. I didn't tease him directly but I remember making some wisecrack about him one night and he heard it and it really hurt his feelings and there was no way to recoup that. He would not accept that. So I don't think the Army was easy for him and I hope that after he left the training regiment at Fort Benning that, because he found new people, he found a more amenable group. There was an awareness amongst us. There was another little kid…

DB: There was an awareness amongst you about what?

CRH: That somehow or another he wasn't quite like everybody else.

DB: Oh ok.

CRH: There was another little kid who was just determinedly noxious. He always had some destructive thing to say. Consequently everybody, ordinarily, thought of him as that kind of guy. I never spent too much time talking to X, just because it doesn't produce anything. He is never happy no matter what and he was always trying to ruin your fun and I have a hunch looking back now, if he was one of my students I would say "Grow up." You don't have to prove yourself anymore. You are here and you are 18 years old. But we didn't know what we were doing and I remember that people really didn't care for that kid.

DB: But generally people were friendly toward each other?

CRH: Yes. And you picked up, as we all did, various friends of one kind or another just because they were amenable.

DB: You mentioned that you made friend there, from New Orleans I believe.

CRH: Yes. Right. And then there was the kid from Cleveland named Hank Job, and I can still see Hank and, of course, there is the Frank Kneller from the 101st Airborne, from New Jersey.

DB: And you knew him in basic?

CRH: We met in basic and have been friends every since.

DB: Now he became famous after the war, right?

CRH: Not famous but he became very active. He is a very successful businessman who, I think, also had a long, successful career with one of the intelligence agencies. Frank's career in business seemed to just take him to every place you can think of. He usually worked for such nice worldwide companies as Colgate and Revlon or Proctor and Gamble. And they always seemed to have him in such places as, for instance, Haiti, when Duvalier was there. In his own words, he also attended 'activities' in such places as Laos, Biafra, Angola and Mozambique, and assorted South American venues. Eventually, I just asked him: "How long did you work for one of the agencies?" He never told me anything or named any names, but, he knows – simply because of my own work and contacts – that I am making some pretty good guesses. We will let it go at that.

DB: So then from Fort Benning you went to the ASTP school in Arkansas.

CRH: Right. At Jonesboro, Arkansas.

DB: And that lasted a few months.

CRH: Yes. It lasted, as the army used to say, "quick."

DB: Now were there any personalities or events that you recall from that you care to recall?

CRH: To me, there was one outstanding personality in the whole thing in terms of the faculty. It was the gym instructor. I'll bet everybody who was there can still see that guy to this day. He was a trackman and a basketball player and he was too old to be in the military. Or he had some awfully good exemption. He was probably 35 years old. He was in incredible shape. Big kid. He was probably 6' 6" and so he gave us all of our exercises.

DB: He was a civilian?

CRH: Civilian. He did all of the exercises and he did all the running. Everything that we ran, he ran better. He was this big good-looking guy. I couldn't tell you his name but I can still see him up there on that exercise platform and I can still see him running. Just very graceful and a tremendous athlete and obviously a lot of kinetics and physiology stuff. He knew what we were supposed to be doing. We did do one dumb thing that they don't do in the military anymore. Do you know what a "duck walk" is?

DB: I have seen it, yeah.

CRH: You squat way down and waddle. Well people finally figured out that this tears the hell out of the knees. The army is full of people who are, well not anymore, but the army used to be full of people who had a bad knee that they had torn when doing the duck walk. Fortunately I never tore one. I was good at duck walking but it scares me now that I know, and now that my knees aren't what they used to be. I remember him. I remember the chemistry instructor was very good. Otherwise I don't remember anybody from the faculty but I certainly do remember the citizens in the city.

DB: Jonesboro.

CRH: Jonesboro. They were very kind to us. The would simply pick you up on the street and take you home to dinner. And as I mention in my notes and in a letter one of them was named Denver Dudley and Mr. Dudley was a lawyer and I remember him to this day with a great deal of respect and affection. He was very kind to us. I wrote to him a couple of times.

DB: And he brought you to dinner?

CRH: Yeah. He would take us home. I don't even recall if he had been a service man in World War I, but he knew that we needed to get off the streets.

DB: Now would the guys like to go out drinking or what?

CRH: Some of them would. Some of them wouldn't. Most of them weren't very expert drinkers. You know, at 18, you don't know much about drinking.

DB: Was there a culture within the military that sort of reinforced drinking and cursing and that sort of thing?

CRH: In the regular, we weren't regular army, but what we would think of as regular units there was. You sink to the lowest common denominator in terms of speech and there wasn't a lot to do in many places except do a little drinking and chase girls with the hope, with any luck at all you were going to get the girl to bed someplace. God knows where, but that was the hope. So you had that group and then you had the rest of us who would go to the USO, go to the museum, go to the dance, and that sort of thing and didn't drink. I grew up in a house where there wasn't any drinking except social drinking. Mom and dad would have whiskey around and they would serve wine once in a while. Dad made wine but you just grew up knowing that it, literally, is silly - if not disgraceful - to get drunk. I have never been drunk. My brother, who does drink once in a while, used to insist that I would probably be far more pleasant if I would get drunk once in a while. He hasn't been drunk, I'll bet, since he left the army either. I have seen him pretty high when we were in Europe in '48. We were just raised not to drink. We had a couple of examples in the family of people who did drink and you could see just how disgraceful that is and how silly that is. The penalty of that, the downside is that everybody in the unit knows you don't drink so when they get sick and they can't find their own bunks, then they come calling for you. They knew you'd be sober. And they chased girls and then their language disintegrates. I remember saying a couple of crude things at home after I got out of the service, at table, and mother probably couldn't believe her ears or simply refused to admit that I had said it and I would see my dad with a little smile on his face because he knew exactly what had happened. I don't like crude language and you have never heard me use it here and you won't and I can't stand cursing at all. Like taking the name of the Lord in vain, so I don't.

DB: But it became a habit in the service.

CRH: It becomes a habit, yeah.

DB: Because of those people around you.

DB: You think there was kind of like peer pressure to fit in?

CRH: Oh yes. Obviously. And partly because you were new and you were in a very dangerous game and you didn't know what the game was and you wanted to fit in and you wanted to be accepted in the way in which any young person would be, I think. You knew that if you made too many mistakes you were either going to injure yourself or perhaps, more importantly, the group. And you didn't want the group angry at you. There are so many different kinds of things that can go wrong there including some sort of shunning or just plain disdain. You didn't want that.

DB: So my understanding is that this one writer thinks that this cursing and so on, I think it was Ambrose, says this cursing and so on was kind of like a solidarity builder.

CRH: Yeah, and that's the sort of psych Stephen Ambrose might come up with. I wouldn't be surprised if it was. But I think it is part of the whole sinking to the lowest common denominator. I may be wrong on that and I have never done any formal studies on it. We had some pretty rudely, crudely educated and highly uneducated people in the military and a lot of them simply didn't have the vocabulary but they were leaders and they were forceful. You knew what they were trying to say. They just did not have some sort of Shakespearean background. So they would use these really rude and crude terms. And then a lot of it can be just funny.

DB: Would you say that the culture was one of a macho culture?

CRH: Oh yeah. Very much so, partly because you were young and full of ginger and you were in fantastic physical shape and you were dealing with all of these weapons. The quid est demonstrandum of that, however, is seen in one particular kind of example, and that is to watch somebody who is more show than soldier wearing a .45 pistol. And if they thought they were John Wayne, you could tell the way they walked, they way they wore their pistol, the way it slipped off their hip. It was really funny and for the rest of us the pistol was just simply a tool.

DB: Sort of like a dude? At a dude ranch?

CRH: Yes exactly. And they had this John Wayne image of themselves and that pistol and sort of a swagger that goes with it. It was very funny. And there is an awareness, when you put on a pistol for the first hundred times or so that you doing something that is straight out of the movies. It's like picking up that Thompson sub-machine gun, you know and it's a combination of very deadly and very childish elements of the game. But a lot of people saw themselves almost that way. There is an awareness of all these kinds of

things just as you and I are aware of the kind of qualities or activities that are expected of us as professors. There are certain things we are supposed to be able to do and you, for instance, share something I did. You are always nicely dressed.

DB: Thanks Bob.

CRH: Some of the faculty dress like they never grew out of the ‘60’s. You know it is sort of embarrassing to see some of these people, but you and I usually dress as though we are aware that we are professionals. This is not the docks.

DB: You went to the Army and to basic and everything from a relatively educated background. A good high school background.

CRH: And a family, who encouraged us to read.

DB: Right.

CRH: I was widely read for a kid my age.

DB: You were literate and here you were coming into contact with a lot of people who were not very literate necessarily. How did that work out?

CRH: Well, see, I grew up with those people. If you think about it, working on the docks with the stevedores and longshoremen and boat and truck drivers. People who worked pile-driving crews, people who worked the tugboats that were also tied up at dad’s dock. I grew up with all of those people and I realized, in some cases, how wonderful they are and so you didn’t look at them and judge them as though they were all graduates of the St. Mike’s grade school. You just accepted the language and the way they did things and you learned to take them for what they were and the qualities were sometimes absolutely superb.

DB: You took each individual as they come.

CRH: Yeah. You learn to judge people and you learn to judge whom you would spend time with and whom you wouldn’t want to spend time with, but you could also see who was a good professional truck driver or somebody who could really handle the Clark forklift trucks on the docks.

DB: Did you work after school sometimes for your dad?

CRH: Oh, yeah. Particularly as the war went on, Dad couldn’t get crews and both my brother and I worked. That’s where I really developed that trick of, long before I was 18, of putting that 100-pound sack of sugar over my head. I can see it today. Frank Korise could do that. Frank was the toughest guy in the crew. He was one of dad’s truck drivers. Frank was an ex-Navy and he wasn’t a big man, probably didn’t weigh more than 170 pounds but Frank was a physical terror.

DB: He could pick up on one hand more than half of his own weight.

CRH: The Shell Oil Company, Standard Oil, was right across from us. Their oil docks were over there, and the manager was an ex-Pacific Coast conference heavyweight wrestling champ and he heard that Frank Korise was supposed to be the toughest guy in the Puget Sound Freightlines. He kept badgering Frank to wrestle with him and Frank wouldn't do it. He was a customer, after all. Finally this guy talked Frank into wrestling with him and Frank just destroyed this heavyweight-wrestling champ. Just destroyed him. He didn't hurt him he just threw him all over the place. Some people have physical strength and some don't. Steve Roble, whose dad just died at the age of 104, Steve Roble in the engineering department, Steve never weighed more than 150 in his life. I wouldn't tangle with him for anything to this day. He is an animal. He is a very pleasant, very highly educated, very bright mathematician and engineer but Steve has incredible strength and his dad had it. His father was a lot littler than you are…

CRH: Mom and Dad were very clear in a very kind way about saying "Ok, here are the good points about so-an-so. Here are the short-comings about so-an-so." Chet Clymer was one of our favorite truck drivers. Chet didn't have any education at all but he knew the truck, he knew the customers, he was a hell of a salesman, he was conscientious about his bills of lading, he was conscientious about the money. He was just perfect, and he was nice. The customers all loved him and mom and dad loved him because you could just say "Chet, pick up whatever it is and go to Shelton with it."

DB: Did you ever experience any sort of snobbery in reverse from people who were intimidated by your knowledge or literacy who would, for example, make fun of you for being more literate than they were?

CRH: Not very often. Once I got settled into that, once I joined the 80th division and people found out that I was a fairly regular person and that I had some interests which weren't akin to the interests of everybody else but that I was interested in everybody else and we got a long on that level. For instance, when Joe Ragno and I started reading Plato and Shakespeare together in our foxhole, nobody said anything about it. They weren't about to read it and they didn't give a damn what we were doing. You had to explain, for those who cared, who Plato was, that's for sure. And they would tease you once in a while but they were quite respectful and I was respectful of them because of who they knew, they grew up in the coalmines, you name it. Frank Marzek could fix that truck which I could never do. We learned very early about the varied skills that people have.

DB: So there was mutual respect.

CRH: Oh, yeah.

DB: Now did that hold true with regard to people of different ethnic groups and so on because I imagine you were thrown in with a lot of different people.

CRH: Yes. Right. The biggest shock and the difference for us, and you can appreciate this, having moved out here, was to move from the east coast, or as you did from New Orleans, to come to the west because out here we had big ethnic groups but they were in some sort of order I suppose. The Orientals and the Indians and the Scandinavians and the Irish, some Germans and then the English background. I am strongly Harmon. Well they had been around in this country as Englishmen since the 1640's. The Swedes, and all the Scandinavians, but all the Scandinavians were lumped together as Swedes.

DB: I thought in your letter at one time you say something about being an Irishman.

CRH: Mother was Irish. Dad was English and then there is some Danish on mother's side of the family. Danish, incidentally, was acceptable to the Irish, Swedish would not be. Isn't that interesting?

DB: Why is this?

CRH: When I was a kid here a common curse word, you could ask Dave Madsen this (he may be old enough to remember), was "dumb Swede" or "damn Swede." The two words went together like "damn Yankees." [*Dr. David W. Madsen, Professor of Classics, Director of the Honors Program, Seattle University, Class of 1969*].

DB: But the Danes were respected.

CRH: Danes were respected. I don't know why. One of the family names is Hansen and there is a story in the family that when one of my Irish aunts and somebody else drove through Canada, where they had all come from, they got to wherever the original recording secretary might have been who would recognize them as actually being in the country, and that this Irish aunt went into the courthouse, insisting that nobody else go with her. She was in there for a while, supposedly looking at the records, and came out and announced that the Hansens were Danes. We spelled Hansens in the family with an "e" as the Danes do. That was very important, that he not be Swedish. Isn't that stupid?

DB: Norwegians were thought of as Swedes you said?

CRH: All Scandinavians were ordinarily thought of as Swedes except the Danes. Well once in a while people knew enough to know that Finns were pretty special for lots of reasons. Partly because they spoke such a wonderfully weird language. But they all came as good loggers, good fishermen, big husky strong men. So you might love them but there also was teasing about them. But that's gone now of course. You never said "dumb Indian," or we never used the word "Indian" as an insult, ordinarily. It was 'Siwash.' 'Siwash' around here was a term of insult. Chinook would not be.

DB: Siwash?

CRH: SIWASH.

DB: Is that their tribe?

CRH: It's bits of a tribe but it was a generic term for Indians. That was an insult and it would really be an insult now. Whereas it would not be an insult, certainly, using the word Chinook. But there isn't any such thing really as a Siwash tribe as far as I know. In the mountain country, as a matter of fact, probably from Yakima to wherever the USA runs into Mexico, there is a certain amount of denigration involved with the names of some of the Indian tribes. Particularly the digger Indians who literally lived in the dirt and dug for rats and mice and stuff in places like Utah.

DB: So then you went to Arizona from Arkansas. And Arizona was where the 80th Division was.

CRH: They had a whole training ground out there. I think it could take several divisions. It seems to me that it was hundreds of miles square, maybe thousands. It ran from Yuma to Indio, California. That's a big area.

DB: That's out in the Mojave Desert.

CRH: I don't know if the Mojave is there or not. I suppose it's close. Anyway, we did desert training there with the idea that we would learn how to fight in the desert, but, also, you would also simply have plenty of room to run around out there and no civilians or anybody to bother.

DB: Had North Africa been invaded already?

CRH: Yes. North Africa was 1942 and was actually finished before I went into the Army. The end of North Africa was pretty much June 1943.

DB: So why did they want you to learn desert fighting?

CRH: Damned if I know. You need a lot of ground to work with tanks and they knew they were going to be using a lot of tanks and you don't really want to be tearing up some farmer's field. So there was all this ground out there and it was pre-environmental days when nobody seemed to care if you wandered off through that sand and gravel no matter what you did. And we probably really didn't hurt the desert. You made tracks and the next day the wind covered them back up again. So it was ideal in that sense. It was pristine. It was also damn cold at night. If you think about it, there is no dirt, let alone no trees and brush around, there is nothing to absorb heat and reflect it back down in the night. A stone will do that for about 20 minutes so the desert nights were astonishingly cold to all of us who had not experienced them. We slept in all of our clothes.

DB: And you got there during winter.

CRH: Yeah. During the winter.

DB: And you stayed there for about six months?

CRH: Probably more like four and a half. Probably came home on leave and if you look, there is a telegram in my letters home, you have got a copy, that says, "put the leaf back in the table" and that's on leave from the desert. It was sometime in the spring and I wouldn't be surprised if it was around May or April even.

DB: So it was pretty cool at night all the way until you got out of the desert.

CRH: Yes. Right. And we came home on leave and from there we went to Fort Dix.

DB: They gave you 30 days leave?

CRH: I don't remember Dan. I could find out. I doubt it. I would bet it was two weeks. Two weeks and travel time. And so it may have ended up close to 30 days because you traveled by train and trains were bloody slow.

DB: You had to find your way back to Fort Dix.

CRH: Right. They gave us, they must have given us, some sort of certificate which the railroads would accept, almost like a credit card. I made a trip, which I am going to emulate or duplicate in some ways at the end of my week on Churchill. Chris and I, my son and I, are going to take the train from San Diego to San Mateo. [*Dr. Chris Harmon, Professor of International Relations at the U.S.M.C. (Quantico) Command and Staff School, and I were appearing on the same panel at a San Diego meeting of the International Churchill Society*].

DB: San Mateo is?

CRH: California. Just south of San Francisco.

DB: Oh, right.

CRH: That's where my daughter, Chris' sister, has a restaurant. So we are going to go up and visit her for two or three days and get a chance to see her. They actually live in Sunnyvale, which is quite close.

DB: And you took that route when you were coming from Yuma to…?

CRH: Yeah. You went from Yuma to San Diego to Los Angeles. I can still remember the center square in town. It is a perfect square. It is mentioned in some songs and poems and stories.

DB: In Los Angeles?

CRH: Los Angeles, yeah. And then from there to San Francisco and from San Francisco to Portland and Portland to Olympia.

DB: You had to change trains?

CRH: Yeah. You changed trains constantly. What I did when I got to Olympia I don't know because the train never went through Olympia. It went through what was called East Olympia, about five or six miles from town. I would have made my way into the city. That's a very interesting story. It has nothing to do with this but it is quickly told. The citizens in Olympia knew that Olympia was the capitol and they figured the railroad couldn't afford to ignore…

CRH: We did all the things that military guys do. How to place that gun. How to dig the hole and how to fill the hole up.

DB: So it was sort of like a graduate course in advanced training.

CRH: Right. And how to cooperate. One of the things was everybody in my squad learned there - and I learned to my early astonishment - that my hands will not function when they get cold. That might not sound very important, but, it means that when it was really cold in Europe the last thing you wanted was me handling anything around the gun that was tight. And I still remember the day I found this out. The gun had a little cover on it shaped like this nice little cup only big enough and it was a little canvas bucket really that just fit over a 57 millimeter gun muzzle. It slid down and it had little straps or buckles to hold it tight. And I was told, one day when it was cold, "Take that off" and I couldn't unbuckle it. And my sergeant was going crazy. "Stupid SOB! Pull that off of there." I said, "I can't move my fingers." So that was something for me to learn in terms of being sure I kept my hands in my jacket if I was going to need a trigger finger.

DB: Did they give you gloves?

CRH: Yeah. Later, you had gloves, but then I didn't. In Arizona, in the springtime and the late winter, why would you want gloves? I had never known that my fingers would really just freeze up and do nothing.

DB: You had gloves in Europe.

CRH: We always had gloves, yeah.

DB: But you were still cold then.

CRH: You were still cold at times, particularly if you got wet. That's the bad thing. But you learn how to wear all of your clothes and you learn how to scrounge more clothes. We would, ordinarily, wear, when it was cold, three layers of clothes all the time. Long Johns, regular uniforms and then fatigue uniforms, sort of heavy cotton clothes over all of

that. And if it was really cold you might wear your overcoat but I never liked the overcoat because you didn't have any freedom to move your arms.

DB: So you would only do that if it was real cold.

CRH: Yeah. And you always had a raincoat. A long raincoat. You could wear that because it was a pretty good windbreaker. But they are noisy so you never wore it out on patrol. You would never wear you overcoat on patrol.

DB: Were you uncertain as to which theater you would be sent to?

CRH: Yes. You never quite knew. The rumor always was, and it's in my letters I think, the rumor was that we thought we were going to 3rd Army in Europe. Already that 3rd Army. Now that's probably part of that great deception that Ike set up about where we would invade in Europe because he went to a lot of trouble to make Hitler think that we were supposed to invade the Pas de Calais.

DB: Calais?

CRH: Yeah the Pas de Calais.

DB: Well, I noticed in you letter…

CRH: (unclear word) That's the French word I am trying to think of.

DB: I noticed in your letter that they gave you a malaria control demonstration, which - if you were going to go to the Pacific - that would certainly be something you would need.

CRH: Then again, I suppose it was utilitarian. They didn't quite know what we were going to do, I guess.

DB: And they kept you guessing.

CRH: I know I wanted to go to the Pacific. I didn't know any better than that at the time. Simply because we might stage out through Seattle to Fort Lewis, and I would be able to see my parents again. That was a dumb thing. When I realized, when I saw the people who had actually been in the Pacific, what a hell of a time they had. There may have been one or two wonderful Pacific islands.

DB: End of session two. This was done on November 1, 2001. Interview with Bob Harmon by Daniel Burnstein at Seattle University Seattle, Washington. As I said, this is the end of the second taping session that Bob and I had. The first one being on another tape.

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**11/19/01**
**Side A**

NOTE: ON THE FOLLOWING 21 PAGES IS THE TRANSCRIPT OF SIDE A OF THE THIRD TAPED INTERVIEW I DID WITH BOB, TRANSCRIBED BY CAROLYN LACY:

This is Danny Burnstein interviewing Bob Harmon on November 19, 2001, at Seattle University; Seattle, Washington.

DB Bob, the last time we talked you left off at Fort Dix. Now do you remember when you left for Fort Dix?

CRH I could find it exactly. The transition was from the Arizona desert to Dix, and I think it was sometime late in May but it could have been a little earlier. The entire division was given leave from the desert. Everybody was given leave money, papers, passage money—all that sort of thing—and told to reassemble at Fort Dix on a given day. So we did that, and then we were there a month or six weeks. Then we sailed right 'til the end of June on the *Mary* for Gren____, Scotland.

DB The *Queen Mary*?

CRH Right, the *Queen Mary*.

DB So you had a pass before reporting to Fort Dix?

CRH Yes. I would think it was a standard sort of leave pass, probably two weeks at least, plus travel time, but it may have been ten days travel time. I don't recall that.

DB Did you go home?

CRH Oh, absolutely. I got the train and repeated the trip I just made with son. Picked up the train, probably in Yuma. I went to San Diego. San Diego to San Francisco. Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle. Olympia, rather. In those days, one got off the train in something called East Olympia. Then I picked up the train again, from Olympia to Portland, Portland to Kansas City, Kansas City to New York. It was all train transport. The cars were made approximately 20 minutes after trains were invented. In those days, they had every piece of rolling stock that was possibly movable working in the country, so we had everything but gas lamps on those things anyway, yes, train trip.

DB At home, would you mind me asking what it was like when you were home?

CRH Always delight, because our parents, of course, as I told you before, were really super people. It was nice to be home again. My brother was there, of course.

DB And your brother was still in high school?

CRH Yes, he was just finishing high school. So he and I did some work together around the house. As I told you, we helped build that house. So we did some things there. Probably went hiking in the woods a couple of times. I think I told you I'd taken home—illegally taken home—that light carbine that the Army had and had some ammunition for it, and Dad was shooting that. We spent a lot of Mom. Mom became sick while I was there. She had some kind of pulmonary illness—flu or something, I suppose—for two or three days at least. So [we] looked after her, of course, and glad to do that. Anyway, and eventually just left, and got on the train and went away.

DB Was it an emotional time for you?

CRH It was more emotional for my parents than it was for me. Dad, of course, had some good ideas of what could possibly happen. Mother suspected what might happen.

DB Right.

CRH But Mother was a very sentimental person and so was my Father, but Mother was really sentimental. She did not like the idea of her son, whom she still saw as a—I had just turned 19—probably thought I was too young to be going overseas with an infantry unit.

I think I told you the story that one of our neighbors had some peahens which were making a lot of noise, and they wouldn't keep them home. But a quarter of a mile away—this is countryside—was a very nice neighbor who had peahens, and he liked them, and he thought they were great. But they ran around making lots of noise. I told him two or three times that my Mother was really ill, and he wouldn't pay any attention. So one day I just simply took the rifle and shot them—I think there were two or three of them—and buried them. We didn't try to eat them. I don't know what you do with peahens. But anyway, that took care of the noise.

Mother just thought it was a miracle that the peahens were being kept home, I told her, "Yes, that was nice," and my Dad just smiled because he had an idea exactly what had happened to them.

Otherwise, you know, just day-to-day things like that. I do remember going to a dance in Olympia with the people who had been one class behind me, and probably my brother. And that was a strange experience. Because you were in uniform, you were different. There wasn't any question about that. It was a weird world. And it's the notion that Tom Wolfe is right in some ways about not going home again. And so it was interesting, but I've always been struck by the idea that it was also just a bit strange.

And I did visit my high school and talked to two or three of the teachers whom I enjoyed. That sort of thing. That was a small town. You knew everybody in town. I imagine I ran around and talked to people in the grocery stores where I'd worked, and that sort of thing. I'm not quite sure.

DB Was everybody wishing you well?

CRH Oh, yes.

DB Did your high school teachers have any advice for you?

CRH Not that I can recall, Dan. That's a good question, and I wish I knew. So many things like that I wish I had written down at the time, but I didn't.

DB Right.

CRH I had no idea.

DB If you don't mind me asking this, you had a girlfriend at that time?

CRH Yes, a really close friend with whom I'd gone steady in my senior year in high school. She and I talked rather bluntly about our futures together and realized we didn't have one, period. If everything had worked out, there may have been a future together. She's a marvelous woman. I think I told you that I still [?] correspond with her and all that. As a matter of fact, I have permission to use some of her ideas in this book. __________ I've written to her; I've got her written permission. Told her I'm going to tell a couple stories about _____.

DB Okay, good.

CRH Yes. So we're still close. I don't know what her husband thinks about that. But never any sense of romance. But she was one of those great people. I've been lucky all my life, and the women I dated have really been superb.

DB Very good. And her name is Jean?

CRH Yes, Jean McDonald.

DB Who you called—

CRH Mickey, as kids will. Or Mick.

DB While you were on leave, you all discussed your future and decided that that was—

CRH Just an interesting thing that was on hold. She was over at Whitman College by that time. I went over to Whitman—probably on the bus come to think of it—and saw her, and was impressed by the library. That was the first open-stack library I ever saw. As a student and scholar yourself, you can imagine the sort of shock. Public libraries were open, and the State library in some way was open. But to actually be able to go and put your hands on the books, and then you look around—Whitman had a couple of very fine historians and political scientists at the time nationally known. One of them was a child of, a student of Samuel Dwight Beamus writing on, of course, international relations and foreign policy. And I think he was the president of the college. And so I was suitably impressed that I knew who Beamus was by that time.

That's still a good book. Beamus and Tom Bailey down at Stanford are still good names in the business. Beamus did that American Secretaries-of-State series with Jeffrey ________. I was pretty impressed that one of his students was ________.

Anyway, I saw her. I don't know what we did. We probably went to dinner at her sorority house.

DB The idea was that while the war was on it was just impossible to tell what—

CRH —what was going to happen. I had some vague ideas about what could happen in infantry units. But mostly I can't emphasize too much this notion that the damn war was going to go on seemingly forever. We had no idea in 1943, and even in '44 about what could possibly happen. Everybody knew how well the Germans had fought in counterattack situations. We had no reason to think that, even if we survived Germany, Japan would go as quickly as it did. It's gone rather like this campaign against the Taliban. Once the stones in the arch began to fall, we were pretty surprised, I think. In the European theater, we didn't realize just how difficult that was. I didn't realize 'til later what the fighting on Saipan and Okinawa and Iwo Jima was really like, so we were shocked. And then, of course, the A-bomb, I think, ended the war more than anything else.

You know, we just did not expect to be back, and I knew enough to know that I would change, and Jeanie knew enough to know that. Mother and Dad, I think, were very good about teaching us what happens to young,

particularly young men as they go through that period 16-20, 22. So I could look at it rather coldly and say, "You're a wonderful woman, and you think I'm okay, too. But let's not kid ourselves. You're going to meet a lot of nice guys in college, and don't feel obliged to wait for me because who knows what'll happen to me." It worked out that way.

As you read the letters closely, you'll find that there are times I quit writing to her. Sort of out of despair.

DB It worked out that way that she met somebody.

CRH Whereas with more popular girls—and she was bright, she was our valedictorian—she met several people. She may have met her future husband there. I don't know. His name is Jim Essery, and the Esseries were really high up in the top management level of Boeing. So this kid was an Essery kid, and I think he was a Boeing employee for a long time. They've got a nickel or two. They live down there around Monterey Peninsula somewhere; it's not cheap real estate. I think he made some money somewhere. And I believe that they may have met when he was in college. I don't know. He was not firmly in the cards yet when I got out. I think I told you that her mother seemed a bit concerned when I finally came home in '46 that Jean and I might pick up again.

DB Her mother was concerned?

CRH Yes. We don't need to put that in the book.

DB Okay.

CRH Her mother had great ideas about Jeanie and what she would do and whom she would marry, I think. Jean and I had a lot of fun with it. We weren't even ________, I suppose. Kind of teased her mother by being seemingly more serious about each other than we were, and we talked about that. Her dad knew what was going on, and her dad knew we weren't in love so we didn't try to tease him. Her father and my father were very close friends, and they had probably talked about this, too.

Anyway—

DB Her mother didn't think you were ___________ or something?

CRH I don't know what she had in mind, so you could just tell that she was concerned that Jeanie had a lot of nice options. Here was a guy who was just out of the service with no university time at all.

DB She didn't—

CRH And she have recalled also that I was really a bad high school student. I don't recall. I don't know about that.

DB You were a very bad high school student?

CRH Yes. I was an A and F student, A and D, I guess.

DB A and D?

CRH Yes. I passed literally right in the middle of, I think, 280 students. I think I was 140 or something like that. I studied what I wanted to study. I don't know about you, but I studied—

DB And in those subjects you made A's?

CRH Yes, and the rest of the stuff—

DB The stuff you didn't care about?

CRH Well, I was too stupid to make myself care about them. Latin, for instance.

DB I know what you mean.

CRH I went like crazy later on in my Latin when I was in grad school. But I had a very fine Latin teacher from my freshman year in high school, and I could have used her and I could have learned Latin. Instead of that, I had to do it when I was, I don't know, 23 or something, working like crazy on *amo*, *amas*, *amat*.

DB You were at Seattle U?

CRH No, over at the UW. I was reading the ecclesiastic records of the Catholic Church in the fourteenth century. They're all in Latin; there's over 50 volumes, and they're marvelous. From the point of view of our discipline because if you've got the books on the business, you understand a lot about the business. And the ecclesiastical records are there in 57 volumes, I think, in Latin.

DB Wow!

CRH Anyway, it was a great source of field work for a field course.

One of the most interesting things on that is the Black Plague struck England during the middle of that century. You could see it coming. They got reports about this stuff. And, then, finally—there's not really much in the records about the Black Plague in England. It's just that there's hundreds of entries about having to replace priests, or entire

Benedictine communities have been decimated literally with one out of ten left. Instead of one out of ten being killed, you had one out of ten left in a lot of places, because they'd always care for the sick and that was a good way to get sick. Anyway, back to—

DB You left a friend and went to Fort Dix.

CRH Right.

DB You were at Fort Dix for about three, four weeks?

CRH Probably more like six. I could look it up. For purposes of the book, if you want it, I'll try to figure it out. That was a marvelous experience, by the way. You know "Joisey". The people were fantastic. Jersey wasn't very far, I think, from New Brunswick and Rutgers. Transportation into New York wasn't bad. And if you got to New York, you had a marvelous time courtesy of the USO. All you had to do was go wherever it was (I suppose it was on Broadway somewhere), and they looked after you.

And we did some more training, and that was good. One of the things that we did was that business about crawling under live machine-gun fire. The machine guns were fixed on a very firm platform—like they were resting on your desk. But every once in awhile, something could go wrong so that you were always careful when you were doing that. There were always lots of, probably, urban knowledge, sort of urban myth, knowledge, of somebody who had been killed on the machine-gun range. I don't know if it was ever true.

DB Why did they do that?

CRH So you'd get used to the noise, and you would be able to judge very accurately, first of all, that you can crawl around under machine-gun fire. The main thing to do is do exactly what you see in the movies, you know. You crawl with your toes and your elbows and keep your fanny down. And that you can do that. And they also wanted you to hear the noise because a passing bullet cracks at, probably, a yard over your head. And the way to—

DB It sounds like a cracking noise?

CRH Yes. The way to replicate that, if you want to sometime, is sitting alone in here, just take one of the sheets of yellow paper that you've got and stiffen it somehow against your wastebasket and shove your pencil through it. That same crack. That's exactly what it sounds like. A little rip in the air. And they wanted you to know that you could do that.

And they also wanted you to be able to look up and see the tracers. Every fifth round ordinarily had a tracer in it, and they wanted you to know how to read that.

DB What's a tracer?

CRH It's a round—of course, all those bullets are shaped somewhat like the end of our pen here. Back in the back of the bullet, there's a tiny bit of aluminum on there which is triggered with heat and explosives, and that starts to burn. It's probably phosphorus; I don't know the chemistry of it, come to think of it. But that starts to burn as the cartridge is fired, and they could burn with red or green. They can, you know, make it party-colored in the old Shakesperean sense of that word, if they wanted. But usually, ours were red and I think the Germans' were green, but I won't insist on it. Anyway—

DB Every bullet had—

CRH Every fifth bullet.

DB Every fifth bullet.

CRH Right. So that you could see at night where the bullets were going. Or even in the daytime sometimes if you were just right. But daytime it would be pretty hard to do. But at night—

DB Why don't they do it to the other bullets?

CRH Well, you don't need it. If you figure that that thing is firing several hundred rounds a minute, every fifth round would actually do the trick against your eye and give you a steady stream. It looks like a rotterpost [?], but it's not, of course. You're only seeing every fifth bullet, but it's the same trick that your eye fails when you go to the movies and you're only—

DB You see the—

CRH You can only see so many frames per second—and I forget what they run per second; is that 17 frames a second or something? And if you know how to look for it, you can always see the little logos on the film, at the lower right- or lower lefthand side, that say this reel is changing.

DB Yes.

CRH And yet, if you were to look for that, you probably couldn't see it. You'd just have to know it's there, and oh, yeah, there it went. And the tracer does the same thing. So that if you were shooting from, say, out of Teresa's office or Karen's office to here up at Immaculate Church, you'd

want to know that you were shooting at the tower up there, which is very logical. You'd want to know where those bullets were going.

DB So the shooter—it helps the shooter to aim, at night especially?

CRH Yes, right. What you do at night, by the way, unless you were just sweeping your gun back and forth, is during the day you would have carefully made up what are called little aiming stakes. There would be like a bunch of little pencils, only they'd be two feet high or something like that, and they're set out in front of you so that if somebody says, "Shoot the thing down the street toward the Admin Building," why you'd just click the gun over to where you know that stake is and shoot. Just pull the trigger. You can't even see the Admin Building maybe. _________, it's the same way.

Mortars are fired the same way. They have so-called aiming stakes out in front of the mortar crew. And they say, "Start a fire and stay at 350 yards or so," and they've already done this. They know exactly the elevation of the gun. Anyway, that's how machine guns are used.

DB Do the same thing, same sort of thing, with ________.

CRH No, we didn't do that. You wanted to see your target, otherwise you would individually aim every shot that you fired.

DB That was the goal, too?

CRH Right. Because we didn't carry out many rounds, and it would a few seconds to load that gun.

DB So you can fire at night?

CRH Oh, yes, you could fire at night, but the question would be, at what. So if you had a crossroads to protect, you'd have pretty well a good idea of something like an aiming stake concept in your mind about where the gun was aimed, and so on. If you were out here in the middle of Broadway and Madison, you'd know whether or not you were shooting up Madison, down Madison, up toward Broadway—that sort of thing.

DB So it was important that you get there during the day to orient yourself?

CRH Yes. Right. As with so many things, they really do mean what they say when they use the term "field the fire," and you want to see what's out in front of you. What is this field? Is it flat? Does it have declevities in it, which would lead to what is called "dead ground" where you can't impact, put a bullet in there directly? You want to know if there are some logical hiding places, like a little mound of masonry, abandoned house, ______

on a barn, _______—that sort of thing, so you'd want to know what your field of fire was.

Another thing to think about—and you can consider this when you think about some of the stuff you've read or when you read my stuff, when you mounted that gun or when you mounted a machine gun or if you were using a rifle, you want to be, if you're in the hills on what's called the military crest of the hill—and the military crest isn't necessarily the top, you have to be where you can look down all the way to the bottom, which might take you on a regular ski slope, for instance, it might take a hundred yards off the top of the hill. So the top of the hill is not the top of the hill for the military. It's the place where you can get as high up as you can and still see all the way to the bottom.

DB It's called the military crest?

CRH Crest. Military crest. And it's the thing you really have to think about with that anti-tank gun. You have to dig forward far enough so that you could fire down into the valley so that somebody couldn't come up on you. Which was why we lost that gun we lost at Gersdorf in January 1945. We were ______ way off toward the military crest of the hill. So the Germans didn't necessarily know when we dug it in, but they knew if they were looking for guns that we would be on the crest, and we were. I think it's in the stories that there's two long, two short, and a fifth one right on the gun when they finally found it. Anyway, it was on the military crest out in front of the barn at Gersdorf.

DB So you were there at Fort Dix roughly six weeks?

CRH Probably.

DB And you said that there was some training there with live fire.

CRH Yes. We also turned in all our old weapons. If you had a rifle you liked that was all zeroed in and you thought it was good—the guy in charge of this was a corporal ordinarily, and he was called the Armorer Articifer. You can just see it straight out of Shakespeare, the man who does this, who does artifices, if you will. If you liked your rifle and it was all zeroed in, you'd keep it; otherwise, you would try to get a new one and take it to the range and zero it.

We turned in all our old 57-mm guns, and then those would be replaced when we got to England, with new ones. I don't know what they did with the old ones, but they probably just turned them over to some training unit and cycled them back through again.

And something that will—I don't know if we'll do this in the story or not—it might in part depend on whether or not I can absolutely verify

what some other people think of him. The captain in charge of our company was a very good training officer. There are people who can train and then there are people who can lead. This guy, with all due respect to him, probably wasn't a leader. I think the evidence of that is that they took the company away from him after he had literally formed it.

DB Your company?

CRH My company commander was relieved at Fort Dix and made the divisional historian, and there was a reason for that, and it can't be that he was desperately interested in history. I've always been under the impression that the divisional commander and the regimental battalion commanders were smart enough to realize that he was great at what he had done—and we should all be grateful—but you needed some hard-boiled guy, and what we got was a really hard-boiled New York/New Jersey Jew named Kirschbaum, and he just did beautifully. But they gave him the company when we went overseas.

DB He became the company, was it called the CO?

CRH Yes, Commanding Officer. And First Lieutenant. I don't know when he made captain, but they replaced the Captain with a First Lieutenant at Dix, so that tells you something.

There was a thing happened that should never happen if his men really liked him and protected him. This was always an indication to me that this probably validates my judgment. Six or ten of us, something like that, plus some sergeants took the guns up to Division to turn them in. There, when the guys were turned in, it was rather perfunctory. And if they weren't too dirty or so, Division just accepted them and then handed them on to ____. But they had to look fairly nice. And one of the ways to inspect the thing was to very formally open the breech block on this thing so that the gun would be up at a bit of an angle purposely so that when you flipped it, the breech block opened; if it was nicely greased, it would slide back with a satisfactory military click. If there'd been a shell in there, the shell would have been detected, flying out as a matter of fact, if this was well done.

But I forget who was doing the presentation, but our sergeant told us to present the gun for final inspection. I am sure I was not the guy who opened the breech. Somebody did. Anyway, he opened the breech and, just like that, out rolled an orange with the divisional and the corps inspectors from Dix standing there watching.

DB And somebody had done that—

CRH Somebody did that purposely. I always thought that they were saying something: Captain Hanson, Robert Hanson, who was our CO—this is

what we think of it. Because otherwise, you know, there were a lot of things [that] rolled out of there, but not something like that. It just wouldn't have happened. It just not would have happened. I can still sense the stunned appearance of everybody, because everybody with any sense at all realized what that said, not about us but about him. So about two minutes later, he was the historian, so I've always connected the two. If there was a cause and effect, there was a Tertellian sense, I think it was there. It was a dreadful thing to do, it really was. If they wanted to get rid of him, somebody should have figured out a more private way (now that I'm older). At the time, I thought it was funny. I still think it was comical in that sort of bitter sense. It was a harsh thing to do to a good man.

DB So he was a good man, but he might have cost you all a lot of unnecessary lives—

CRH He was a fine enough person.

DB —when you were overseas.

CRH You saw some of these people in grad school when some of them taught you, probably. You know, this is the university regulation, this is what we'll do. No understanding of why it was done, I suppose, at the heart. But follow the regs. Since then, I've felt sorry for him. At the time I thought this is great!

He was naïve. Two of the men went to him who didn't want to go overseas. Both of them a little older. I think both of them were married and simply said, "We're homosexuals." He raised such a fuss. They were gone in about 20 minutes. Everybody else was looking, thinking, I wonder, shall we try that? And they didn't care where they went or anything else. It just seemed better than getting on the *Queen Mary*, to some people I'm sure. But mostly men just thought, why the hell does any of this, you know—say, well, you know, just shut up and talk about it. We've all got a job to do. He was so shocked. I think he'd probably been a pretty sheltered kid. Probably one of those straight through school, straight through law school, passed the bar, went through OCS, aced OCS, without ever growing up maybe. Maybe that helped him grow up. He's still alive. He wasn't that much older than we were. Our captains tended to be 26, 27. Lieutenants were 23.

DB When you say divisional historians, did he write a history of the division?

CRH Well, I think it was his job to keep track of all the pieces of paper that you and I would later use when we wrote the history of the division, because the guy who was not an historian at all wrote the divisional history.

DB Who was that?

CRH His name is Ed Bredbrenner, and he's from New York and he's still alive.

DB Brend—

CRH Bred, B-r-e-d. That tells me he's Dutch.

DB Benner?

CRH Brenner, b-r-e-n-n-e-r.

DB Do you know the name of his book?

CRH Oh, it's just the 80th Divisional History. I've got a copy around somewhere unless I loaned it to somebody and never got it back.

DB OK.

CRH And my buddy, Nick Grossi, who is the other guy in that sun/son story, has got a copy of it. We could get that. I have the 319, 318 Regimental Situation Reports—day-by-day regimental situation reports; those were formally done by somebody else who is not an historian. But there is a native division history. It's not particularly good, Dan. ______ It's better than the one that anybody else wrote; nobody else did one.

DB Right.

CRH So that's nice. It's interesting that somebody thinks, well, I'll just tell these stories. It's really not our business to tell lies [?].

DB To tell a lot of facts but not boring, not much other than that.

CRH Yeah, I think that's a good explanation.

DB Did your company—

CRH I don't how I would have done it differently if I did it.

DB Did your company or platoon—I guess not platoon, but your company—at the time have like a yearbook or scrapbook or anything?

CRH No. A lot of them do, but we didn't. The regiment turned out a piece of paper I think you've seen, that is a very tiny, little, blue-and-white (because those were our colors) story about the 80th Division, and it can't be more than eight to ten thin pages on a book that is nowhere near one-quarter of the size of this in diameter. It's just a tiny little thing.

DB Booklet?

CRH Yes. And I think you saw it somewhere along the line, but, if not, I'll make sure you see a copy.

DB Okay.

CRH I do have one. And it just says, you know, the 80th Division came into being in the First World War and then was done away with and then came back in the Second World War, and it went to France and it lasted [?], and here's the end of that. And a couple of little pictures.

DB So it wasn't about the regiment; it was about the Division.

CRH It was about the Division, right. But there are a lot of regimental histories.

DB But not about your regiment?

CRH Not about mine.

DB Okay.

CRH If, sometime in the future, you're working with this for some weird reason on another book, you'll find a lot of that at Carlisle Barracks. They are very good, and they're very helpful.

DB The people at Carlisle?

CRH Yes. The Army war college. It is also the library for the Army war college; it's got a lot of this stuff. Someday you may want to do a paper, make a presentation—I don't know. But, back home anyway, close to that _____. But that's a place to go.

DB Yes, for—

CRH Regimental, divisional histories, memoirs—anything you can think of like that. The day-to-day pieces of paper with which Captain Hanson would have worked as divisional historian are reports that came in from every unit, literally from every lieutenant on up to division, and they could be written on any sort of piece of paper you could possibly think of and under any circumstances you can think of. So some of them are water-stained little scraps of paper torn out of a notebook. Others are rather elaborate typed reports turned in by the company, the battalion, the regiment.

DB And that's what some of the ones that I saw in your letters home.

CRH One or two pieces, I think, are in there that I had. I had an aircraft sighted—Russian aircraft—that you would have seen. There's a casualty report in there that you would have seen, too, I think, around this time of the year. I don't know what I kept that, but I did.

DB So you kept some of those reports?

CRH Yes. Right. But anyway, those things were—it would have been Hanson's job to collate all that so could just see probably some sergeant and then some clerk-typist with corporal stripes filing all this junk. It was all paper so it got bulkier and bulkier. I imagine he had a truck all his own just for all the pieces of paper around after awhile.

DB Did he go to Europe with you all?

CRH Oh, yes, he was with us all the time. All the way through.

DB He stayed in the—

CRH Stayed in the division, right. So he was up at Division all this time—

DB That would be the headquarters?

CRH —right at headquarters.

DB Your letter of the 15th of September, 1944, praises an article in *The New Yorker* that described what went on at the POE which I guess is the port of embarkation.

CRH Yes.

DB Is that the same thing as Fort Dix?

CRH No. From Dix you went to the POE—

DB I got it.

CRH —You went up through northern Jersey, you went to Manhattan because we were going to go out on the *Mary*, and she was on the docks in Manhattan, not too far from *Normandy*. If you recall, the *Normandy* was a big French ship that was mysteriously burned somehow. I can still remember seeing her on her side. Anyway, *Mary* was anchored in there someplace.

DB It was burned?

CRH Not anchored. She was moored.

DB The *Normandy* was burned while you were in New York?

CRH I would think she probably was, but anyway, she was on her side. She eventually got so much water in her, she just went over.

DB In the East River?

CRH Yes. East River, I think. Check where the *Normandy* is easily enough. If I run across it, or you run across it, we might use it as a grace note somewhere along the line. You could, you know, here was this giant ship and that people to this day don't really know how come that thing caught fire, because everybody was working hard trying to convery it to a troop ship.

DB Did some people think it was sabotage?

CRH I doubt it, but there could have been. Mostly construction jobs like that are notoriously fire-prone, as you would well know.

DB So your POE was in New York City.

CRH Yes.

DB Did you have barracks there?

CRH No. You went from Dix on the train, you went straight to New York, and you got off at the dock and walked up the gangplank.

DB Okay.

CRH Formerly, POE, there wasn't any sort of great barracks establishment or anything. There were probably 35 or 40 very anxious sergeants and young officers all making sure we got on the boat. When you went up the gangplank, you checked off your name. I don't know if they sent us up by squads or if they sent us in alpha order. I can't remember. But I certainly remember climbing that very steep gangplank at the side of that thing, and I remember checking in.

DB I guess you got to know a lot of your company in Yuma already? You had already—

CRH Yes. Right. Very well known. Yes.

DB And you stayed with them at Fort Dix during your training?

CRH Yes, right.

DB And they gave you some anti—

CRH Actually, we went some place else you would know. It's even closer to your home at Rutgers or your school at Rutgers. Kilmer. You went from Dix, and then Kilmer. So I imagine, come to think of it, Kilmer was probably, properly thought of as the POE. And when we came home, we came through Kilmer, and I still have a little booklet. I'll make sure you see it. It says, you know, welcome home.

DB That's part of the Rutgers campus now.

CRH Oh, is it?

DB Yes. There's still a small part of it that's still Camp Kilmer, and the Job Corps is centered there.

CRH How is it close to Old Main and the very nice streets of old buildings? How close is it?

DB It's right across the river, you know, the _____. They have—students who have to take like a shuttle bus.

CRH Yes, I've seen them.

DB _____ to campuses. And one of the campuses, the biggest one, is the Kilmer campus. And that's the big, very big campus.

CRH Have they kept the name Kilmer?

DB Yes. It's called the Kilmer Camp?

CRH I wonder if it's for Joyce Kilmer, the poet?

DB Yes, because he was from New Brunswick.

CRH Oh, was he?

DB Yes. There's a Kilmer library there that I used to use a lot.

CRH I'm glad you brought that up. Kilmer was probably officially our POE. Anyway, it's a short train trip as you would well know. I really don't know how long it took that day. Probably all day, the way the Army does things.

DB Was there a lot of anticipation at Fort Dix and at Kilmer and so on? Did you all, was it sort of be-merry-today-for-tomorrow-we-might-die type of atmosphere?

CRH For some, it was. For most of us, it was a very solemn sort of dedication. We certainly engaged in as much as we possibly could. Probably the usual number of men got married. I don't know what "usual number" would mean, but people did get married. They was the usual "Let's go to New York because you can have a good time and who knows when you will again," that sort of thing, that kind of stuff.

There was an interesting thing happened in New York to several of us, and you from that area can certainly appreciate this. That was a time when

most western men anyway—I don't know about easterners, but I think easterners, too—despised pimps, and New York was full of them. And one night, two or three of us simply threatened a pimp who was trying to get us to go with his girl. And we scared the hell out of him. I forget what we threatened him with. Nowadays that would be considered just plain foolish to even think about it.

DB [Unintelligible]

CRH We may have thought it was vaguely dangerous, but we thought we were vaguely dangerous, too. Stupid, I suppose. But anyway, it's just the whole notion that this guy would actually live off the services of a girl. We really threatened him with bodily harm, and he was convinced. He took off. That was probably somewhere around the ________. That's the first place I ever learned about baklava. We were traveling with an Armenian who said, "There's this Greek-Turkish dessert you've got to have."

DB Very good. Well, let's see. There are a couple of questions here. At one point shortly thereafter in your letter you mention that you had sent a V-mail back to your parents, so it had to have been short. Explain what a V-mail was, and why it has to be short.

CRH Okay. It's a single sheet, and you've seen copies in the letters themselves. It was a single sheet which could then be reduced to about a 3x4 sheet, something like that—

DB Three by four inches?

CRH —yes, photographically.

DB It was a microfilm kind of?

CRH No. Microfilm is really small, if you think about. No, this was an actual piece of paper that your parents got. It was a photographic reproduction of that letter, and apparently you could save somewhere between a fourth and a fifth of the actual weight and space by photographing this stuff, and then sending it back to the States, and your parents got that. So in my letters home, which you saw, there were a lot of little black-and-white letters hardly bigger than a postcard. Three or four inches, I think.

DB About like that?

CRH Yes. I'll show them to you again.

DB Originally when you wrote them?

CRH Full sheet.

DB 8x11?

CRH Yes, full-size sheet.

DB And then somebody back in England or something would reduce it?

CRH Photograph that. Right. And throw away the original, and send a copy back.

DB So that they could come home on an airplane with less weight?

CRH I doubt that they went home on airplanes then. I have no idea. There weren't that many planes crossing the Atlantic, and ordinarily they all had—no matter which way they were going, they all had very vital cargo, including people who were going home because they had to go home for some reason—officer, messenger, you name it. I don't know. They may have gone home by plane. That's a fascinating thought.

DB It was so that they would conserve the weight?

CRH Yes. We've got a good source on this that we can use, and I'm going to ask you if you'll do it, simply because I'll be gone so much now until we get to January. Get hold of the Alumni Office and tell them you want to talk to Major (Retired now) James Bordenet, B-o-r-d-e-n-e-t.

DB B-o-r-d-e-n-e-t.

CRH Jim graduated about 35 years ago, and he just retired as a Chief Postal Inspector around here. And I'll bet he knows all that stuff. As a matter of fact, it occurred to me long ago that I should ask this kid. He did his ROTC, kept his commission for a long time, I believe he retired as a major out of the Army, too, out of the Reserves. I'll bet Jim would be happy to help. The Alumni people would be delighted to give you his name. The last time you saw him cited was right after the 11th of September. Somebody was asking about letter bombs, I think—packages in the mail. His picture was in the paper. He's a very sharp, very nice fellow. Probably made a helluva of an inspector for the Postal Service. Anyway, I'll bet he's got a history of that stuff or would know who to tickle to find out, you know, how do you went about.

The actual size of a V-mail—I've got them myself. I've got my own right there in my original letters.

DB So you couldn't write that much because it was basically one [two voices—unintelligible].

CRH Yes. Although some people can write very small, legible, and nice. I can't even write _______ and it's legible. I usually use it as an excuse not

to write very much because there wasn't much can say, so I would scrawl out a few words just to keep my folks happy, and then also to feel that communication that I needed.

DB In your letters, you had you traveled to Baltimore and New York and Washington and New York City.

CRH Right.

DB Had you never had exposure prior to Baltimore to large concentrations of African-Americans?

CRH Oh no. No. Johnny Hamilton was the only one in Olympia so far as I know.

DB There was one Black in your class?

CRH Yes. Right. I don't think there was another Black family. I'll ask my brother about that. There were some Indians, Japanese, Chinese, Filippinos, but Black Americans were thin on the ground, and I think John was from the only Black family, but I'll ask Neal.

DB So it was a real different experience walking through Baltimore?

CRH Yes. Right. I was fascinated by the way in which the weather permits you—and the architecture was designed almost—to permit you to sit on the steps and talk to your neighbors, which was just great, I thought. There's a lot of New York, a lot of East Coast neighborhoods like that, but I had never seen it with Blacks. So I do comment on it; I think I commented on the fact they didn't seem to have much to do, just sit around on the steps.

DB On your trip over to Britain, what kind of experiences and personalities did you come across? It must have taken ten days or so to get over there.

CRH Actually, I think it was probably less than that. Don't forget the *Mary* held the crossing record, and she held it, I think, well after the war until the *Champlaign* broke it, and then I think the *Mary* broke it again and maybe *Elizabeth* did. We probably went fairly fast. It might be in my files, but the divisional history will know also, I would think.

But anyway, there were almost 20,000 men on that ship so it was crowded.

DB You said that there were half, only half the number of bunks as there were men.

CRH Yes. Right.

DB So you had to rotate bunks?

CRH Yes. And you had literally a sort of hot bunk situation where if you weren't in your bunk, the other guy was. If you wanted to be—most of us, I think, who didn't like the idea of the cramped quarters and so on, did our best to simply sleep on the decks. So you'd find some place where you would be out of the traffic lane, and then just roll up in your blanket or roll up in your overcoat and sleep on the deck.

Another thing is people kept getting seasick. That's catching in a way, enough to realize that you didn't want to do that. I don't recall how many nights I slept downstairs. I haven't any idea.

DB You tend to sicker downstairs than up on the deck.

CRH Right. Claustrophobic, I suppose. I do remember very vividly once or twice in the heads seeing men who were both seasick and suffering from diarrhea at the same time, thanking God that I had neither one.

Another great memory of that—and I think I discussed it somewhere sooner or later in the letters, probably in the summer of '45—the food was all British food—

DB On the *Queen Mary*.

CRH Yes. And it was cooked in grease, and so on. So you'd go down these long lines of people. When you get down there, you probably would have lost your appetite. I don't know how many times I went down and probably refused food or refused a lot of it, because they'd have things like kippered herring and so on for breakfast even. But the smell of that in those close quarters would certainly turn me off. I can't tell you that I refused a meal, but I'll bet I did.

Another thing I remember is that they had at least one boat drill, and they may have had more. There was an enormous

End of Tape Side A

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**Interview 11/19/01**
**Side B – 45 min.**

CRH: We have a red light now. Yeah the bunks were everywhere you could possibly put them including the big main cabins and the salons, the big dining rooms, and so on. So they might have bunks up, I don't know how many high. Then, when I came home and I was on the **Champlain**, I think there were 5 or 6 bunks high on the flight deck. No, not on the flight deck, the ready deck, down below the flight deck.

DB: Of the aircraft carrier.

CRH: Yeah, right. And I think I was up in the 5$^{th}$ or 6$^{th}$ level of the **Mary**. I believe there was somebody above me. I am not sure. Anyway we were just jammed in there, so you crawled up over these things and of course you were always stepping over somebody or waking up somebody who was asleep, climbing up those monkey frames. And anyway, we were doing this lifeboat drill, and there was a Sergeant Olivetti, (who was a corporal at that time), who was an artist. He had people laughing and he was doing illustrations of what all of these people looked like, including our various officers and he had a pen of some kind, or a crayon. I couldn't imagine what it was, but he managed to lean outside of the ship and write on the side, and people who could would lean out and see this and roar with laughter and tell what Olivetti had done next and that he was mocking the officers. None of them were around.

DB: OH.

CRH: I remember that. I remember being on the deck at night looking at the sea and hoping there weren't any submarines in our path. Just wondering because you quickly realize that - if this thing got torpedoed - there would really be a terrible psychological mess. 20,000 people trying to get in the same lifeboat. That didn't sound good. We were confident. She had great speed. I think she made about 30 miles per hour. So, she was as fast as an aircraft carrier maybe faster. She was built for that. The idea was that she would, she and the **Elizabeth,** would cross the Atlantic twice in the time that any other ship would cross. They would make three trips, while everybody else made two - or the big north German Lloyd liners - that sort of thing. And they would swipe passengers, the same way the Concord does for really rich people. You can fly across the Atlantic in what, five and one-half hours or something on the Concord. The **Queen** was the Concord of her day.

DB: Right.

CRH: So she had a lot of speed and you knew that if the Germans were lucky they might have a submarine out there, but otherwise they would have to be awful lucky.

DB: You were in a convoy?

CRH: No, oh no. Thank you for bringing it up. No, that was the pride of the **Mary**. She didn't need a convoy. There wasn't any point in having the fastest ship on the sea and slowing it down to seven knots or whatever a convoy would do.

DB: So, because she was going so fast, it was a more difficult target for submarines?

CRH: Right and she did zigzag some. So it would be even worse for a sub skipper to try to figure. If he saw her at five miles, was she going to come toward him, or, would she be 20 miles away the next time he looked at her?

DB: Right. But even so, it was a gamble.

CRH: Oh yeah, and it worked. That's true with so many things in war, and you hear about the bad things when the gamble didn't work. But, once in a while, the gambles work.

DB: Right.

CRH: It's like Normandy was a gamble. It worked. Hitler was convinced that that wasn't the main attack. So anyway, they never got the **Mary** and they would have loved to have done so.

DB: Now it's near Los Angeles.

CRH: Right and I was supposed to go to see it on this trip [*to an International Churchill Society conference in San Diego, where I had the pleasure of speaking on the same panel with him*] and then Chris and I woke up one week ago Wednesday, last Wednesday, and I said, "I feel really bad with this cold I have, I really shouldn't be around people and I really don't want to be on a bus for two hours to go see the **Mary** as much as I would like to see her." Chris said, "Well I am glad to hear that because I got a bunch of staff and command papers I have been trying to get corrected so I will be happy to stay home with you." So we did. We spent a very pleasant day together on Coronado.

DB: Sounds good.

CRH: He got his correcting done about one.

DB: Nice hotel, right.

CRH: We were at a B&B about three blocks away, four blocks away. But all the meetings were at the Coronado, so we were really impressed.

DB Now Bob, did you spent significant time in Scotland before you went?

CRH: No, we came to Greenock, Scotland, which is Glasgow's port, got off the ship, got on one of those little English trains that went to the midlands of England.

DB: Oh, ok.

CRH: Just off the boat and out.

DB: You didn't even stay overnight?

CRH: No, they probably had facilities for that, but the main thing was to get these people out of that tiny port town.

DB: And in your letter you say, "England, July 1944. I can't tell you where we are, what we are doing, what kind of camp it is, or what towns are around here."

CRH: Right, but otherwise I think there is a comment about 'freedom to tell whatever you want'.

DB: Right, it was funny.

CRH: And then eventually I think we were able to tell them we'd been in England; I don't know. And eventually there's a letter that says, "I'm free to tell you we're in France."

DB: Right.

CRH: Is that the 15th of September letter?

DB: I am not sure. I have it in my notes.

CRH: I don't remember. It would be about right I suppose.

DB: I believe it was September. I believe it was.

CRH: Right, because we came ashore on the 6th of August, as I recall. So it was about three weeks later. They said, "Ok, you can say you are in France."

DB: Now, can you, since you couldn't tell in your letter where you were, tell what you were doing, what kind of camp it was and what kind of towns were around there in England, can you tell us now?

CRH: Yeah, exactly, because all the records show where the regimental headquarters were day by day have been published and I've got copies of those so that I know that on the 15th of September, regimental headquarters for the 319th was in some place in Lorraine and within five minutes after getting home I could, if we cared, I could tell you where the Colonel was and his headquarters on the 15th of September '44.

DB: I mean, in England, where were you?

CRH: Damned if I know.

DB: Somewhere in the midlands.

CRH: Yes and everybody else in the division seems to remember, but I never do. It's camp so-an-so (Name indistinguishable). I could find it easily enough and it's probably in the divisional history.

DB: Right. And it was near a town. A small town.

CRH: Yes. And it was near Manchester. To give you an idea about where it was. And from there them we went down to Southampton.

DB: Before you shipped out.

CRH: Yeah, right.

DB: But you spent most of your time up near Manchester.

CRH: Right, yes. When we went to Southampton we just passed through.

DB: And what was that like in that camp near Manchester?

CRH: It was a good experience. We did some sort of basic training, to sort of sharpen everybody up and get them back in physical shape. The most important thing I think in terms of what you and I are trying to do is, they brought over from France, two or three sergeants from the very famous 1st division, the "Big Red One," who had made the landing in Normandy. And they were there primarily to tell us, not about the landing, but about fighting in the Bocage in that hedgerow country and what you had to do to survive that. What you should look out for.

DB: "Bocage" means hedgerow country?

CRH: Yes, right. B-O-C-A-G-E. But it really refers to, in English, the hedgerows, and they really are just as difficult as you can imagine in the way of a military obstacle. Anyway, these sergeants had survived all of that.

DB: And they tried to teach you about…

CRH: Right and they came for - you know – two- or three-hour stints. You can just imagine.

DB: So there was so much you could learn.

CRH: You had to be there almost, you know. But they told us about mines, and, as I told you before, it scared the hell out of us about mines so nobody would move, hardly walk, when they came ashore in Normandy. Even though you knew damn well that there couldn't be any mines where we were right away. Nevertheless, we were afraid of them. Told us about mines. Told us what they could about fighting in the Bocage. I don't recall

anything else, but I can still see the three of them sitting up there in front of the company doing their best to be helpful, probably realizing that none of this was going to do these poor bastards any good at all really.

DB: Were you, I imagine, attentive?

CRH: Oh, yes. Because these were some people who - as they used to say in the Kentucky valleys, long ago – “had been to see the creature” and they had survived it, whatever that meant. We had no idea what that meant. Just as well.

DB: Just as well?

CRH: Yeah, there are very few people, I think, who really want to go do that. Know what it is. There are an awful lot of people, like myself, who will go do it, but that doesn’t mean you want to go do it.

DB: Right.

CRH: You might want to do it once or twice to see what you could get away with, test yourself, but after that it’s just a cold, calculated question, “How do I survive this?” Or “Will you survive?” You don’t know. A lot of times you do crazy things and you don’t think too much about it.

DB: Did you find the English…Did you get to know any of them?

CRH: I really don’t recall. I just remember having a very good feeling toward them then. So I imagine there were English girls at the USO’s. At the dances. I probably went to pubs. I have no idea Dan, I just can’t remember, but I remember very vividly when we came back, that we traveled in groups in January ’46. When we were coming home we shipped out of Southampton, eventually shipped home. And when we did, we had heard stories about fights between returning English soldiers, sailors and Americans and there may have been some, I don’t know. I never saw one.

DB: So you traveled in gangs.

CRH: We traveled in gangs. Three, four, five, six people at a time.

DB: Wow.

CRH: Yeah. And it was impressed on me so that when my brother and I went to the Olympics in ’48, I told him that the English don’t like us, really, so we won’t spend much time there. We’ll just go to the Olympics and then go on to the continent.

DB: Were they jealous of the GI’s, taking their girls away or stuff like that?

CRH: Oh sure, right. And our clothing was so different. I don't know if you know this, but the English fatigue, as they call it, clothes in which they worked, their fatigue dress was the same as their regular battle dress and that was their dress uniform too. And it was rough wool; didn't look good. They knew damn well that they didn't look as good as our people did. They just didn't. And they also had the idea, of course, that even if they had not been in the service very long, that England had been in the war since '39 and we were comparative latecomers, and we had only come in because of Pearl Harbor. They knew enough history to know that. So there was a lot of resentment. The idea was that we were going to stand by and send them equipment and they were going to owe us a lot of money. They ran out of money early in the war and they didn't like that. But the overall impression in '44 was that they were very kind to us and it was probably true of most of the people in that area. It was certainly true of people I met in Switzerland when I was on leave in '45; they were really nice to us. Anyway, that's my impression about fights with the British.

DB: Now, Bob…let me stop the tape.

CRH: And I remember buying on that trip a little book of Shakespeare's sonnets, which I eventually gave, just a few years ago, to a very good student from here who was a Shakespeare nut. And I gave her my book of sonnets. I had purchased that on New Year's Day, as I recall in London, in '46, and I suppose she still has it. I don't know.

DB: Now in your August 22nd letter, '44, you say you "…get a kick out of the photos of the house and grounds that you and mom, that you took and I carry them around in my wallet". Do you still have those photos?

CRH: No, I think I lost almost all of that at one time or another, but most of that stuff got wet the night I swam the Our River in February of '45 and I threw away everything, except a pay book and I might have kept a small photo of Jean that I had in it that didn't get wet, because the pay book would have been in a celluloid folder. It probably stayed dry that way. Everything else got soaked I think. But having those pictures of the house was fun.

DB: Did it help you to sort of keep in touch with time back home?

CRH: Yeah, literally with home.

DB And you say that you remember, in response to your dad, your dad sounded like he, sort of wistfully, wished that he was back in the service. And you said that, your words were, "Remember you and mom are holding together everything that we are fighting for and wishing to get back to." Now did you and your buddies talk about that sort of thing very much?

CRH: I don't really know. I can't remember now and I don't want to misquote either them or myself. I suppose we did. We had an awful lot of very long heart-to-heart talks, because there wasn't anything else to do except to talk to these people on the guns,

particularly when you figure that that gun was usually isolated. You know we weren't a regular rifle outfit and, so, if they were lying around why you talked to them while they would have their job. We were a little family of 10 or 12 people and a corporal gunner and a sergeant. So you really knew about your little family.

DB: What kind of concepts did you have about things like that? Not just you but you and your buddies.

CRH: Well I knew enough about Hitler's ideas, so that I was one of the few people in the squad who could explain them. I remember doing so, particularly in Southampton, talked to a couple of Polish guys, particularly a friend of mine, Arthur Strempek, and that was a very funny situation because Arthur took my comments, eventually, as my own words and I had to reassure this giant Pole, giving me an angry look. "Hitler says this about you people, I am not saying this." Because Hitler did have a very low opinion of Slavic people and I was trying to explain to Arthur. Some discussion had probably come up about, "What the hell are we doing in England, did we need to go to France?", and I had probably started to, you know, start my teaching career early. I don't know. But I can still remember him roaring. I said, "Now wait a minute Artie, this isn't me. This is why we are here." So we knew that and I knew enough to realize that Hitler had a very deadly mad on about Jews. I didn't understand, nobody knew at that time, I think, the sources of that hatred. I think most of that scholarship came out after the war. Probably drew on his Vienna experience as much as anything, but the Austrians, I think, have been notoriously anti-Jewish. I always reminded my students that it was an Austrian sergeant who betrayed Anne Frank.

DB: So you said your parents were holding together everything that you all were fighting for and wishing to get back to.

CRH: Yeah, and they were good about it. They were active in the town - in every sort of charity that involved the Catholic Church or the American Legion - they were involved in. They were good citizens.

DB: Holding together this idea of a country where citizenship mattered and so on.

CRH: Uh, huh, yeah.

DB: Now at one point you said in September 5th, '44, "I haven't written in several days. I think I wouldn't write, even to you, if I knew that you were worried. There is a good deal of interest to tell that doesn't concern the war, but when I try to write about some of the things I have seen and done, I just don't have the interest." So could you comment on that Bob?

CRH: I have no idea what that meant. If it didn't concern the war, it may have concerned, you know, I have always been a travel nut. Since the time I was a little kid and first read Richard Haliburton, I may have been interested in simply trying to describe the French countryside and what the people were like. I have no idea at this remove, Dan. I am sorry.

DB: Why didn't you have an interest?

CRH: I was simply too tired and there was sort of a despair that comes from being tired. But, you were by that time, no longer moving rapidly. The rapid move across France ended pretty much by the 2nd of September and so from then on it was slogging time. Certainly the war was providing all sorts of interesting scenes and sights and things. And being in France would have been interesting. Lord knows I have written enough pages on it since then as a tourist, but I don't have any idea what inspired that line. I have a hunch, fatigue. By the time you spent your day doing all the crazy things we had to do, especially if you moved the gun and to dig new holes, dig a new gun hole, lay in the wire and all the other crazy things we had to do, probably just plain too exhausted to worry about it.

DB: And I am correct in deducing that you didn't write much about the battle etc…through the censorship.

CRH: You couldn't.

DB: And also you didn't want to alarm your folks.

CRH: There certainly was that and the more experienced I got, the more I realized I didn't want to alarm my folks, so I certainly never told them any of the things I have told you about what artillery fire was like. I knew dad knew but there wasn't any point in telling mother.

DB: Now at one point in the same letter you say that, "One bottle of cognac is plenty for seven or eight men to get what they want." Now Bob, could you comment about whether or not alcohol complicated, I don't just mean in September '44, but throughout the rest of the war, did it? Ambrose writes in **Band of Brothers** the thought that alcohol consumption complicated the army's operations significantly.

CRH: But it complemented them too. Literally in the sense that it fills up, complet…not complete but complet. To fill up. I've got a letter somewhere to my brother telling him, "You would be surprised how many people go into attacks fairly well drunk."

DB: Yeah, right.

CRH: There would always be the search for wine and there would be a search for hard liquor and people who liked it would drink it. I never saw anybody that I can possibly recall drunk. I imagine our little sergeant would have beat the hell out of them with a rifle butt if he had to, because we couldn't afford that. It wasn't like the poor kids in Nam who used to get high over there, I guess the closer to the lines they were, the higher they'd get. I myself would not have been able to handle that in Vietnam simply because I knew enough to realize that you need every sense of alertness you can get. But sipping on a little cognac, something like that, and I mention seven or eight men, I certainly would be

one of them. Cognac still makes me sick. It’s too sharp. Calvados, stuff like that, I can’t drink that. I’d drink a B&B. Benedictine and what is it – brandy - probably in sips.

DB: So you think it lubricated things more than injured things?

CRH: Yes, right. And in an attack what it did was sort of relax you I suppose as much as anything. Whole rifle companies would be, not showing the effects of drinking, but would have been drinking when they went into an attack if they could. If they had it. It was almost like that old crack about “smoke if you got them” and “drink if you got it” but don’t get so drunk you can’t function because the left and right guy beside you depend on you. It would not have been tolerated. It would have been, I am sure it would have been handled with physical violence. There wouldn’t have been a complaint to an officer or to a tech sergeant; it would have been handled on our sergeant’s level, a three-stripe level.

DB: He would have hit the guy?

CRH: Yeah, Mitchell would have had to stand on his tiptoes to hit anybody, but he was tough enough to do it. But otherwise he probably would have turned to my friend Strempek and said, “You hit the guy.” And Strempek would have done it.

DB: Did that happen sometimes?

CRH: Strempek drank at times. Whenever he could. But, never to excess.

DB: Was that a form of discipline for things that were…

CRH: No.

DB: That wasn’t typical?

CRH: No. Interestingly enough that’s not. Americans are a lot like the Australians; you just don’t touch people. You just don’t. And you might threaten it once in a while between two people but uh, no. No non-com would dare do that.

DB: But if it was something…

CRH: But he might hit you, he would once in a while. I’ll tell you a good story…

DB: He would in the situation where somebody was endangering others or something like that?

CRH: He might take them out in the woods. I’ll tell you a story that you can’t repeat. Turn this thing off.

DB: Now, in the same letter - you say a lot in this letter - you said, "Everyday I seem to become more separated from all of the things that are going on outside of this war." That's in the letter on September 5th.

CRH: Yeah, right.

DB: You made that comment sort of in relationship, as I see it, in relation to a request. You had asked that your mother send you some books and renew your **Reader's Digest** subscription and that that would help you to keep in contact with the old world, you and the world back home. I wonder if you could comment on this, and did you get more so, that as time went on, did letters and reading material from back home help?

CRH: Yeah, there's a lot of comments in there about how nice it is to read the little news sheet from Olympia, the **Daily Olympian** and that's about the time that mother ran across the offer from Judge Beals to send me the Shakespeare, and I don't know who decided to send me the Plato, **The Republic**. And so somewhere in the fall, probably in October, Joe Ragno and I started reading the Shakespeare's and **The Republic** together and talking about it. But you did live in your own little world. We moved, I would say during and after the Battle of Bulge, back into sort of a wider frame of life because you could see that the war was going to end, particularly once you crossed the Rhine, but that wasn't done until March of 1945. I think when the Battle of the Bulge was over, we realized that this was the opening of the last chapter for the German defense.

DB: So it was psychological?

CRH: So you started thinking a lot about what was going to happen and how this would occur. But you knew that that was the chapter that was ending and so, of course, in my mind it was something, I became more and more aware that I was in the midst of a very big scene and I suppose I wrote more about it as time went on. Certainly thought more about it. You could see what was happening, whereas in September, we were living in the woods on sort of exaggerated camp-out all the time. We were passing little French villages constantly and you were in them once in a while, but, usually, we worked and lived in the forests or on the edge of fields or on the military crest of a hill or a crossroads. And so your world was the men you were with and the people you saw passing by and the little units you were wired into.

DB: Let me get you some water. (CRH coughs)

CRH: I've got water. It doesn't seem to help much. I have got a cough drop. Anyway, you lived in your own little world and I knew enough to realize that, and to get out of that. So that was fun, then, to read the **Reader's Digest** and keep in touch with some of the other things that were happening.

DB: But you knew that you wanted to get out of that. You could see it happening.

CRH: I knew that it was a good idea for me, and, I suppose, for most other people. I know Joe Ragno was delighted. It never occurred to him to write home and ask for some serious reading. But, he was delighted when I introduced him to the Shakespeare and so we shared that and we talked about it. It brought up theories that had nothing to do with the war and of course Shakespeare does that nicely. Not that we understood what we were reading, but, it was a nice try.

DB: It was kind of hard to not get a feeling of being isolated from the world back home?

CRH: Yeah because you were in your own little world and there was nothing there except – perhaps - 600 or 800 yards of visibility one way or the other and that gun and concentration on what that gun was supposed to do.

DB: And the fear of death and so on all around.

CRH: Yeah, there was something like that too. You began to be more and more aware of just how chancy that was. And you realized it was just chance. That took a long time to sink in. Skill had nothing to do with a lot of that. Skill did some things for you, but, there are some things you cannot program. Anyway, you had to adjust to that. But mostly you were so worried about all these other people with you, and the gun, and what was happening and whether or not you would dig in and get to stay there for more than 20 minutes. That sort of thing. Your whole life revolved around that 57-mm and the people you were with. The wire that connected you to your company, connected you to your surrounding infantry and the visibility out in front of you and that was it.

DB: It was so intense.

CRH: Yeah. It was just like a day like this most of the time from probably mid-October on.

DB: Overcast.

CRH: Yeah, it was the worst rainy November they'd had in I don't know how long, that sort of thing. So you are living in that mud.

DB: In your September 14th letter, you refer to "enclosed surrender leaflets that the Air Force had dropped to Germans all over France." Is that the same thing as the copy in the letters?

CRH: You've seen those. Yes.

DB: And another letter in September and one in October, early October, you refer to your efforts to keep warm…

CRH: Yeah.

DB: By spending significant time digging your holes deeper and drinking lots of coffee. So it was very cold.

CRH: You know on days like this it is damp. This is Lorraine weather. This is Bulge weather. But strictly Lorraine also. Cold and wet and it penetrates your clothes and you have a terrible time getting dry when you are in the field. You are never dry.

DB: So a lot of times you were wet.

CRH: Or good and damp. You had on every bit of clothes you had.

DB: What about the shoes? Did they get wet inside?

CRH: They had to come off everyday. They came off every night if you possibly thought you could do that safely, and you aired they out as much as you could, and you changed your socks constantly. I never had the slightest bit of problem with my feet.

DB: So they supplied you with socks.

CRH: They would send up new socks and ammunition. They might not be able to send anything else. That's how important that was.

DB: I imagine you were grateful for the socks. And the ammunition of course.

CRH: Ammunition, food if you could do it, mail, those were the big things. Then right behind the mail would come a copy of either **Yank** magazine or **Stars and Stripes** and then right behind that would be dry socks. Dry socks would be high on the priority list and you would, you know, squirrel away as many sets of those as you could. I don't know how many I carried.

DB: Just in case they didn't come the next time.

CRH: Right. They were very aware, particularly as November went on, that they were losing people who were desperately needed. That they were losing people to trench foot so there's all sorts of little edicts that came down from Army and Eisenhower's headquarters, you know, about, "Don't get trench foot and here's how you avoid it."

DB: Change your socks.

CRH: Change your socks, keep your feet dry, think about trying to massage them everyday.
DB: Is that right?

CRH: There was something, I don't know, a physiologist could tell you what that does.

DB: Get the blood flowing.

CRH: I suppose.

DB: And did you all do that?

CRH: I must have. I knew that; I had read enough World War I literature to realize that trench foot is a crippling disease and that there is no reason to get trench foot if you can possibly avoid it. And then I imagine, too, that little Sergeant Mitchell was probably on us all the time about that because he was a very sensitive man.

DB: He cared about you guys.

CRH: I think he really did. That's why everybody liked him. And he was just old enough. He was probably 24, 25 or 26.

DB: And you would dig your holes deeper and drink lots of coffee and so on to stay warm.

CRH: We had these little tiny camp stoves about this tall and about that big around and they were like little alcohol stoves, but you didn't need one of those. All you needed was a coffee can or a big soup can, but a coffee can with sand in it, and a cup and a half of gasoline. You just pour the gasoline in the sand and it becomes a torch and it turned out just enough fumes that it would burn, rather than explode. And, eventually, every army in the world turned out directions telling the damn troops to quit making those, because they were wasting a lot of gasoline. They killed themselves trying to get gasoline up and we were making coffee with it. The excuse was you didn't care what they thought.

DB: Right. (and, then, teasing): So, one of the reasons for the Battle of the Bulge, was the lack of gasoline because the troops were drinking coffee?

CRH: Oh, we had plenty of gas up there by that time.

DB: Wasn't that one of the problems?

CRH: No, it was a problem for the Germans. They didn't have gas during the Bulge. They kept attacking where they hoped we would leave gas and once in a while they did run over, overrun a gas dump. In one case, they came up a hill, it was almost like they had come running up Madison Street, and as they got up to the top of the hill where they knew there was a gas dump of some sort, the Americans blew up the whole thing. Flaming gasoline poured down the valley towards the Germans. And it was a question of, perhaps, a million gallons. It was a heroic thing they did.

DB: Yeah.

CRH: But it frustrated the hell out of the Germans. No, by that time, our supplies were pretty good. It was September, October, and early November that the supplies were in

short supply. And they were. We didn't get the shoe-pacs, for instance. The kind of waterproof shoes you should get because – so far as I know - General Lee (who was in charge of all of our supplies) didn't really believe in that sort of thing. There is a lot of criticism of this chief supply officer for Eisenhower and some criticism of Ike for just simply not having fired him.

DB: He didn't believe in giving you all shoe-pacs. Is that what they called them?

CRH: These shoes, they'd be something like this, Dan, with this rubber structure only it came up about this high.

DB: Oh, oh.

CRH: It's duck hunter stuff for paddling around in high-top shoes when you are hunting in the field or working in the field to keep your feet dry and to get rid of those leather shoes. You know your leather shoes just seep water even when you put sealant on them and we didn't have any sealant, which was why so many European farmers used to make and wear wooden shoes.

DB: Yeah.

CRH: So, our shoes leaked all the time, and that's where the trench foot came from. General Lee is - apparently - the source of many studies at staff and command schools about just how badly you can do that kind of job and still keep it. And the inference is that this was one of the few failures in personnel work that Ike made and you always wonder why. Lee, for instance, moved into Paris and Ike didn't move to Paris when we got it. Lee moved all the supply people in, took over every major hotel he could get his hands on and these were all "rear-echelon bastards," [as we called them unjustly! Most of us would have readily traded jobs with them] doing nothing, really, for the war except that they were supposed to forward the equipment to the people who were doing the fighting. So, for instance, in Paris there should have been unlimited hotel rooms for the GI's who were on Pass.

DB: Did you all know about that at the time?

CRH: Rumors flew around. You had to wait. For instance, Sgt. Mitchell got a pass to Paris. Somebody from the unit would come back from a pass to Paris and start telling stories and of course the rumors flew through the Army. But, if you are smart, you don't believe half the rumors in life: around this place [Seattle University] for sure. The Army is the same way. Later on they found out professionally that this was true.

DB: Did you all generally have a good or a negative attitude toward the quartermaster corps in general?

CRH: It depended on what they were doing. If you had plenty of supplies, you thought they were great. It you didn't like blacks, if you were a southerner who didn't like blacks, you thought they were terrible because the blacks drove so many of those trucks.

DB: The Red Ball Express.

CRH: Well, for a while there, almost everybody had trucks in the Red Ball Express. They stripped trucks out of every unit you could think of, so our regiment would have lost a truck temporarily to Red Ball Express, and the driver would be simply assigned to get on the treadway, which was what it was. In regular services of supply, there were whole truck companies, such as the Puget Sound Freightlines, that did nothing except deliver freight forward in trucks. In many cases those were run by blacks with white officers, and there was a resentment that the blacks were there with all our food and we were out here doing all the fighting and they would never do the fighting and frankly I don't recall feeling like that, but I probably envied them. There were some very vehement southerners who didn't care for blacks.

DB: Who were in your squad or your company.

CRH: Yeah. This was the Blue Ridge Division after all. There were plenty of people who felt that, but if the rear echelons delivered, then you tolerated them. But, everybody who was rear echelon was a 'rear echelon bastard,' period. The words all went together and there was a sense of envy. You know, "These guys will survive the war and if they go to Japan they will survive that too, because they are not doing anything really that is dangerous." You knew they might get shot at by German airplanes sometimes. They, usually, didn't go to bed at night wondering if a shell was going to come through the roof. That's for sure. They would drive the truck someplace where that wouldn't happen, which was what should be done, but, we envied them. That's for sure.

DB: Now you referred to an article in **Stars and Stripes** on October 1st as being pretty expressive about every GI's thoughts about the fighting. And you said that you would send it home to your parents. Is it still in your…?

CRH: It might be. It might be in my scrapbook. Mother "scrapped" everything. She took headlines out of the **Times**, the **Seattle Times** every night. I'll see if I've got something like that. I really don't know. There again, using the facilities available to you, that issue of the **Stars and Stripes**, if we know what it was, will come up on your computer. If you hit the right buttons long enough it will come up. I don't know what it said. It was probably a description of fighting in Italy.

DB: Hold on one second.

CRH: So you had to get over it.

DB: He could be critical. [*In regard to Sgt. Bill Mauldin, the cartoonist*].

CRH: Oh yeah. He could be very critical. I don't want to waste time on that. There's a great cartoon that shows some very portly, obviously rear echelon-type higher officers and they are standing on an Italian ridge somewhere and one of them says, "What a great sunset view; I wonder if there is one for the enlisted men." That sort of thing.

DB: That put this very well.

CRH: It was a lot like that.

DB: Now on October 11th you wrote that your Company's first job after spending a week or two above the beach at Normandy was "When the German 7th Army was cut off near Avranches. Now is this the same as a reference that you make in your October 12th letter to the breakout from Normandy?

CRH: Yes, yes, that's exactly it.

DB: I deduced from a couple things that you said there, and through my reading of the general situation, that there was a final salient of Germans there in Normandy…

CRH: Yes, right.

DB: …That had to be taken care of before you all could feel secure enough to build a breakout around that.

CRH: Yeah.

DB: Ok.

CRH: And also you have a question of roads, which are really usable and everything. If you look at the map, everything was jammed south of the mouth of the river Seine. So that meant that it limited your road selection even more and, in those days of course, they didn't have very many good roads in Europe, period. Maybe we didn't here either. When I was a kid you know there was only two lanes around here from Mexico to Canada for the most part.

DB: Highway 99.

CRH: Yeah, and 101; one or the other. Probably 99 and 101 down to California. I am not sure, and Europe was in the same boat. Then, as you come through the Norman Peninsula, it's got some rugged small forest areas and hills. There's a place there called 'The Norman Alps.' They're probably 500 to 1,300 feet in height, but, they're rough, rocky and, so, you couldn't move very many men - together with tanks and supply trucks and so forth – over them at any speed. These same little roads. Roads that the Romans probably built. I know when we made the breakout from Avranches, we went through a Roman village. The Romans were at that little town 2000 years ago, for the same reason we were there. To cross one of the little rivers [in that case, the Selune], you need to cross

to get out of there. So we had to break through there, and the big battle was at Falaise - where the Canadians and the Brits were supposed to join, eventually, with the Americans in a kind of closure movement, entrapment, where the Germans would be caught in behind it - and we never quite closed those jaws. So, the Germans literally walked out - some of them leaving all their equipment - and walking within 50 or 100 yards of the Allies, at night.

DB: In retreat.

CRH: Yeah, retreat out of there.

DB: As opposed to having their whole division get it.

CRH: That's right or be killed by the bombers during the day. Remember there were 18 hours of daylight, so there were fighter aircraft and bombers overhead constantly. The stories of the German soldiers who got out of there are pretty impressive. Anybody who has ever done that sort of thing realizes - you know - how good they were and, also, how lucky they were. Some famous German soldiers literally walked out of Normandy - on their tiptoes - and made it through that gap.

DB: So, they made it through, but, on the other hand, you all secured the area.

CRH: Yes, right. Then the whole front collapsed – because, see if this is Normandy, then everything collapsed because it couldn't be defended – and, then, that was complicated after the 15th of August by people, coming up from the Mediterranean, who had landed in the middle of August and started up the Rhone valley. That made it even more dangerous for the men, the German men, in western and central France and they just had to get out of there. So they all retreated to eastern France and they desperately tried to regroup, which they did. We ran out of gasoline about the same time they desperately needed some time just to put units together again.

DB: This was around early September?

CRH: September, yeah.

DB: And then things got slow for a while.

CRH: Right. Well, then, we started again. There was a big attack the night after Election Day in '44, so, I think that was the 7th of November. Anyway, the next morning was one of the worst mornings I can possibly remember in terms of weather and violence. We made an attack on the river Seille, S-E-I-L-L-E, and that became famous in the 3rd Army, partly because even Patton thought about canceling the attack, because the weather was so bad

DB: And that was in eastern France?

CRH: Yes. It's north of Nancy and fairly east of, maybe slightly north of the town of Metz.

DB: Was it successful?

CRH: Yes it was.

DB: I imagine that was helpful to have that region, you know, once the Germans counterattacked (in December '44).

CRH: Then the next big attack was Thanksgiving time, the day after Thanksgiving in '44. We attacked in the region of Faulquemont and the Maginot Line and St. Avold. We went through the Maginot, so, we were getting supplies again, obviously, by this time.

DB: Were the Germans manning the Maginot bunkers?

CRH: Oh yeah. It faces the wrong way, but a lot of those forts had rotating cupolas on them with 37-mm cannons and machine guns, so it wasn't a complete walk over. It was still very dangerous, and we lost Mitchell up there. Mitchell lost an eye up there in artillery fire. It was violent for a couple of days to say the least. But anyway, we did have gasoline and ammunition by that time.

DB: So after say the 15th of September, or after early October, things became very stable for a while.

CRH: Not very mobile. You did move a little bit at a time because Patton was ordered to sit still and not attack. They were trying to figure out what they would do next and Patton kept doing what he called "spoiling attacks," where he would figure out where the Germans were and try to destroy any plans they might be making to attack us. Mostly, Patton kept looking for some soft spot on the German line where he could make a breakthrough and then tell Ike, "Look, we are breaking through here. We could do this. And, as a matter of fact, my troops." He always called this 'reconnaissance in force.' He was told not to make an attack so he was careful always to report "…not attacking, I am patrolling in great strength" that sort of thing. Well it might be a whole regiment out there, 3000 men patrolling and it was an attack and everybody knew it. It just drove the other army commanders crazy, because they knew Patton was trying to get to be the hammer that got into Germany. That was his ambition, to be first across the Rhine, and they all knew it and Ike knew it too.

DB: Why would Ike want to hold people back?

CRH: Well he figured, and I think, rightly, that if we kept attacking across the whole length of the Rhine, first of all, we could use all of our strength. We would use the Canadians and the Brits plus the three or four American armies, probably four American armies, 1st, 9th, 3rd, and 7th. Four armies, and he would just sort of use them all as a steam

roller and the Germans wouldn't be able to concentrate their defense any place because they were being attacked overwhelmingly, in the air….everywhere…

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**Interview 11/24/01**
**102 min.**

DB: This is November 24, interview with Robert Harmon conducted by Daniel Burnstein at Seattle University, Seattle Washington. You remark in your November 8, 1944 letter that there was a lot of sickness due to the cold and rain in November. Was that sickness like pneumonia and were people evacuated?

CRH: Some were evacuated. The worst case was a chap named Lockhart and he had a continuing bad cough and they analyzed it and found out he had Tuberculosis. Probably living in the rain had triggered it. I think he had grown up as so many of those kids did in some mill or steel town in the hills without any medical care and had latent TB and the army never new it until he really got sick. At least one good friend went home with trenchfoot, very very bad. The rest of us, I know I had that ongoing whatever it was I had got and I had to go to the hospital for the next summer. Hepatitis.

DB: So you were fighting that the whole time you were in combat basically?

CRH: Yeah. I didn't know what it was. I had no idea. Every once in a while everybody got GI's anyway so you just figured oh, well it's that but that diarreha was the indication of it and nobody knew enough to know and nobody would have cared. If you had diareaha that was too bad. That wasn't going to excuse you for duty unless you were falling down sick which was fine and I wasn't. I just went from 200 down to 160.

DB: Wow. But now was part of that because of the lack of food?

CRH: A whole bunch of us got sick at the same time. We probably all ended up with it but I was the only one I knew that had it. I think I can trace it to a meal at the house, or in the front yard of the mayor of (French town) in France not too far from L'mar and we had slaughtered a pig and that's one way to get that. Anyway, I got sick. Lost the 40 lbs.

DB: I am sure that made you tired, fatigued at times.

CRH: Frankly Dan, I have no idea. You know at that age you are young and strong. You have a lot of pep and you were tired all the time just from doing whatever we were doing.

DB: Yeah, yeah.

CRH: I can't recall ever missing a day of duty, ever skipping an hour of guard, ever skipping a patrol.

DB: And finally they detected it the following summer.

CRH: Well, the following summer things slowed down enough so you could not feel silly going on sick call and everybody else dying and getting wounded and you are saying "I've got diareaha" wouldn't do the trick very well. But finally things died down enough in June or July and it was nice because I got sent up to the big hospital at Munich which by the way I think was where the hospital that was based out of Providence hospital went. We had an army hospital. It was primarily recruited from and activated from a bunch of doctors most of them were from Pill Hill and I think a lot of the nurses were. I may be wrong in that. Anyway we had a big German army hospital in Munich and it was nice. I was up there in the morning I would be only duty and afternoons I would have free so I would walk around town. I got to know well, a bombed-out downtown Munich pretty well.

DB: Yeah I remember that from the letter. Basically they just told you there's not much we can do…

CRH: Yeah, they gave me a healthy diet. They jammed me full of eggs and cream. All the milk they could get their hands on and whatever rich food I could eat which was probably a lot of it.

DB: And your system got rid of it.

CRH: I guess so. You never quite lose it. I think I may have told you I gave blood for years after the war so I was handing on. Finally someone said, "Did you ever have hepatitis?"

DB: Uh huh. So they told you not to give.

CRH: Too late. Well my system turned out lots of blood with no problem so I was glad to go to these student blood drives when I was a student there. Finally I was told, "oh no, you can't do that."

DB: Just in case probably.

CRH: It's not that it would hurt me. I handed it on to them. Whoever got it.

DB: Well um in your November 16 letter you say, you are talking to Neil, and you are saying "to tell mom that I wrote Abby".

CRH: It's an aunt of mine.

DB: It's an aunt of yours.

CRH: My father's only sister. Abby Harmon. Spinster, clerk to the Skagit county auditor for 8 million years.

DB: You were close to her?

CRH: Nice lady. Yeah, she was a great lady. Again, a very funny story. She gave us lots of her parents' things. My brother and I got you know, lots of things from the house and so when her estate would be broken up she had already handed us a lot of stuff. Well the way in which the law covers something like that to make sure that the other kids who hadn't gotten this. The way the law proceeds they just simply said that Neil and Bob were not receive anything from her estate which sounds pretty cold. I always thought it was funny. We were the only people I ever knew who were cut out of the will. We already had a supply of loot.

DB: Now in that same letter you that after you said to Neil to stay out as long as possible and not to join a rifle company you say, "Don't think that my moral is low. I am doing ok and I have a lot fun considering my position." Now I wanted to ask you about…

CRH: You have to realize that the military, like this game you and I are in. It's full of laughter. It's all an internal joke and the jokes that people who understand why something in particularly funny. I don't care, here we tell Dean jokes or other things, constantly.

DB: So there was a lot of laughs along with the difficulties.

CRH: Sure. The Germans were chasing us a French road with direct artillery fire one time, the shells landing right behind us, truck going as fast as it could with everybody on it except one man, and he was running like crazy and we were all cheering for him, praying for him and everybody was laughing at him at the same time and he was probably cursing and praying a laughing too. Because you realize how funny. The truck wasn't going to stop for him. Slowed just enough to let him catch up.

DB: Did he catch up?

CRH: Oh yeah. And he was one of the most popular people in the entire company. Nobody wanted to see him hurt for any reason whatsoever but no one was going to stop but we all realized how funny it was at the same time because he is running along and he was chubby so he wasn't in the greatest of shape.

DB: Now a couple of the books I have read, Hines, Soldier's Tale and then Ambrose and others say that, they talk about how war is at times something that is horrible but at the same time people can sort of like it, in a sense in that it offers opportunites to act skillfully in conditions of danger and offers opportunities to prove yourself in action. Can you relate to that?

CRH: Yeah, that's pretty true. I wouldn't have any problem with that and you can figure on writing around that if you want to with great confidence. The problem with that then is that sooner or later you figure out in the infantry, the Air Force too even quicker I bet, you figure out the odds against you and then you begin to get nervous and what was kind of a kiddy sense of fun diminishes as you begin to realize that this is horribly dangerous. But there is that sense of skill you that we know what we are doing here and there was, of course, pride in what we were doing. We knew that we were the good guys.

DB: Did some people in your squad or squads like it more and some people liked it less?

CRH: Probably but at this distance I couldn't tell you. I think mostly it was simply a question of survival and making yourself adjust to being patient with the circumstances. And being disciplined. Of course there was a lot of dedication to that squad and there was personally a lot of dedication to the squad leaders.

DB: That makes a big difference.

CRH: Oh yeah. Everybody liked our gunner. The corporal gunner, they liked John Mitchell the squad leader and they liked his corporal. It helps.

DB: Yeah. I'm sure.

CRH: The guy who drove the truck was integral to the whole thing because he was just sort of central to everything we could do with that gun and everybody liked him. He was a very funny, very in some cases laconic, but otherwise very funny and very companionable. Polish guy, Frank Marsak. And everybody like Marsak so there were three people I can think of right there of this tiny group who would have been integrating factors.

DB: Key figures.

CRH: Yeah, right.

DB: Now your November 15th letter of '44, oh this is something I asked you about a minute ago. You say that you are rarely full. That the other guys are remarking about how big of an appetite you had. So, obviously the jaundice didn't detract from your appetite.

CRH: No. I always had an enormous metabolism. Very good metabolism.

DB: Did you guys get enough to eat? Or sometimes not?

CRH: Many times not. But a lot of times you could supplemement the rations which was why you would be out digging up potatoes in the French fields. For instance, and you would just stuff yourself with things like that. Another thing that is really sort of humorous if you think about how this must have smelled. Somebody in the squad introduced us to the joys of onion sandwiches. The French fields had all these big white

onions and that sounded terrible until this guy explained “no, no put sugar on it, you are going to like this.” And it was a fresh veggie so God knows we hadn’t washed for weeks and onion sandwiches we must have been a pretty sniffy bunch. I remember that many a times.

DB: They weren’t bad huh.

CRH: No, and then the carrots were ripe in the fields. Beets were ripe. Turnips were but I don’t recall that we pulled any turnips. Anyway, you would supplement your rations whereever you could. One thing you would not eat ordinarily was a civilian bread. They were filling it with bread helper if you will. Probably some sort of bad sawdust. Anyway, it even looked bad, tasted sour. Nobody ate it.

DB: Did you all get bread from the army?

CRH: Oh yeah, right which was kind of like cake. It would be a white bread and if possible they would have some jam.

DB: Was that on the good days?

CRH: Very good. It would have to be a very good day.

DB: To get bread.

CRH: Or you would be able to go through a chow line. For instance, if you and I had a gun here out of the Irish steps, we they were feeding back behind Harborview hospital where you would definitely be where the Germans couldn’t see you, the chow line would be running back there.

DB: It would be that far away?

CRH: Oh yeah.

DB: So you would have to walk?

CRH: Yeah. Probably only two at a time. Something like that.

DB: But on a lot of days that was not possible.

CRH: Most days it wasn’t possible.

DB: And you would eat what they call K-rations?

CRH: We had K-rations and at other times they would try to bring up some other rations of one kind or another. But the hot meal was always the great thing if you could do it.

DB: Chow line.

CRH: The chow line. And our sergeant was very good about trying to do it whenever possible. It was always his option.

DB: K-rations were?

CRH: Tiny cans. The cans were almost exactly the same size as a small tuna can and it would have some sort of meat in it or…

DB: Like a dried…

CRH: Probably a baked burger of some kind. Some sort of ground meat. It wouldn't be a slice of steak.

DB: It would be canned meat.

CRH: Canned meat yeah. For breakfast they had figured out how to can some sort of scrambled eggs with stuff in them. I forget what and so you would heat that over one of these little gas stoves and I told you, those were made out of sand and gasoline. It was apparently invented in the desert somewhere. Either in Africa, or by the British who were over in the California manuever ground where I was.

DB: Did you use Sterno tablets too?

CRH: No, I never heard of Sterno. And if we had we wouldn't have had it. No, all you needed was a little gasoline and a match and the sand. That was all. And then there was a candy bar, really really hard.

DB: This was all part of the K-rations?

CRH: Yeah, and a stick of gum. Maybe a pack of gum. Little pack of cigarettes. I forget how many because I never smoked them. Matches of course. Tiny bit of toilet paper. I forget what else. And they had a very special little that you opened this can with. And to this day you will see people like myself who have one of those as kind of a souvenier.

DB: The key was on the can or?

CRH: Must have been. And it may have just been tossed into the package. I don't know.

DB: There was a lot of stuff in these little cans.

CRH: Yeah, and it's just about the size of a pound of butter. And then there would be the little can and the little candy and the little cigarettes and toilet paper and so on.

DB: And was there another type of canned ration that was a little more, you know, something you could heat up more?

CRH: Yeah. They had what were called "10 and 1's". And that came in a case about so and they weren't quite a big as a number 17 can but they were, I bet they were as big as these coffee cans we use here in the department. And they would have various ingredients in them so there'd be ration enough, ration of 10 servings of stew for 10 men. 10 servings of God knows what for 10 men so that I think a case was supposed to feed you all day long.

DB: And sometimes you all could heat things up that way?

CRH: Yeah, probably not right in the lines but you would be in someplace where you could get back behind the line and fire up your little gas stove and you would be out of sight and you would be down below the levels of shells if you could or preferably in somebody's barn or house.

DB: That was relatively a treat compared to K-rations.

CRH: Oh yeah, right. There was a lot more of it and you could make it more tasty for one thing.

DB: So but a lot of times you had to deal with just the K-rations.

CRH: Yes, and those went on your belt. How, what the devil did we do with those? You probably had a little pack.

DB: Like where you put your canteen.

CRH: Yeah, only they didn't have anything as nice as that canteen. The canteen actually had hooks on it and it hooked right onto your pistol belt that you usually wore. On your ammunition belt you wore to carry your rifle ammunition. But they just offered a little bit more of sort of a selection. And they certainly offered more in the way of volume. A tuna fish can is not a hell of a lot of food for grown men but you get three of those little packs for a day. That would be your ration so if you were going to be out on a patrol and you knew you would be back for a whole day you would draw breakfast, lunch, and dinner K-rations so you got separate things and then people would trade around. Another thing they had in them was dissolved, or dried coffee or something so you could make hot water, again on these sand stoves and your canteen cup and you could make coffee. Well, a lot of people didn't like it so they would trade the lunch pack, had lemonade I think it was and a lot of people kind of liked that lemonade. So you would see people trading around and then you get people like myself who didn't smoke so I would be trading cigarettes for those chocolate bars.

DB: You had a sweet tooth.

CRH: Always. Yeah, right. Still do.

DB: Now, did the men typically have enough toilet paper? You mentioned toilet paper being in the cans.

CRH: Probably, probably not. It would much matter. You know you were living out in the woods most of the time. There was an unending supply of leaves.
DB: I see. I see.

CRH: I wouldn't surprised if we probably did have enough. Who knows. Be interesting to know, at this remove I have no idea, the little stars and stripes paper that came up, the newspaper, was so popular that I can't imagine anybody dare to use any of it for toilet paper unless it was year old issue or something which you wouldn't have. I think they would have killed over that.

DB: Uh huh.

CRH: 'Cause there was never enough Star's and Stripes to go around. The two of you, you always dug in by twos as I've told you, the two of you would probably read the paper together.

DB: But you do remember some men having to use leaves huh?

CRH: Yeah.

DB: Now um when you lived in the French houses, was the family usually nice? Were they usually appreciative of what the GI's were doing and was this the case in Alssaince-Lorraine as well?

CRh: Yes, I think so. I can only remember one case where I know we sort of alienated the people who were there and that was a cold and rainy situation in someplace. Maybe this time of the year. Maybe the middle of the year. And we were using the kitchen and the mother and daughter, some young girl about 14 I suppose, were trying to take a bath of hot water, and we were cooking and we just said, "nobody's washing, wash up". They chatted at us in French for that for a while but we refused to (French word) which means go away fast.

DB: And then you went (French word).

CRH: (French word) must be one of the French words I ever learned. And I learned how to trade for eggs and I could still ask where the German machine guns are but (French word) because you didn't want the French around you partly because you were afraid they'd get hurt. So you would ask them to (French word) and if they didn't (French word) then you ask them the (2nd French word). Anyway, we didn't move, but I imagine that lady, probably until the day she died, probably told stories about the ill-mannered Americans.

DB: Americans.

CRH: Here daughter was trying to bathe. We could care less.

DB: They called you (C-something)?

CRH: No, I just used that term.

DB: Ok.

CRH: That's probably what she called us.

DB: yeah.

CRH: (French word).

DB: You sometimes asked civilians if they knew where the German machine guns were.

CRH: That's the first part. That's the first military French I learned. And for some reason I was supposed to find out and so some guy I knew told me how to ask that. (French word) is the French word for machine gun.

DB: Say that again.

CRH: M-a-I-l-t-r-u-e-s-e. Put a plural, "S" on the end of it Mailtrueses but don't pronounce it.

DB: Right. So they were good intelligence sources?

CRH: Sometimes. Sometimes bad but they were the only thing you had. You could at least try to see if they a) knew something, b) if they would tell you straight.

DB: And then the mortars would try to knock those out?

CRH: Yeah, or you would be told to go get them.

DB: You know, like in a patrol? Now your November 29th letter says that you talk about the time that you went to mass with a pistol on your hip and you all excited quite a bit of attention.

CRH: That's probably in some small church around Falcomal. We were in two of the biggest attacks 3rd Army made before the Bulge. On the night after election day which I think must have been November 8th and then the day after Thanksgiving day which in those days was probably November 25th or 26th. And the 26th, whenever it would be they went through the Mageneu. You and I talked about that last week. And I do remember

going to mass and I think it was in this little town of Normanee, where I still had friends. But I wouldn't insist on it but I remember going to mass.

DB: You say that they were somewhat afraid of you perhaps due to German scare stories.

CRH: When we first came in there, the Germans had done their best to make the Alsacians and even the Lorrainers think that the Americans would mistreat them because the Americans would regard them as German. And they had tried of course to assimilate that area. Had been trying since 843, Treaty of Verdun.

DB: Did you hear stories about that? Was that the rumor, I mean did you experience any hostility per se?

CRH: No, no not really. That would all come from material that I read after the war. During the time…They probably would have been loath to be very disrespectful to us. After all, here's a bunch of young people who don't speak their language running around heavily armed and obviously, not at all concerned about them in terms of what we were there to do. So they would have probably been pretty circumspect in what they said to us but I do remember many cases of kindness. Many cases of people being very nice to us and helping out in any way they could. Being respectful to us.

DB: When you went into that church did people get uh…

CRH: They may have. The funny thing about that of course is that they know what you are doing for sure when you go to communion. You know, they may have though before that we were just there sort of spying on them and then we went to communion with everybody else.

DB: That allayed the tension. Now you mentioned some envelopes that you had sent that were dirty due to mortar shell droppings near by.

CRH: That probably occurred that same time that we had that wonderful story about Bill Corollo being stuck on the gun and we were getting so much shelling right on the gun itself and close to the gun and that's probalby when that happened because I remember that there were things along the edge the my foxhole that had been struck with shrapnal. It didn't come into the hole. It never struck me obviously. I don't remember. But that could have been when that happened.

DB: Are some of these letters, some of the letters you said that the envelopes were dirty.

CRH: They might be. If you see one you might mark it 'cause you could use a line about you know, it still shows evidence.

DB: Right.

CRH: I think I told you I was writing. I began on Thanksgiving morning, deals with an aid man who was killed, and I think I told you that story near Argentan. I dug out his armband because it still has his blood on it. Describing it precisely. I haven't looked at it in years. Pulled it out to have it in front of me when I was writing.

DB: And you have that at home?

CRH: After Christmas, we'll do one of these up at the house.
DB: Ok.

CRH: And everybody, just like we all do in the academic world, have an "I love me" wall with all these awards you get and it's a thing. You can play with those. Kick around my metals. My dad's are there.

DB: Oh yeah? From World War I.

CRH: And I don't have any of his Mexican ones. I don't know what they got for that but they would have gotten a campaign ribbon. I have some of his other things. Anyway.

DB: Bob was there any provision made for Thanksgiving?

CRH: Yes. They did their best and as I recall we had Thanksgiving dinner. And there may be an allusion in the letters even to it. You may find that, I don't recall. But I would not be surprised. We did not make that jump off into the Mageneau until the day after Thanksgiving so I would swear I bet that sergeant Shepherd fed us a dinner.

DB: Turkey?

CRH: No idea. I think that's what they would expect. I haven't any idea now.

DB: But Christmas, you all were too up to your heads in…

CRH: Right. Well I was in a house so I actually cooked us a Christmas dinner. By that time I had discovered that in Luxenbourg they have a custom of drying, or had, no longer do it, drying the meat simply by hanging it with special hooks in the chimney. Wood chimney. And they cooked a lot of times right on the hearth. So once I found that out then I knew where to get a ready supply of meat. I would have cooked dinner for us at that house.

DB: Now there's a letter in here that's in German and I want to show you that in just a second. I think it's from Werner Schroder's collection of his letters from the war. I believe he is telling about the battle of November 13th in which he was captured by the 80th division.

CRH: Oh that's that chappy who came to visit us in Washington DC.

DB: Right. Can I show you that?

DB: On December 3rd 1944 you tell about a quote, “land lease agreement or reading material that you had with three or four boys from another squad.” So…

CRH: I don’t remember who they were.

DB: Were you all able to discuss the books?
CRH: Probably although you wouldn’t see the squads that much. Very rarely did you ever put the guns together. There weren’t that many. There were only nine. There were three platoons, three squads, nine guns. So you allow there to be five miles from one end to the other going around the regiment or something. So you wouldn’t see them all that often but you would know everybody’s taste and they would know what you were getting and so. I would be interested to know who else was reading my Shakespeare’s besides myself and Joe Ragnoe.

DB: So just occassionally you would see them and trade off and you would know each other.

CRH: Or the company would move some place. When we moved from Nomanee to go into the attack in the Mageneu we moved quite a ways. Probably 15 or 20 kilometers.

DB: And then you would see them.

CRH: Yeah, you lagered up with, they used that German word, until you got orders about what we were going to do. We might all be in the same small town. I really don’t remember. I had forgotten that we did this.

DB: So, Joe Ragnoe was a reading buddy within your squad. Did you guys talk about the reading material?

CRH: Oh yeah, right. The two of us talked very seriously about it.

DB: Did he go on to go to college?

CRH: I have never known but I don’t think so. I corresponded with him along until he died. I never got the impression that he went to college and I never asked him. He was married. I know that.

DB: Basically you guys were the intellectuals of the squad.

CRH: Mitchell was the intellectual I bet. That guy had been a professional artist. I am not an intellectual. I am just a good student. I never have been.

DB: I mean that in a good sense.

CRH: Better read than some other people.

DB: I don't mean that in a lofty sort of sense.

CRH: Reminds me of some girl, this was probably as she was trying to pick me up situation, I can't remember but she was astounded, someplace, probably a coffee shop, I was reading the editorial pages and eventually it turned out that she thought I was trying to impress people. Reading the editorials. Oh well. I don't know who else read. I don't remember if Mitchell ever borrowed my books. I have no idea.

DB: Did most guys read things like comic books and stuff like that.

CRH: We all read comic books. We all read Stars and Stripes and Yank and the comic books and everybody read my Reader's Digest. Some out of sheer desperation read my daily Olympians and I don't know what I borrowed from other people. And my Collier's magazine. I think mother, I think there's a note, "please renew my subscription".

DB: Yeah. Collier's was sort of like a Reader's Digest?

CRH: No, it was…Precisely it was the same as the Saturday Evening Post in the old format which was about this long and about this wide and very nice print.

DB: This long?

CRH: It was about as big as, not as thick, but as big as that red folder. I will bring you a copy. I've got a neat one at home that I saved from the 1950's and some Mormon down in the Utah country, "Why I have five wives". And it is on my main bookshelf in the living room. They had some good people writing for them. They had one guy, I think it was Quintin Reynolds worked for them.

DB: And he was a famous, he wrote novels about the war right?

CRH  He wrote novels or he wrote realistic stuff. He had a couple of books on the war for sure. And I think he may have been in Europe before the second World War doing things there then. Some of these correspondents. Anyway.

DB: Now you mention about, "Our job of outposting towns". What did that mean?

CRH: Well if a town was to be defended you wouldn't usually defend it from within the town if you could avoid that. You would go as far out as you could sensibly go without getting yourself either lost or in danger of being attacked or cut off. And then dig the gun in there so you would keep the bad guys as far from whatever town you were in. For instance, at battalion headquarters, our company had headquarters in a town. They wouldn't mind if you were right in the town but they would be a lot happier if you were three, four, five hundred yards out from the town. Preferably at a "Y" in the road so you could control, literally, three roads with the gun. So that's what outposting meant. And

we may or may not have infantry around us to protect us. Otherwise we would protect ourselves which is why we were all heavily armed.

DB: Now you say also in this letter, "I know that if I come out of this ok that I will certainly be a much better and more capable citizen from my army experience."

CRH: Yeah. I think that's true.
DB: Do you want to elaborate just a little on that Bob?

CRH: This idea that you knew you had learned how to cooperate with others and that you knew you could do it. You could see some benefits from mutual cooperation. You could feel that you were literally, saving the world, and we were. No problem about that. And I think you just got that sense of your civic responsibility. Of course you learned about that, as I am sure you did in the Boy Scouts or something too. It was a lot more real in the 319th.

DB: Were you in the Boy Scouts?

CRH: Yeah.

DB: What badge did you make?

CRH: Probably just whatever the lowest level was. It was difficult for us living out of town as we did. One of our parents had to drive us into the city because there weren't any rural scouts in those days. And they would have worked late already and they had to turn around and drive you back to a meeting. So were weren't in very long. I was probably always, what was the lowest rank, Cub Scouts?

DB: Well Cub Scouts were like younger versions of Boy Scouts.

CRH: Well maybe when I went to high school. I must have been a tenderfoot but I bet I didn't last very long in that. Would have been too complicated for my parents. I still remember the scout master. Great guy and great wife and they did their best before war rationing shut us down to run us around places like the Olympic penninsula. My first hikes in the Olympic mountains were with them.

DB: Campouts too?

CRH: Yeah. The notion to duty. They were a young unmarried couple probably in their 20's taking a bunch of scouts out on the weekend. Dr. Guppy who used to academic vice president and I did some work for the Sea Scouts but it was never anything like that. We maintained a boat for them for a while.

DB: Do you know how to sail Bob?

CRH: I am a damn good sailor. But, the important thing about that boat is that it had an engine that needed working on and Bill was a merchant marine engineer during the second World War.

DB: You say here Bob that, you are talking to Neil, and you are telling him to stay out of the army, wait until you get drafted. They you say, "I've been through the mill in the states in Garrison and over here in combat and I just assume…" well I guess you are talking about him "I just assume that he didn't take some of the stuff that army life calls for."

CRH: I probably was writing to my folks.

DB: Yeah, yeah. So what did you mean by that? " I just assume…"

CRH: Well there's a lot of nonsense that goes on in the military because they have so many men to deal with who don't know how to get along with one another, not in the sense of fighting, but don't know how simply to cooperate, scrub the barracks down. You know you literally had to take some people by the hand and say this is a scrub brush and that's a dirty floor and here's how you clean it. And the only way to do that easily, I am not sure it's the best, but was to simply assume that nobody knew and then treat them all pretty much like they were ignorant until they got it perfect and the way to get it perfect was, nobody got a pass until they got it perfect. So, there was that sort of thing.

DB: Is that what the call "Mickey Mouse" stuff?

CRH: Yeah. Right.

DB: Was that the term that was used?

CRH: The other one was "chicken shit".

DB: "Chicken shit". Yeah.

CRH: The two of them. Mickey Mouse was the polite term. But there were just lots of things that exeplified I think the sudden accession to power of people who really didn't know how to exercise power. Maybe they were doing their damnedest to be really good but still didn't know how to do things very well.

DB: Was it worse for  the ones that were not regular army, than those that were regular army?

CRH: Oh, we had virtually no regular army. We figured that the regular army was 255 or 60 thousand men in 1939. We eventually went to a combined military from '39 to beginning of the Korean war or something I think there were 17 million people enrolled. That's Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force. That's a lot of people so there were very few, for instance in the regiment most of knew who the West Point

officers were. And very few companies had a West Pointer and if they did they were really proud of it. And our Colonel was a West Pointer. At least the one who ran us from the Seigfreid line to, I guess until we came home.

DB: Was he the head of the company?

CRH: Head of the regiment. Yeah, in other words he had 3300 men under him. So he would be what would be called a “Full Bird”. That is he would have eagles on his shoulder.

DB: He’s a colonel. So…

CRH: Anyway, there was a lot of nonsense. And I think most of it was probably necessary. You tried to take all these disparate people and weld them together and just get them to all cooperate at once. As I told you, that’s why they teach you to march. Just to get you started on a very basic physical level of turning to your left when you are told to turn left.

DB: It could come in handy when you were on a march through the woods sometime?

CRH: Oh yeah. Or get people used to doing things right on time. If you are moving a patrol say down through this, the Irish Steps here, probably all of it would be hand signals. Like athletics, if people aren’t watching the quarterback or the point-guard in basketball you know, and a lot of guys don’t, it screws up the whole system. So you just have to learn to cooperate. But there were people who were simply not very good and it was kind of funny how they were treated, with contempt, but you couldn’t ignore their stripes. If they had the stripes they were the kind of guy who could say, “Ok, KP for you” or “no pass”. That was another one. “No pass for you.” Those are dreaded words.

DB: Were the guys who were not athletic, not coordinated, I mean some guys are kind of constitutionally uncoordinated or whatever…

CRH: They had a hell of a time but they did it anyway.

DB: Yeah.

CRH: And some units would do their best to try to shame them into doing what they had to do. Others, men would do their best to try to carry the weak ones. You were told, the whole company is going to be on top of Queen Anne Hill in an hour and a half from now, and you would do your best to make sure that they got to Queen Anne Hill. Others wouldn’t. It just depended. Throughout the whole service it varied from place to place.

DB: How about in combat? Would these uncoordinated guys wind up getting killed often times?

CRH: Probably no more so than the rest of us. And then sometimes too you would find out that they were amazingly coordinated. This very close friend of mine who was a professional artist, who did that sketch of me, I don't think ever did anything in the way of athletics and the only sign that he could be coordinated was that he was a brilliant pianist. He laughed later on about all the things that he learned he could do.

DB: He had that potential.
CRH: Yeah right. He became the company runner. He was the guy that was told, "Take this message and go across that dangerous field."

DB: That was a dangerous job.

CRH: Right. And he learned that he could run and dodge and crawl on his stomach just like everybody else. Certainly his parents would have been astonshed to find him doing it and he was sort of amused that he could do it.

DB: Now, in your December 3rd letter Bob…

CRH: By the way, there were a lot of people who were rejected for service. You would have to get the selective service records but there were a lot of men who reported for service and who were turned down. Probably as a result of diet and so on. Probably as a result of the years of the Depression. It's a very interesting statistical, sociological study and people like Chuck Lawrence, for instance, may have some stats of that. Sort of things in which they are interested.

DB: Right.

CRH: Jim Hogan might. Jim Hogan is interested in scatter sight housing. He may know something about population questions. Anyway.

DB: In your December 3rd letter to Neil, I just wanted to clarify something in that letter. Did your brother wind up leaving college as a freshman to join the Air Corps. That's what it sounds like.

CRH: He finished his first year, joined the Air Force, trained for a while in basic training, was eventually told in 1945 that they would not need any pilots anymore and I think he had choice of whether he wanted to stay in or be discharged. And so I believe he was actually discharged from the Air Corps cadet program and reenlisted immediately.

DB: In the Army?

CRH: In the Army Air Force. He had the option to enlist back into the Air Force and he did. He was with the 10th Rescue squad flying out of Elmandor field in Anchorage, running rescue missions.

DB: Now you speak of a souvenier surrender leaflet signed…you ok Bob?

CRH: I am fine thank you.

DB: Want some more water?

CRH: I will get some more. You have seen those souvenier leaflets.

DB: Well, this one you sent to Neil. And you say it is signed by the "Big Boss" himself, who I assume is Ike or…?

CRH: I would too. You'll see them, I think all of those origianls are in that packet. But they might be in the stuff that I have in another folder that I have in another folder at home. I know I have five of them together somewhere. Probably they are in the collection, I have a bunch of World War II money, you ought to see that too so we will do that in January.

DB: Now this one you say was unusual though. In the letter, you said it was unusual.

CRH: Could have been signed by Ike maybe. I have things signed by Bradley, I really don't know. It could be. And then I have an interesting one in Russian. By chance, do you read Russian? Anyway, I have got one that Russian prisoners who would become German soldiers as a unit, turned up with the Germans and they were in Normandy so they would drop some of these Russian speaking leaflets. It says (Russian word), in letters that any of us could read. And apparently it goes on to give the same song and dance about "the war is lost". Let me get some more water.

DB: Go ahead Bob.

CRH: I am just hoping in some way or another I am all over this communicable part of this…

DB: Now you said here in this letter that you "…are not sure if you are going to write Marie."

CRH: Oh, that's Neil's girlfriend.

DB: Ok.

CRH: And they lived down the bay from us a little bit. She was one of those girls who wanted to marry Neil. Neil had a long selection of girls who wanted to marry him.

DB: Oh.

CRH: I took her some place and I found out that I liked her a great deal.

DB: Jeanne?

CRH: Yeah. Neil had been going out with her.

DB: Did he wind up marrying one of the girls?

CRH: No. He did do something interesting. He married a girl, a lot of us do this, he married a girl who looked and acted a lot like the girl in whom he was really interested. And that girl, he met here, she joined the Holy Names nuns and eventually, they had been engaged, and she joined the nuns. The woman he married was a hell of a lot like that girl. Very interesting and I think you see that quite often in life. It's almost as current I think as the idea that you marry somebody a lot like mom if you liked mom at all.

DB: Right, right. And you go on in this letter to say that, "I haven't been home for so long, I really don't know her anymore. Same with Mick. I guess she wrote a lot but she quit after I said stop writing. She's still the same to me but after I got to England and in France, I should have written more I suppose but I figured, to hell with it. It was hard enough to think of something to write home in those days."

CRH: That was in '44 I wrote that?

DB: That was in December of '44.

CRH: Ok.

DB: In these books I am reading, they talk about how the combat world is so all-encompassing that the past almost becomes unreal. It becomes very distant from people. Is that kind of what you were alluding to there?

CRH: Yeah, I think so. By any chance did you read that article about Nick Grossie and me that appeared in the November Sun?

DB: Oh yeah.

CRH: I mentioned something in there about, "you are on an island".

DB: Yes.

CRH: There it is. You are on an island. And there's the whole Army and then there is your unit and finally there is your squad and then there's the guy you dig in with and the island gets smaller and smaller. It's hard to move outside of the island after a while or be concerened with what's outside of the island.

DB: Yeah. Did you mean to be humorous in saying, "There really isn't a lot of danger for me except from mortar and artillery fire."?

CRH: Probably. If that letter was to Neil, I was being humorous. But there is a vast distinciton between mortar and artillery fire which is impersonal after all. Somebody who is aiming a rifle or a machine gun at you, and there was the blessing, that's why I tell myself I was an interested bystander throughout much of the war, the rifle guys did the fighting. They were the ones who got shot at directly and only was I engaged in combat in Recon Patrol did I do what they did. So, they did it almost everyday as a matter of course. I did it once in while. That's one of the reasons I got through. It's amazing, kind of these little comforts. You know that if you get hit with an artillery shell that's just plain bad luck. You know somebody's shooting at you that's not a question of luck many times at all.

DB: So you were able to sort of reassure yourself sometimes by saying that to yourself?

CRH: Probably, but you also knew it. We were very appreciative of the fact that the anti-tank guns didn't go chasing around after individual German soldiers. We didn't run out across the fields very often. It was only after the company was broken up and I joined that glorified Ranger Platoon that I did all that dangerous stuff. And even then you didn't do it as often as the rifle company guys or the mortar people. It's a big difference.

DB: You mentioned that the Jerry machine guns and Burt(?) guns were no better than the Americans.

CRH: Yeah, that might be wrong. That's what I thought then but if you figure, we model a lot of our guns on theirs now. That plus that Russian collision cock, we have changed the philosophy of what sort of weapon you carry.

DB: Even then though you do say, you seem to indicate that you thought thatthe artillery of the Germans was better.

CRH: Oh yeah, it was. And there's no doubt in my mind that our rifle was better.

DB: That your rifle was better?

CRH: Had that M-1 rifle and you could fire seven rounds plus I think one more round that wasn't in the clip. It just was already in the magazine. As fast as you could pull the trigger and that vis-à-vis (unclear technical discussion), the mouser is a very good rifle. As a matter fact if you were to talk to Dr. Tadie, who is an expert, he would probably tell you that you could make a good sniping rifle out of the Mouser.

DB: But the Germans had to put a new bolt in everytime?

CRH: No, they had a new bolt going every time but you just opened the bolt every time and pulled it back and then the bolt would slam forward. When the bolt was slammed forward it carried a new cartridge up into the chamber. What you had done if you did that, if you can imagine, you've got to yank that bolt up and you are taking your eyes somehow off of the target where as if you are shooting an automatic rifle you are just

looking, say I am looking at the lowest number on your computer, and the gun kicks a little but my eye doesn't leave 20, or whatever that number is over there. So you are keep the target in sight.

DB: So that in itself made it more accurate.

CRH: Yeah, and as fast as you can shoot. And it was a good shot, a good rifle. People like the Marines and some of the old Army people didn't want to accept it for a long time in '39 and '40 because it was the old O-3 Springfield which was a sacred rifle to people like my dad, and is an excellent rifle. And they were always going to say, "Well it won't match the O-3".

DB: Did we give a lot of those to the Russians in the war?

CRH: No, I don't think so. We kept most of them. We gave a lot Endfields away which is a British gun.

DB: Is that a bolt action?

CRH: That's a bolt action too. The Mouser is bolt action. The Endfield was a collaborative development between some of the New England people and the British. You'd have to get the history of the rifle but Endfields were manufactured in New England. Anyway, it was a good rifle and I could shoot it.

DB: But you were aware at the time that the German artillery was better. That must not have been a very reassuring feeling.

CRH: No it wasn't. Of course it was really bad on the tankers because that famous 88 was superior to anything they had and they just had to be very good and very lucky.

DB: Blow the tanks apart.

CRH: Yeah, right. It would leave a hole about that big around and go right into the tank ordinarily. And everybody insider there would die, horrible.

DB: Did you know a lot of tankers?

CRH: No. They are not the kind of people you would know. They are in this tin can. Can't talk to unless there is a lager right along side of you and if there were, you might chat with them for a minute. If it was a combat situation, you were all in the line together and you wouldn't be standing around the tank because you would be in sight of the Germans.

DB: right. When you say lager, how do you spell that?

CRH: L-a-g-e-r. It's the same word as beer. It means "a place to store things." I am sorry, I though you would know the term. When you buy lager beer, it means it's been put into a big barrel for 30 days, 29 days depending on…

DB: I finally know what that means.

CRH: Yeah, it's a lager. That's why concentration camp, the word concentration is the same word, concentracion lager. And you had "officeren lagers", officers' prison camps and those became OFLAGS, O-F-L-A-G-S. Mostly for the hundred thousand flyers.
DB: Did the German rifle men, you mention that the German rifle men often didn't really aim once they got at a far distance, unlike the Yanks who would be squirrel shooters.

CRH: That was our impression.

DB: Was it in part because they wanted to conserve bullets, the Germans?

CRH: No, they just didn't shoot that well. Of course, there were a lot of them who did. A lot of these guys grew up in the forests and they'd shoot like Daniel Boone obviously. And of course the ones they trained as snipers were excellent. But with us, we expected that when you got off the range, I was talking to this friend of mine from the 101st Airborne this morning, Frank (unclear last name). Frank never fired a rifle in his life until he went to gunning. I had grown up with a rifle in my hand and he probably shot just as well or maybe better than I. We have never compared shoot metals but I know he fired expert and he never fired a rifle before he joined the Army.

DB: So the training was better for Americans with regard to marksmenship.

CRH: It was good. I think so. I think so. And I think it was better than the Brits and probably better than the French.

DB: And the Germans zeroing in on one place, you mentioned that the Germans would tend with their artillery, to zero in on one place and not change all day. Now was this a matter, this guy Dougler and Ambrose also, they talk about, they compare the American sense of individualism with the German sort of sense of rote, non-indiviualistic mindset. Would this be something, am I making too much of that?

CRH: No, I think you are right but I just have to warn you that it's a booby trap. We tend to think of the Germans as being trained to rote movements. To being mechanical in their movements and in many cases maybe they were. But the more you read German novels, particulary, and the more you find out about the actual, literally comradery between German officers and men in good units, the more you realize how independent they really were.

DB: So it wasn't something you could always depend on that they would always be rote. And the ones who would depend on it would get shot.

CRH: Right. Another thing you have to realize is that we kept running into replacements all the time. Every time you turned around we were decimating these divisions. They got the hell beat out of them in Africa. If they managed to escape from Africa, which many didn't, they were beaten up again someplace else. And they were beaten up in Normandy and so what we were getting was maybe the 10th or 15th generation of men who had actually all say been in the good old first Bavarian sausage makers or whatever it was and they would have been wiped out at one time or another. So the guys we were getting we going through the same kind of basic training we were. Desperately trying to make soldiers out of stenographers or something so they may or may not have been very good. The ones who were good, the SS and the Paratroopers, for instance, in many cases were fairly new to the job but they just had better non-coms and they had really fine leadership from the top. The leadership of the German Paratroopers was superb. Oddly enough because the quit using them after Krieg which was 1941. Is that Krieg? I think so. Yeah, Kreig was 1941 because it is associate with the attack on Russia. They were very good but I don't think they ever made, they never made a mass drop again after Kreig. Hitler was afraid they lost too many people. Whereas we thought, "Hey Kreig's great". Sure they lost a lot of people look what they did. So we went nutty over the Paratroopers from that time and there was a very important man who became, I think Chief of Staff of the Army, eventually, he was a young captain at West Point in 1940. He's a captain. West Point grad, been in the Army 15 years maybe. Made captain, made West Point. In 1944 that guy was a major general. He was a Paratroop general so the German interest in this peaked early and they didn't do anymore. Ours came late and we had a whole airborne army after a while and we had another one in the Pacific. We went nutty over Paratroopers.

DB: Interesting. But did the replacements you guys got after a while, they were less well-trained.

CRH: Yeah, and there was a syndrome to them. From your end of the world. They came through Fort Devins, Massachussetts and they were fired over there in response to the horrible losses in the Bulge, 70,000 or 80,000 casualties or something in the Bulge. It was amazing. And they were sent over there and they were also combed out of anti-aircraft units and cooks and bakers schools, I don't know what, and sent up to the line with very minimal prep. Just more bodies. They were in desperate shape. Well the Germans were doing the same thing. The only thing is that the Germans tended to reorganize a whole unit. And instead of feeding in Burnstein and Harmon go to company A and Taylor and Erik go to Company B, they just put us all in Company B and then would have the company somewhat filled up and at least you would recognize your sergeant and so on. All the guys on this side of the hull might go to war together and equally ignorant but at least you would know how ignorant you were instead of being a lone duck and fed into the machine that we had. Our system was terrible.

DB: And it would lead to these new guys not having buddies…

CRH: And a sense of alone. Right. Are you familiar with that term that was used for them in Vietnam? It got so common so that you ought to be able to see all the initials and

nothing else and you are supposed to know what it was. And it just had all the approbriam and disdain, the fear of what mistakes this new-comer will make and it's just simply, "Fucking New Guy". F-N-G's.

DB: F-N-G's.

CRH: That's right. That's what that means. And it's nothing against him but he was just an FNG and you didn't know if you could trust him, you didn't know if he knew how to use his weapons, didn't know if he knew how to walk carefully in the jungle but you expected the worst. And it was always that you suspected the worst.

DB: So would they get you guys in to trouble sometimes, these new guys?

CRH: Yeah, because a lot of time they didn't know what to do and of course everybody would be told "well here's FNG so you look after him" and you weren't too pleased about that. You would just as soon have your own old friend. Maybe your old friend got wounded or killed or was given another FNG to babysit. I ended up with one kid who was chasing me around when I had a bazooka for a while, after we went through the Seigfreid, we was very good about paying attention to what I told him There is a letter or two about him in there.

DB: I remember that.

CRH: That he didn't like it a lot of times when I yelled at him but he learned. I forget his name now. He was very patient about it. And some weren't. I have told a story in there, I've told you maybe, but there's, coming back from the Seigfreid I had done something, I think Sergeant Grosea had gotten wounded and I picked him up and hauled him back down to our lines anyway and our Colonel was watching and he though this was great because we were both wearing these little blue scarves and we were his rangers. And I Grosea off and went back up and I was traveling alone by that time because the attack had gone on. I passed through the woods but one of those forts and there was a man standing against one of the forts, just standing there, spread eagle against the fort and couldn't move. And he was just absolutely panicked and I tried to get him to go with me and told him at least that I knew where we were going. I didn't know where we were going but I told him. He wouldn't move and he didn't listen to me and I doubt that he could hear me. He was just hysteric. You would have to go down to the 3$^{rd}$ floor and ask the psych people what was happening. And I bet he was an FNG.

DB: Yeah. So he probably didn't make it.

CRH: He might have. You know, you never know. Somebody else may have been able to talk to him. Somebody else may have walked up and smacked him. You know, a lot of times that would do it. You know you hear all these stories.

DB: You all didn't call them FNG's did you?

CRH: No. Heavens no, it's not my war. No, we just agreed on the terminology. And we really didn't have that much of an attitude toward them. I think the Vietnamese War was much more self-centered than ours was. The newer generation really were different. And they really did feel put upon. Something I don't mind saying I objected to and a lot of other people didn't. I just did it on military grounds

DB: They were self-centered in the sense, they didn't get the sense they were doing it for their country.
CRH: Right. A lot of young Americans. I think there really has been a change in the country since 1950. There's a lot more of that "me first" attitude than there ever was. I am amazed and very pleased at the amount of public service you do get. And a lot of really public spirited that you do see and they are in the Scouts or they are doing volunteer work, or they are joining Americorps, Peace Corps or something. It's great. Anyway.

DB: On the 10th of December you say to your parents, "If it makes you feel any better, I am writing Mick tonight for the first time in a month. Satisfied?".

CRH: Mother loved Mick and so did my dad as I said, my dad was close friend of her father and so they were quite pleased with the notion that we might be a romantic thing. And they also realized what a choice woman she is, was and is.

DB: And so she was kind of pushing you to write her.

CRH: Yeah.

DB: In the margin on these, when you talk about the anti-tank company being broken up you said, "it's probably because the Army realized its 57 milimeter, 6 pounder British anti-tank guns weren't adequate for German armor."

CRH: Yeah right. That's true, they weren't.

DB: That's what they had given you? These 57 milimeters.

CRH: That was the best we had.

DB: Oh.

CRH: That will give you and idea of how inadequate they were. That was the best we had and everybody realized that they were no good. Funny thing is if you read any account from anybody from the parachute regiments, they just thought .57s were wonderful because at least they had them and they couldn't handle anything bigger. You couldn't put anything bigger in a glider in those days. You could put that 6 pounder in a glider and if you were lucky the glider didn't crash and kill everybody in the crew and wreck the gun. But that was a lot better than throwing grenades or trying to use a bazooka, which again, by design, not by purpose, but as the design turned out, the bazooka was simply

inadequate also. A lot of tanks were destroyed by bazookas but they weren't anywhere near as good as they were supposed to be.

DB: So the 57 millimeter was better than bazooka.

CRH: Yeah, better than the bazooka but less than the German tanks.

DB: And these 57 millimeter guns were sort of like Burp guns?
CRH: No no. They were artillery pieces.

DB: They were artillery pieces.

CRH: Right. It stood about this high. If this office was wider you could open one up in the office and stick the gun out the widow and the trails would be going out the back door.

DB: How many rounds per minute could you shoot off?

CRH: Probably three. You open up the bolt, it was a enormous action, you kicked that open, the old shell fell out, you threw another one in. And the French 75 millimeter, to give you an example, that's a high-speed piece of artillery, which was designed before the first World War and is still a very good gun and is still in use in some places, a really good crew on a French .75 because of the smoothness of the action, fine machining, prided itself that it should have 3 rounds going all the time. One in the chamber, one in the air, and one exploding on the target. So that's every 20 seconds. I don't think we could load that fast. But we could load awful fast but there was a certain slowness to opening this big mechanical thing and yanking that back and pulling out the old case and putting in the new one and then for the corporal gunner to make sure he was back on his target.

DB: Would it make a loud noise?

CRH: It made a hell of a noise. 57 millimeter is this big around.

DB: Did you go like this?

CRH: I doubt it. We may have. We probably we too busy just getting ready to do it, the next thing you do. If anybody had their hands over their ears it would be somebody who really didn't have to replace the ammunition but was just there as sort of a back up. And he probably stood there with his hands over his ears.

DB: So the shells were about three inches in diameter then. Big shells. But they were not good enough?

CRH: German armor in some cases would be five inches thick. We would just make these little dents with our .57.

DB: So they must have kept some anti-tank companies or did they get rid of all of them?

CRH: Third Army got rid of all of them as far as I know. Well, practically all of them did but did as we did and kept a few of the guns. So out of the whole regiment there were only nine anti-tank guns and they kept three and I was on one of the crews that they kept. So what a relief. One of the great moments of my life was to find out that I was going to stay with those guns.
DB: But they put you at the regimental headquarters with that.

CRH: Then after that, the Colonel got the idea that any time we need them, we've got 50-60 men here, I forget how many of us there were, who could also act as a supplement to this intelligence and recon platoon which would 40 or 50 men who were supposed to go out and run intelligence and recon in combat. So he actually had a whole other platoon to do that and that's why we did a lot of that. So I ran more. I did more patrolling and more actually rifle work after I was sent to regiment but I didn't do it everyday. That's the secret. You can't do it everyday and survive. I didn't hit the odds everyday.

DB: Now when the anti-tank company was broken up, 33 men were assigned to form a platoon for the anti-tank defense of regimental headquarters. That was you?

CRH: Yeah.

DB: Ok. And then "later when the 4$^{th}$ armor relieved you, the regiment formed the Ranger Company, I was lucky enough to get into it…"

CRH: Yeah, and the Ranger Company had also kept the guns. And the Ranger Company was really a Ranger platoon. We may have had 50 men by that time. I don't know. Not a lot.

DB: And that was called "Regiment Security" that's another word for it and that was after, when did the 4$^{th}$ Armor relieve you?

CRH: It must have been right around Christmas. Just before…

DB: Talking about the Ardens being relieved.

CRH: When I went into the Ardens around the 20$^{th}$, 19$^{th}$ or 20$^{th}$ of December I'll bet I was in the Ranger Platoon by that time. But the Ranger Platoon, no we weren't. We had a Colonel Taylor. Taylor finally got wounded in the attack on the Seigfreid line, that's after the night of February 7$^{th}$ and 8$^{th}$ 1945, Taylor got wounded somewhere that night or the next day. He was replaced by Costello, who became a Major General. Costello was the flamboyant one who invented the Ranger Company so it's February.

DB: Early February when you started with the Rangers.

CRH: It's silly name.

DB: Right, yeah. You explained that some people may not like that term. But it's not your fault. Now on the 16th you talk about loving the variety of packages from home. "I've eaten Italian sausages, German Jewish cookies, French candy, all kinds of Polish and Spanish things you would never hear about until you get some of the boys whose folks are from the old country." So did the war sort of multiculturalize the US in a way?

CRH: Oh sure. It's where I learned to curse in Polish. (unclear word).

DB: (unclear word)

CRH: Well you know, my first real southern gentleman from New Orleans was at basic training. I can't remember his name but he really was everything that you would imagine. And all these street kids from the East Coast cities. Pennsylvania miners. It was multicultural.

DB: A lot of Polish guys.

CRH: A lot of Poles and a few Hungarians. My first ever Armenian. I knew there were Armenians. I had read about the way the Turks treated them. I never met one in Olympia.

DB: Did some of the guys from the Pennsylvania mine company talk with the accent?

CRH: They would have whatever you would recognize. I probably wouldn't, as a Pennsylvania accent. I imagine there are different varieties of that depending if you were around a town like Scranton or if you were up in the Wyoming Valley it might be different. I don't know.

DB: Was that an interesting experience?

CRH: Oh I loved it. I realized what I was doing. I was, I read travel books from the time I was a little kid, I wanted to travel. I was interested in other societies, I realized that there was a lot out there that was just wonderful to know and I was going to go out and learn it. So I took the Army as sort of an instructional episode and appreciated a lot of it maybe more than many men did because I was looking around sort of "gee whiz, look at this. It's just like I thought it might be or like nothing I ever dreamed of". But I realized I was learning. So to have all these people with different backgrounds was wonderful and I took advantage of it. I learned a lot from them. I would talk to them by the hour about what they did and how they grew up. That sort of thing.

DB: Did some of the guys not appreciate it?

CRH: Not that I know of. I don't remember anybody who told me they didn't want to talk to me about it.

DB: No, I mean not appreciate having all these different ethnic people around.

CRH: Oh, I think a lot of people didn't pay any attention to it. You know, it just new occurred to them to worry about it or think about it. It was just, this is the Army and we know threr will be different people.

DB: Was there some prejudice between groups?

CRH: No, none whatsoever.

DB: So was that in part because the company or regiment helped to instill a sense of solidarity?

CRH: Yes. Well particularly after we joined the division in the desert and we knew these were the people who we were going to fight with and sometimes die with. So the last thing you needed to do was worry about not getting along. What divided the company could be personalities. There's always the officer that's just a jerk and there's always the sergeant who nobody could stand.

DB: And there were some of those?

CRH: Oh yeah. Sure. And there's always the people whom you don't like. They were simply, as the Brits would say, not clubable.

DB: Clubable. That's a good word.

CRH: You just don't want then in your club.

DB: Do you want to mention any in particular Bob?

CRH: Not that I can think of. I did tell you the story about the one guy who I said was going to stick behind to the camp fire in Arizona and he thought it was going to kill him. So he decided to apologize right there for some insults he had given me. Benny Bukeler. I let him go in his truck and go away. Everyone was going into breakfast except whoever was on guard and I was on guard. Benny had given me some grief and so I grabbed him as he was starting to board that truck and said "you're going to stand here with me". He panicked. He apologized immediately for whatever grief he had been giving me. So there were people who you didn't like for one reason or the other. You know, there's bound to be. Most of them I think were just sort of an amazing adventure. You figure that was the first time that I had ever seen these southerners. I had never seen hillbillies. Interesting. And I was interesed in the colorful way they talked. The way they talked to one another. It was a great adventure. And I appreciated it.

DB: Now there was a lot of change during World War II with regard to blacks.

CRH: Yes, but not in our time. It was coming. Fortunately it was coming but there was still a lot of just plain prejudice. With us, from this part of the country, just sort of, nobody knew any blacks or if you knew any you had the vague suspicion that you probably weren't supposed to associate with them and that was about it. Here you dealt with Indians and Japanese, Chinese, and some Philipinos. Very few Mexicans, very few. And blacks were just simply strange. They weren't strange in Seattle but of course Seattle was far away from me. Very far away. I bet I hadn't made ten trips to Seattle in my life except to drive through the country on my way from Olympia to Mount Vernon where my grandparents lived. You just didn't know blacks.
DB: Were there experiences in basic training or in Europe with regard to blacks?

CRH: No. See I was on Benning and you wouldn't see any blacks on Benning. I doubt I ever saw a black soldier on Benning. Because there was a training regiment for what we were doing right next to us was the Paratroopers and I am not ever sure if they were accepting blacks in the Paratroopers but it probably wasn't legal but they had probably found some way to keep them out too. I never knew any black Paratroopers except those that joined a black unit. I think there were some in the Marines, for instance. I am not sure.

DB: And in Europe?

CRH: The only time you'd see them, they'd be driving trucks. As I told you before, they would be the target of some sort of approbrium or rude jokes or just sort of humorous jokes. It could be very personal.

DB: Did that lead to fights sometimes?

CRH: I suppose. I never saw one. It's just, the vague resentment that they were going to make it through the war and you weren't. That was the feeling. They were driving all the supply trucks so you figured they were eating better than you were. There was a certain resentment about that. It was only after I think we would be talking to these southerners and they would talk about what problems faced them when they got home. They knew they were going home. That's the first time I ever heard one of them say, "the first thing we've got to do is straighten out the blacks." That's a direct quote. I have never forgotten that.

DB: Why would they feel they would need to, what would the war have to do with the need to straighten them out.

CRH: Well the first thing would be all those blacks running around with white girls over there in Europe.

DB: They would talk about that?

CRH: Oh yeah, they were very clear about that. That simply was not to be tolerated. Just the notion that they would break out of whatever role the whites had assigned to them in some place, Mississippi or whatever it would be, that that wasn't to be tolerated.

DB: They were afraid that they would break out of that because of their experiences in the Army?

CRH: Right. They had gone off and seen something of the world and obviously were going to have to be reduced to servitutde when they got home again or otherwise society would just disintergrate and the world would not be right. They were very clear about it.

DB: Did they see these guys, the black guys with white women?

CRH: Oh yeah. Constantly.

DB: You would see them sometimes?

CRH: Not in the lines where we were but in rear escalons or if you were passing through a rear escalon you would see that. And people would know that truck drivers, for instance, who had access to food would be shacked up with some white girl. Or they would suspect it. You know, suspicion is as good as a true fact.

DB: So women would be attracted to the guys who would have the goodies?

CRH: Partly, but also they were simply just very personable. An awful lot of blacks are literally very easy and outgoing and fun and they have a lot of fun amongst themselves. And the white girls would see this and some of the notions they had had about blacks would be confirmed that yeah these are really fun people and fun to know and they didn't have the racial prejudice that we did. So they had no objection…

DB: This is France?

CRH: Yeah, right. And I think the Germans were the same way. But a lot of it was food. No question about it. Particularly in Germany it was food in many cases. There wasn't any food.

DB: So that would apply to white guys who might be in the quartermaster corps or something like that?

CRH: No American cook in my regiment company, headquarters company, ever did any sort of personal service things for himself when the war was over. There was always some girl to iron the coat or whatever it might be. Wash the socks, press the uniform shirts so it looked nice.

DB: He would let them have…

CRH: Yeah, they'd be sleeping with him and damn glad to do it. They would work in the cafeteria in the chow hall all day long and then sleep with sergeant so-an-so or corporal so-an-so at night and damn glad to get it. Just for the food usually, not even any money. And if they were trying to keep an orphan kid they had or a child with them or a wounded husband would come home from the war and couldn't work, they were glad to get the job. It was cruel but it's the way life works though.

DB: Did a lot of women turn to prostitution also?

CRH: I suppose. So much so that I know the military MP's were worried about it. But what they were prostituting themselves for ordinarily was food. There simply wasn't any. Or sometimes food and housing. I don't think there was a lot of what we would ordinarily think of as commercial prostitution, the kind you get around here, where some guy is running a string of girls. I think this was all pretty much free-lance. And so there were only about three or four words you used. As a matter of fact there probably weren't half a dozen major phrases. One of them was "Do you want to walk with me", a very nice German word for "take a walk" is Spatzigre. Another one is very blunt "Do you want to sleep with me?" There was probably some direct statement about "I want you to sleep with me" but I don't remember what it was. I have no idea.

DB: "Do you want to walk with me" was like if you wanted a date.

CRH: Yes, and if you want to walk with me then we will see what develops. (German word) "Do you wish…" (German words), "…want to walk". And then you would just see what developed. And if the girl said no then it meant possibly that she didn't like your looks but it also meant that she didn't want to walk with you, period. So you didn't know what it was. It was pretty tragic.

DB: Yeah.

CRH: There as very good description of this in the years just after the first World War in Vienna by Emil Ludwick, ordinarily I am not much of an Emil Ludwick fan, he has got little weaknesses, but he did know Europe and he did know Vienna and his description of how poverty-stricken and how hungry people were and how many high class women that were available for a pot full onions. It was pretty instructive about what I learned about life at the age of 20-21. It sure has tempered my vision all these years since of the people. It's not always a clear cut case of this person is lazy. It's not necessarily so.

DB: So um, you got this Christmas card from Vic Dram and you sent it home to your mom to keep. Was she an old girlfriend of yours?

CRH: She was the first high school girlfriend I had. The first high school date I guess I ever had. She was a girl I went to grade school and is a cousin of Jinna's, whom I still love very much. She is a great girl. She married another kid from Olympia. We see her all the time. She was in my grade from 4$^{th}$ to 8$^{th}$ and still a treasured friend. I took her to her first high school dance. But the girl who probably occupied most of my freshman year

was Vicki Dram. And she realized that she and I liked to read the same things. So we went to several dances together but I think probably mostly we just talked an awful lot. And she was one friend who insisted I had to read Cireno De'Bergeac. So that's the sort of level of entertainment that she thought was appropriate and she was looking for somebody else who would appreciate that. And that's the kind of thing my friend Bob Dinsmore, the artist who did that picture of me, he would have read that for instance and we may have talked about it. We may have talked with Vic about it. I don't know. I hadn't kept up the correspondence with her. I had to do a little work to find her when I gave her back her Christmas card at Evergreen.

DB: Now Bob, you note in brackets, when you talk about your December 16th letter that that's the opening day of the Battle of the Bulge.

CRH: Right, but we didn't know it.

DB: When did you become aware?

CRH: Probably 36 hours later. And the reason I say that is, Patton had one of those attacks going, his "rock-soup-attacks" where he would go five feet and then hope somebody would give him enough ammunition to go another five feet, or gasoline or food. And he wasn't supposed to be attacking at all and he always kept insisting he was just doing recon and patrol. And then he'd say "Well this is a good place to jump off the attack I would like to make". Everybody knew what he was doing. And we were moving literally for Northwest to Southeast I think across I think what would essentially be the face of the Rur Valley, or the excuse me…

DB: The forest there?

CRH: No, another Cole(?). Sar, face of the Sar Valley and we kept right on going and I would think we would go on for at least another day and I think we were doing that on the 16th.

DB: Were you in Luxembourg?

CRH: No, no. France.

DB: You were in France.

CRH: Yeah. I had no idea where Luxembourg was at that time. It was north of us. In keeping with most Americans today who don't know where Luxembourg is. We moved from somewhere around St. Avole and we get moving down towards Alsace and the idea was that we would link up with 7th Army, which had come up from southern France. And we were all pleased about that and I remember the day and I remember a long conversation about whether or not we could steal some rations. There was a black unit driving rations we by us with a bunch of 10 and 1's and we were wondering if we could cut into their convoy and thrown rations off the back of our truck onto our truck without

them knowing it. I remember that. And I remember doing that and then sometime that night, which I would suspect was the $18^{th}$ but it might even have been the $19^{th}$, probably the $18^{th}$, anyway sometime that night, suddenly we were told (undistinguishable) and we knew there was something of an attack up north but wherever Luxembourg is there's problem. That's when we drove all night with the lights on.

DB: You drove all night?

CRH: To get to Luxembourg. Went into action the next morning. Probably on the morning of the $20^{th}$ outside of Luxembourg City. Have you been to Luxembourg?
DB: No.

CRH: Ok, well Luxembourg City looks essentially as these desks do in your office here so there's a plateau cut by a very steep river, swift little river, the (name) and she has cut really steep canyons in this. Wonderfully defensive position. And we went down, crossed one of these plateau where the railroad station is now and then down this trail on this road that leads off to the north over to your other desk and set up the gun right at the base of that. I passed that, I don't know how many times since I have been in Luxembourg. It's right on the main road. Right where we sat that gun.

DB: So you were going to the Southeast to the Northwest?

CRH: Yeah. And as you got to Luxembourg City you went almost directly north.

DB: Directly north.

CRH: To a town called Hidershide.

DB: And that's where you set up camp basically?

CRH: We probably made ten camps between Luxembourg and Hidershide. But I think they were, well maybe not that many, I think we in Hidershide on Christmas because the $2^{nd}$ battalion made an attack on Kersdor. No, $2^{nd}$ battalion took Hidershide on Christmas and we were right behind them.

DB: And this was all part of…

CRH: And that's 20 miles north of Luxembourg City.

DB: Ok. And how did Belgium and (word) tie in with this?

CRH: This is Germany, and this black ridge is a forest called the Eiffel and a series of hills called the Eiffel and part of it is called the Eiffel that gets snow on it all the time. Snei is the word for snow. Snei Eiffel.

DB: Eiffel is I-F-E-L?

CRH: E-I-F-F-E-L. What's his name, the tower. His family obviously came from there. Ok, the Eiffel looks onto a long river called the Ur. South of the Eiffel is the Mozelle and the city of Trier which Ceasar founded. And the Mozelle runs off and over here is the Rhine at Coblenz, which is the Latin word, Confluenzia, "Where the rivers flow together". So here's Trier, here's the famous Bittburg with its, to Germans, famous brewery, to Americans, the cemetery and here's the boundary and here's Luxembourg and so here's Hidershide right in the middle of the country and over here is Bastonia, which is in Belgium. Your tape recorder is Bastonia. It's 60 miles across there.

DB: And the Ardens forest?

CRH: Sits over the north part of it. There's two parts to the Ardens, and it covers half of Luxembourg and then a lot of that extends into Belgium. The Arden was divided just as though one would divide the Rocky Mountains or something and some of it was left with Luxembourg, when the country was formerly organize around 1812. So the other 3/5 of it went to Belgium. So the Belgians have an Ardens of their own.

DB: And that was…

CRH: It's all that same plateau.

DB: It's all that same plateau.

CRH: Yeah.

DB: And you guys were a part of this general attempt to hold the Germans back. The most famous part of this is the Battle of the Bulge around Bastonia.

CRH: Right.

DB: But you all were part of that.

CRH: But we were 40 or 50 miles to the east of Bastonia and slightly south of it. The rivers that feed off of that, or the roads that feed off of the Snei Eiffel were in those days very few. And they weren't paved ordinarily. Or if they were paved they were only two lanes wide and not paved very well. So, they would feed, literally, from Germany across the border into Luxembourg and if you went up this way they would feed up to the great Belgium towns if you were going this way. And wherever there was a possibility of stopping them at a crossroads, that's what happened. And that happened so often that it held up the battle and the Germans, eventually, just simply couldn't progress and they started to lose so many people that they were literally smashed. Particularly when the weather cleared and the Air Force caught them in these long streams of traffic like being down here in the I-5 at the wrong time of day and having planes go over and machine gun them.

DB: So that would destroy a lot of trucks and men…

CRH: And horses.

DB: And horses, and supplies. So they couldn’t really keep it going.

CRH: No and they didn’t have enough gasoline to keep going. They had to capture our gas dumps and they couldn’t.

DB: Meanwhile, but for a couple weeks there it was pretty hairy fighting.
CRH: It was for most of a month but as far as the real strategic advantage, I would say it’s no more than a week. Within a week, I think Eisenhower knew we were going to lick this thing. And Patton of course assumed, of course, that we were going to beat this thing right form he beginning. That’s when Patton said, “Hell, let them go all the way to Paris and we will really cut them off once they get up that far.” The idea was to stop them before they got to the Mers river and we did.

DB: The (unclear word) would have allowed them to get the gasoline?

CRH: Gasoline and it opens up onto good tank country. It flattens out into tank country. And a lot better roads.

DB: So was there a lot of tough fighting that you expereienced during these few weeks?

CRH: Yes, right. This is some of the most violent city fighting. Particularly because we’d take these little, they were villages, we would take these little hilltops and then there would be violence in those.

DB: The Germans would attack the hilltop and you would have to defend the hilltop?

CRH: Yeah. Not have to. It’s a privilege to defend a hilltop. It really is. That’s one of the things that worried my about Afghanastan. Fighting from the hilltop position is a very strong position.

DB: Oh yes, yes.

CRH: Particularly when you’ve got air superiority, which we did. Even if our airplane couldn’t fly because the weather was bad, the Germans still couldn’t get at us with very many aircraft because they just didn’t have them. They mounted one last big attack, I forget how many airplanes they managed to get together and they shot up several, 18 or 19 Allied airfields. Really bad security lapse on the part of the Allies Air Forces. Otherwise the Germans just didn’t have the air power that we did.

DB: Did you all talk amongst yourselves about the Army screwing up? Or the Air Force screwing up?

CRH: No, we didn't even know that that had occurred. We thought that what they were doing was what they could do and in general they were right. But we have been saved by them or helped by them so often, you know you just get on the phone and call and pretty soon these airplanes would show up and they were very good for us. I think I told you, we had the 19th tactical Air Force in support of us and it's amazing how many times. It's the 19th Tac I believe, which blew away most of the town of Bittburg for us. Right for my regiment.

DB: So that helped a lot.

CRH: Yeah, that'd be probably in March of '45.

DB: And did your regiment take (unclear word)?

CRH: We had a bad evening. About this time of the night we pulled up there, called up them the next day and maybe that night even before dark they blew away the center and the next morning we walked through the town. I've got pictures of that. There was not much left. They just destroyed it. They did the same thing a lot of other places.

DB: What did you all think at the time was the reason why the Germans had been able to make such a ferocious counterattack?

CRH: We weren't sure. We just knew that somehow or another they had aquired all these people and we didn't know enough to know that many people had hoped that the war would be over in '44 and right from the top down there was the hope the war would be over. Eisenhower certainly hoped so.

DB: But you didn't think that.

CRH: Yeah, and I think in my letters you'll find one or two allusions to the idea that this has got a long ways to go yet.

DB: Yeah.

CRH: When I wrote that I don't know. If I wrote it in '44 or if I wrote it in '45. We had no confidence even when we crossed the Rhine that that would end the war. Maybe the big boys did but on my level…

DB: But before the Battle of the Bulge you guys already knew that this was not going to be a cake walk from now on.

CRH: No because we had all this violence. Well, and either the 7th or the 8th of November we fought at Delm Ridge and did this big attack when the weather was so bad that even Patton thought about canceling it.

DB: And then after Thanksgiving you said.

CRH: And after Thanksgiving we went through the Mageneau and there wasn't any doubts in our minds that we would get through the Mageneau, no doubt. But there was still an awful lot of casualties. Weather was bad and then you realize that this thing was dragging on and that you were running into good troops again.

DB: No in your letter of December 19th you said that you "…are sending gum, that sending gum in your letters is a darn good idea." So you are writing that on the 19th and you are in the Battle of the Bulge already.

CRH: Yes, but you are not telling your parents about that.

DB: Ok.

CRH: And it probably wasn't written on the 19th. It was probably written on the 20th or the 21st or something.

DB: So you are writing sort of mundane things to try to sound like everything is ok.

CRH: Yeah. Somewhere, I have a note that after a while you never dated letters the day you wrote them.

DB: Right, right. Now, I just want to clear up something. You say here that "the 80th division had to drive on (unclear name of town) and spearheaded the way into Bastone to the relief of the garrison.

CRH: Ok, there's two…

DB: That's a radio reprint that says that.

CRH: Yeah, there's two units that did that and the one that did the heavy lifting is the famous 4th Armored. 4th Armored division.

DB: That's part of the 3rd Army?

CRH: Yes. Definitely. And we were teamed with them an awful lot. Well when 4th Armored was sent to go the road to far to our west and go to Bastonia, they took a lot of infantry with them. One of the infantry groups they asked for and got was from the 80th. It was the 318th infantry regiment. One of the three regiments in my division was detached from the division and went with the 4th Armored.

DB: Was that you?

CRH: No, I was 319th. So I never saw Bastonia at all, until long after the war. But the 318th guys went into Bastonia with the very first of the 4th Armored. I think the first

contact made with Bastone was a young lieutenant from 4th Armored but right with him were our people from 318 because they were guarding those armored units.

DB: Meanwhile you guys were holding the line.

CRH: We were attacking in Luxembourg.

DB: I see.

CRH: They were moving north in segments of about 5 miles I would say, at a time and that night, that Christmas night and the next night, I mean we took the city of Hidershide. We took a city that was right on the main road from eventually from Trier to Bastonia. There is a long ridge that runs across the middle of the country, almost like a hogback and we took that key city. And if you stand on the ridges at Bastonia you can look off way to the north or you can look off back from where we have come from to Luxembourg City.

DB: When did it turn around? It took about a week to turn around from being on the defense to being going on the offense?

CRH: We went of the offense almost immediately when we got in there but we weren't sure that the Germans were going to be beaten back. I would say for 10 days or two weeks. Looking back at it now military historians can say "well, when they didn't capture the bridges on the Mers or they didn't get the gasoline at the Mers or they didn't pass San Vis, which was defended by an armored outfit, let alone didn't pass Bastonia, which was defend with the 101 Airborne plus an armor plus assorted anti-aircraft guys who just happened to be going by got pulled in. And then the road closed down around them and they were surrounded. In the meantime, we were further west and so we were moving eastward and northward trying to cut the German lines. The Germans were a "V" and we were trying to cut right into the middle of the "V" from the south and in the north, the 82nd Airborne and a number of other very good units were either attacking the German top of the "V", which had it's point at Bastonia. Actually it flowed around Bastonia. I think it was 20 miles west or something. It was amazing how deep it was. But it was shallow, the similie is always like the River Platte, you know, a mile wide and an inch deep. So they really didn't have any force and momentum behind them.

DB: By they, you mean…

CRH: Germans. They were too weak.

DB: But you guys didn't know that at the time.

CRH: Sure, no. We didn't know at the time. We wouldn't have been very comforted by it at the time either because we were still getting heavily shelled and every action we fought seemed to be a desperate one. You know, you go down those deep valleys and you wander through those deep woods and for the rifle guys it was really tough and for us it

wasn’t very easy because you were going along in that truck with that gun and you know damn well the roads you are on are probably under survalence and artillery would come whistling in. I remember being parked up against a very, on a hill I have passed through many times since, looking down on a road junction when one of our tank destroyers, which was an armored vehicle with probably either a .75, .76, or 90 millimeter gun on it. Anyway, it had a big open ring in the middle of it with a .50 caliber some German could put a shell right in there. Probably by accident but it was the sort of thing you remember. You think it can’t happen but it did. I have passed that bridge many a time since that happened. And then from there we went up to that little city of Gersdorf, where that story that’s on the wall, takes place.

DB: Well Bob, that sounds like a good place to stop for today.