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AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDRE BEAUMONT

FOR THE

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Andre Beaumont in Millsboro, Delaware, on December 13, 2005, with Shaun Illingworth. Mr. Beaumont, thank you very much for having me here today.

Andre Beaumont: You're welcome.

SI: Could you state for the record where and when you were born?

AB: I was born in New York City on January 3, 1926.

SI: What were your parents' names?

AB: My mother's name was Aurelie Blanche Beaumont. Her maiden name was Javet, J-A-V-E-T. My father's name was John Baptiste Gabriel Beaumont. My mother was born in a little town they called Preles, P-R-E-L-E-S, in the Canton de Fribourg in Switzerland, and my father was born in Biarritz, France.

SI: Do you know anything about their lives before they came to the United States, such as where they were employed?

AB: Yes. Well, … my mother was born on a farm. She had five sisters and two brothers. The brothers were due to inherit and run the farm. The daughters were sent off to school. Most of them became governesses and French tutors. … My mother went to Berlin when she had finished school, where she worked as a governess for some wealthy family in Berlin. … Most of the sisters did this, because they spoke French and, because they're right next to the German-speaking part of Switzerland, they also spoke German, but French was the language of the aristocracy and it was very desirable for rich families to have their kids speaking French. So, that's what my mother did. My father, growing up in Biarritz, which is a resort town, it was very, very famous in the 1880s and '90s, … again, they were five sons and two daughters. It was the reverse, but most of the sons went into the culinary/restaurant business. So, my father was trained as a chef. He spent seven years as apprentice in different types of cooking. Then, he began as a chef, working, first of all, with the Paris Exposition, where the Eiffel Tower was first introduced. … Then, he worked around, worked around, for various [people]. Mainly, he was picked up by some British [aristocrats], the Duke of Northumberland and his family. … Some of the Duke's brothers became ambassadors and they took my father with them as their personal chef. So, my father ended up in Vienna, working for the English ambassador. … Then, when the war broke out, the English ambassador obviously left, because Austria was fighting England, and my father got a job working for the Rothschild family in Vienna. He was not allowed to leave Vienna. In fact, they put him in an interment camp for a while. Then, later on, they made a deal where he could stay. So, he was in Vienna. … My mother had come to Vienna to work as a governess for some rich family. She was Swiss, so, she could travel all over. Anyway, that's where they met. … They got married after the war, in 1921, and things were not very good in Europe. … My father got the job as a chef to the English ambassador in Bern and … he had the American ambassador come over. [laughter] The American guy said, "This food is so good; we need people like you in the United States. Do you want to come? I'll give you a visa." … So, one of my father's brothers was working in New York. Anyway, he was one of the chefs, first

chefs, of the Plaza Hotel. … He told my father, "Please, come over. We have great jobs," and so on. … So, that's how they came to the United States. … My father worked as a chef in various restaurants. The most famous one was the Stork Club in New York City. … At the time, it was one of the fanciest and [was] where all the big shots went, and so on, and so forth. [Mother] was pretty much a stay-at-home mom. She did tutoring and she did a lot of work with musicians, singers, teaching them the enunciation, pronunciation of French words, so that as they sang in French, they would be pronouncing the words correctly. …

SI: Where did they settle in New York?

AB: Oh, they settled in Manhattan, on the Upper West Side. … Well, originally, they lived up on 110th Street, near Riverside Drive. Then, we lived near 96th Street and Broadway. We lived on 82nd Street and Broadway, and then, we lived on 79th Street and Broadway, and that's from there that I left to go into the Army. … When I came back from the Army and went off to college, back to college, they were still at 79th Street, and then, they were still at 79th Street later, when I got married and I moved out to Queens. So, they lived at 79th Street for quite a while. Eventually, they moved down to what is known as Stuyvesant Town, on the East Side of Manhattan.

SI: It sounds like your father was able to stay employed during the Great Depression. Was that a tough time for him?

AB: Well, he did have problems, because he worked at a restaurant, … actually in Central Park, called the Central Park Casino, and that was very successful. It stayed open after the big Stock Market Crash of 1929, but it got involved in a really political game. The Central Park Casino was the playhouse of the Mayor of New York City, named Jimmy Walker. … Jimmy was a flamboyant guy and he's known to make stupid statements and he made some wisecracks about Governor Alfred E. Smith, who never forgave him. Alfred E. Smith appointed a young man by the name of Robert Moses, who was a city planner. … Robert Moses decided that there was no place for a fancy restaurant in Central Park, because it was a public area. So, the Central Park Casino was closed down about 1933 or so. … From then on, my father had a hard time finding work, for, oh, I would say about three years. He worked in little restaurants or he worked … as a relief chef for some of these restaurant chains, and then, eventually, he got picked up by Mayor Frank Hague of Jersey City. … They had just built Jersey City Medical Center which was really one of the first medical centers in the United States, … quite a thing. … He wanted a chef for the staff house, where they had all the doctors and specialists housed, and he also wanted a personal chef. So, that was a break for my dad. He had this work from, I guess, 1936 to about 1940, when he was hired to come to the Stork Club in Manhattan, and he worked at the Stork Club until well into the 1960s. … Anyway, he did have a period of time during the [Great] Depression when he had … a hard time finding a permanent job. … I think, though, he was very fortunate, in that he had a trade or a skill that was in short supply and, you know, there weren't too many trained chefs in the United States at that time, as opposed to today, where you've got culinary schools all over the place and you've got a lot of them floating around.

SI: Did your father ever comment on any of the people that he worked for? Did he ever tell you any stories about Frank Hague or the Rothschilds?

AB: Oh, yes. I don't know; he certainly liked the Rothschilds … in Vienna. He felt they were very generous people and he enjoyed working there. He wasn't too crazy about Frank Hague; one of the reasons why was that he had to kick back part of his salary every week to the Hague political machine. [laughter] … Hague was a real, you know, old fashioned, I guess, machine politician, big shot, you know, big shot guy, smoked cigars. … I don't know any particular stories that he told about him, but at least he was glad he had a job and Hague liked what he did, and so, that was mutually convenient.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood where you grew up?

AB: Well, the West Side. Basically, most of my memories about New York begin with our apartment on 96th Street. … I was amazed, later on, when I was doing research for my memoirs, that I discovered that the neighborhood where my parents settled was labeled as an area where there were a lot of French-speaking people. I never knew that such a neighborhood ever existed in New York until I read this history of New York City, where they talked about the development of the city. … Anyway, so, there were a lot of French-speaking people around. I didn't know, I didn't realize, that I was in a hotbed, but, you know, it was nice. I would say it was a nice, middle-class area. The nicest thing about living on the West Side is that you had the IRT [Interborough Rapid Transit Company] subway, which ran all the way up underneath Broadway, and you also had trolley cars that ran up and down Broadway, and so, you could get practically anywhere in the city by using either the trolleys or the subway. … It so happened that … 96th Street is a subway stop and, later on, when we moved down to 79th Street, that's another subway stop, and we lived here on 82nd, which is three blocks' walk to the subway. … What was interesting about the neighborhood, as I remember, too, is that, in the 1930s, and that was more later on, mid-'30s on, we lived on 82nd Street then, the neighborhood began to change with an influx of refugees, Jewish refugees, from Germany. … The visible changes were the opening up of little candy shops and pastry shops and businesses that, apparently, some of these people had run in Europe. … My mother was delighted, because they had all these delicious goodies, and I was, too, because you could get these candies and cookies and cakes. … They were really very, very delicious. … So, that was a change. It brought a different aspect to the neighborhood, not that we were overwhelmed with the Jewish refugee families, but, certainly, they [were visible]. … I'm sure that there were a lot of them that moved into all the apartments, because many of the apartment houses, during the [Great] Depression, where we were fortunate enough to live, had empty apartments and it was possible for my mother to change [apartments often]. She would sign a three-year lease and, every three years, move to another apartment and pay less rent, which is almost funny, [laughter] and they would always move into an apartment that had been freshly redecorated, new appliances and everything. So, when we moved, we would have [an experience] like moving into a new place, but it was in the same building. … So, they had a lot of empty apartments and I'm sure that a lot of the professional families from Europe came that were accountants, lawyers, whatever, doctors, settled into those apartments and started working in the United States. These were the fortunate people that escaped the Holocaust, but at least they were able to foresee what was happening and they moved. So, that was [it], you know, as far as the neighborhood was concerned. You had little grocery stores about every three blocks and you had movie houses about every ten blocks. You had two chains, Loews and RKO, and each one had their own movie house and they always played double features. … You could go

there on Saturday afternoon, … maybe one o'clock or so, and see two shows and pay a quarter, or something like that. So, it was very nice living there and, of course, as I say, the trolleys and the subway were five cents and you could get onboard, and then, transfer, get on the subway. You could ride a subway all day long by transferring from one line to another, go all over, and, often, [I] went down, a couple of times, … to the Battery. You got on the Staten Island Ferry, took a ride in the harbor. You could ride the ferry for five cents and go back and forth and they never charged you again. Of course, today, the Staten Island Ferry is free. Do you know that? [laughter] It's interesting.

SI: Were you the type of child who explored the city? Did you, say, prefer to play sports with your friends?

AB: Yes. As I grew up, I did. I was a great walker. At one time, I walked all the way from 79th Street down to the Battery and I used to … take walks and go down to Times Square or Columbus Circle, what have you, walk over to Columbus Circle and cross along Central Park South. I liked to watch, go look at the stores, and especially when you were south of Columbus Circle on Broadway; they had all the auto dealerships there. … From about 59th Street south to about 56th Street on Broadway, on both sides, were all dealers for cars. So, you could go and look and walk and look at the cars, which I was interested in. So, yes, I did that. Of course, I did a lot of other things. … I had a Boy Scout troop. I was in the troop and we used to do all kinds of things after school. … I never got to be an Eagle Scout, but I did advance and I became I think, a Life Scout, back then? … I had a lot of extracurricular activities in school. I was in the glee club. I was in the drama club. … I worked on the school newspaper and the yearbook. …

SI: You went to Collegiate.

AB: Yes. I went to Collegiate School. Well, I really started at Birch Wathen School. … I spent three years there and … it was what they called a progressive school and I really don't remember much about the details, except that I learned later, from my mother, that she really didn't like their educational philosophy, because it was sort of, "You let the student move along at his or her pace," and they really did not push you very hard, and I was the kind of person that needed to be pushed. So, I didn't make much progress and I had problems with my English, because … I had lived so much in a French-speaking environment that, although I did speak and understand English, I still had pronunciation problems and my vocabulary was bad. They never really worked on that and the one thing that really bothered my mother is that I never learned handwriting. It was all print and, … today, I still can print beautifully. My handwriting is still not very good. So, my mother, being a very traditional person, decided I wasn't getting [a good education] and that's when she put me into Collegiate, which was more of a traditional school, where they really made you work and you were required to fulfill certain things, and so on, and so forth. … It was a very good move. … I am very happy that I went there and I got an excellent education.

SI: Which aspects of their European heritage did they keep up in your family life in the United States? Language seems to be one thing.

AB: Yes.

SI: Were you raised in a two-language household?

AB: Yes. … Actually, we spoke, at home, French, exclusively. … [laughter] I doubt that there were not too many words spoken in English. … Even when we walked, when we went out as a family, [if] we would go to the Radio City Music Hall to see a show or walk in Central Park or whatever, we would be always speaking French. … Now, it was interesting, because it was embarrassing to me to be in public and speaking French. I sort of did not want to be identified as a non-American. It was a strange feeling, but I think a lot of the [first-generation Americans shared that feeling then]. I don't know if that exists today with the immigrant population. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were talking about how you felt uncomfortable speaking French in public.

AB: Yes. I was, as I said, … very much desirous of being identified as an American, you know. I don't know; it's an interesting contrast, that, today, I think you have people [who] are proud of their ethnicity and their difference and I think, in those days, it was the desire to be assimilated and just be part of the country. I don't know; it was interesting. You were asking me, "Were there any European …

SI: Traditions or customs?

AB: Customs. I could not really say [yes], other than the fact that our meals [laughter] were very European. … Especially, as I can remember, the Christmas and Thanksgiving meals were very much in the English tradition, because of my father's having worked so many years … in England for the Duke of Northumberland and for the ambassadors, English ambassadors, that we would have things like plum pudding and minced meat and all these things, which were not necessarily French. On the other hand, I'm sure we had a lot of French things, … which, today, are probably all [more common?], a lot of the sauces. A lot of the foods were prepared with sauces, which I think is especially a French development. I mean, that was the ultimate thing of French cuisine, is the sauce. … When a guy works in the kitchen, under the chef, the number one guy under him is usually what they called the *sauciér*, the guy that makes the sauces. … Of course, the other guys cooked the vegetables, cooked the meat, and then, the guy does the sauces that go on it. So, we had a lot of these different kinds of sauces that went on meats and vegetables and things like that. I would say those would be it. So, I would think most of the European aspect of life … was expressed in our family in the meals. …

SI: I get the impression that you were probably very aware of what was going on overseas in the 1930s and 1940s.

AB: … Yes, definitely. Obviously, … both my parents were very upset about this whole development of Hitler, I mean. … I can't remember the exact date, but I think it was … somewhere in the early 1930s, [1933], … when he came to power and … they certainly were concerned. It was certainly well reported in the newspapers. The whole development of the Nazi Party and the taking over of the whole country and all that was very well known and you

could hear, on the radio, his speeches. … Although I didn't know a word of German, the guy sounded like a lunatic. He would scream and he was quite a spellbinding orator and I guess his whole [method was], he would drive these people to a frenzy … in some of these speeches that he made. They would be just yelling their heads off. … All of the content of the speeches, that I gathered from my parents, were very much pro-Germany and anti-the-rest-of-the-world, almost. So, yes, … we were very much aware of that. … I did not take it as seriously as they did, though. I was, I suppose, a little bit too young to realize the seriousness of the situation.

SI: As the war approached, were you aware of any changing sentiments in this country, perhaps people expressing either very strong pro-German or pro-Allied viewpoints, or the activities of the German-American *Bund*?

AB: … Well, obviously, I think, as the situation in Europe escalated; … the first thing that … Germany did is, they took over the Saarland, which was part of France, is part of France now, Alsace-Lorraine and that, and then, followed, I guess, with the taking over of Austria, and then, followed later on by the big negotiations on Czechoslovakia. They originally … granted Germany parts of Czechoslovakia. Then, eventually, they took over the whole country. … Most of the people that I knew, and, also, that I was aware of, were very concerned about this and were not happy about it, but, of course, when the war broke out, which was in September of '39, … there developed in the United States a very strong anti-war movement, "Don't get involved, let them work it out, and keep America out of war," and whatever. Of course, one of the main people in that whole movement was Charles Lindbergh, who crossed the Atlantic alone in 1926, I believe, '27, [1927], about the year I was born. Anyway, so, there was a considerable amount of peace pressure in the United States. I was not very much aware at all of the German-American *Bund*, but, also, there were a lot of people that were on the other side that [said], "We've got to do something to help them," especially after Germany conquered Poland, and then, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, all these countries, and then, … it all happened so quickly, they finally took over France and they expelled the British Expeditionary Force back to England. … They exited through Dunkirk. Anyway, … all that period, it sort of turned the sentiment very strongly, … well, pro-Britain, because they were the only ones left and there was a big movement. I know my mother was very much involved in a thing called Bundles for Britain, where we would gather food and clothing and so forth and send it to England and I still have a lapel button for Bundles for Britain. … I guess I volunteered to help in that or raise money or whatever, but, nonetheless, there was a lot of pro-British sentiment, even though there … were a lot of what they called the isolationists, people who did not want to get involved, but, as history [shows], as it evolved, we got more and more involved supporting Britain. The biggest movement was the "destroyers-for-bases" deal, which Roosevelt negotiated. Fifty … World War I surplus destroyers were given to Great Britain, in exchange for bases throughout the Caribbean, places like Bermuda and other English possessions, all the way up through Newfoundland and so forth, Canada. … Of course, Canada was then a British [realm], still part of the British Commonwealth of Nations. … Canada was not an independent country. So, the bases up there, in Nova Scotia, were all granted to the United States. So, that was a big move and I think it was criticized by some, but most people were very happy to do this, and then, of course, … all of that quickly changed with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, … which just about destroyed the isolationist movement, and people like Charles Lindbergh were desperate to get into active duty. He had resigned his [US Army commission]. He was a colonel in the Army, because … there was no

such thing as an air force, it was the Army Air Corps, but he was a colonel in the Army Air Corps and he resigned this. … He tried to get back in and they wouldn't let him in, but he eventually did serve as an advisor in a lot of the aircraft construction and design and managed to go to the Pacific as a, quote-unquote, "advisor" and actually flew fighter planes and shot down Japanese planes. The story is that the American pilots were so amazed by his ability to fly, how, apparently, he was a brilliant pilot and knew all these maneuvers and so forth, and they learned a lot from him. Anyway, that was a … little sideline into the history.

SI: That brings me to another theme from your memoirs; you were very interested in aviation and military issues while you were growing up. Could you talk a little bit about where that interest came from and how it was expressed?

AB: … Okay. It's hard to say … how that ever started. I think maybe my first infatuation with aircraft was, there was the German seaplane called the DoX, which had ten engines, … five engine pods, each with a pusher propeller and a pulling propeller, and they had designed that aircraft as a transatlantic plane and it did [cross the Atlantic]. It came to New York and it landed right on the Hudson River, … right near where I lived, near Riverside Park, on the West Side. So, I saw that and I was obviously very interested in that and, [with] the school, we made several trips to Newark Airport. … There wasn't much going on there. It wasn't a big thing, as it is today. It was just a building and there were a few aircraft there. There were some Ford tri-motor transport planes and there was some Boeing 247s, I think they were, and we used to go there and they used to let us go inside the planes and walk around in the passenger cabin and go up to the cockpit, look. … I got interested in that and I got interested in this magazine, I think I mentioned it in my memoirs, this *G-8 and His Battle Aces*, which was all World War I fighter planes, fighter stories of, obviously, G-8, was one of his [characters]. … I don't know whether he was American or British, but he was fighting for the Allies against the Germans and they would always have all these plots and so forth, and so, I got to learn all about Spads and Fokkers and whatever, Hispano-Suiza engines and, blah, blah, blah. I really got very much involved in those World War I aircraft and I built a few models. … I also subscribed to a publication called *Flying*, I think it's still … published today, maybe it's under another name, which discussed the latest developments in aviation. … They would feature new aircraft, as well as other developments having to do with instrumentation and ground control and all kinds of things. So, it was an interesting magazine. … That was a little bit as, I guess, I … grew older. … Actually, originally, I think it was *Popular Aviation*, … the name of the magazine, and it changed into *Flying,* but that's how I got involved. … Again, as I said in my memoirs, as a result of that, I was interested so much that, when the time came, when I realized that I would have to go into military service, when I got to be near the age of eighteen, I really wanted to become a pilot, and that's when I went down; … first, oh, I should backtrack a little bit. One of the interesting things was, in [the] 1939 World's Fair, the Navy brought in a whole bunch of ships anchored in the Hudson River. … One of the ships they brought in was … our country's first aircraft carrier, the *Langley,* which was a converted collier. Now, the *Langley* had, by 1939, been pretty much superseded by much bigger and better aircraft carriers that the Navy had, but the *Langley* actually tied up at a dock somewhere on the Hudson and it was open for visitors. … What they had done is, they had taken this old collier [and] they just built the flight deck on top and ran the smokestacks out the side, and so, it was [an aircraft carrier]. … They had an elevator there; it could raise the planes from down below to the flight deck. So, I was able to visit that entire ship

and look at the aircraft, and so, that was interesting. Of course, the big carriers in those days were the *Lexington* [and] the *Saratoga,* which were converted battle cruisers, and, of course, they were not available. That certainly … highlighted my interest in naval aviation. … That's when I went down and I wanted to apply for naval air training and I wanted to be a pilot. Well, I couldn't pass the eye exam. So, then, I went and I tried to get into the Army Air Corps and I couldn't pass the eye exam. So, then, I went to apply for naval officer training and I couldn't pass the eye exam. [laughter] So, anyway, … that was [the end], but I think, later on, maybe [we will cover this] when we're talking about my early military experience, my aviation knowledge did come in handy when I was in training for antiaircraft.

SI: In reading your memoir, I found it very interesting that you participated in a debate on the role of battleships versus carriers. How did you get involved in that debate and how did you get on the right side of the issue?

AB: … [laughter] Well, I guess the whole thing is, that was one of the things that interested me later on, was the whole Billy Mitchell controversy. … Billy Mitchell was, I believe, a colonel or brigadier general in the Army Air Corps and he was a strong proponent of airpower, … even way back in the 1920s. … He kept on saying that airpower is going to be a tremendous factor in future wars and that battleships were obsolete and that planes could sink battleships. … They had this demonstration off the Norfolk coast, I guess, off northern Virginia, where they took a World War I German battleship that was supposedly one of the best ones and Billy Mitchell's bombers sank it in about twenty minutes, which was an eye-opener, but, still, didn't change anybody's mind. … I think the general thinking, really, going into World War II was still that the battleship was the primary instrument of naval warfare. … The United States was building a whole class of the *North Carolina*-class battleships, which first came into operation in … 1939 or so, and then, they started building these "super battleships," which were the *Iowa*s and the *New Jersey*s and the *Missouri*s. They were supposed to be [the best]. I don't know how many of them they ended up building, four of them, but that was still the prevailing thought and they had not too many aircraft carriers being built. … Of course, I think … that debate that we had in school [arose because] I was in the debating society and we selected topics to debate, and this debate, this topic of the battleship versus the aircraft carrier, was one of the topics that was selected. … I was the team leader on the aircraft carrier side. … I am not sure whether that debate took place before or after Pearl Harbor, [laughter] because I think Pearl Harbor was really the turning point in that whole argument, where it was obvious that a [battleship was vulnerable to aircraft]. …

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SI: Could you please repeat that?

AB: Okay. Yes, I think the turning point of that whole debate, really, was Pearl Harbor. I mean, the debate, outside of the school situation, was that … it became very obvious that a bunch of aircraft carriers, four, I think there were four [Japanese] aircraft carriers, could launch planes and sink all the ships [that] they did. Of course, they were anchored, which was helpful, but, nonetheless, all these battleships were sunk or … destroyed. … Many of those ships, if they had been out in the ocean, would have ultimately sunk, but, because they were in a shallow harbor,

many of them were salvaged and went on to perform later on during the war. … Nonetheless, it was kind of the final nail in the coffin in that argument, that there's certainly a lot to be said for aviation, naval aviation and aviation in general, as a weapon of war. … So, as I said, I really am not certain whether that [took place before Pearl Harbor or after]. I kind of suspected that debate we had was before Pearl Harbor, because I don't think we would have had that debate after Pearl Harbor, if I think about it.

SI: The British attack on the Italian fleet at Taranto kick-started a lot of debate on that subject.

AB: Yes, that's true. That's another one, yes. … I think that's where the Japanese got the idea for Pearl Harbor, [laughter] that's right. … That was, well, obviously before Pearl Harbor, but it was a strike by a small number of aircraft that caught the Italian Navy at anchor in their harbor, yes. So, you're quite a historian of World War II.

SI: I just thought of that. I would not claim to be a military history expert.

AB: But, anyway, yes, Taranto was that [influential]. I think, as it has been said, that the Japanese admirals got the idea for Pearl Harbor after the British had this successful raid on Taranto, yes.

SI: You also mentioned in your memoirs that you often visited the piers, particularly the Cunard Line ships. I was curious; do you remember the burning of the *Normandie*?

AB: … Oh, yes, yes, the *Normandie*; actually, I was taking piano lessons. … The guy that was teaching me piano … had his studio in Carnegie Hall, in New York. … Apparently, there were, I guess they still do it, … all these little, small, you know, rooms that they rented out to, I guess, voice coaches, whatever, musical instructors. So, this guy taught piano and I remember the day that the *Normandie* burned, because I was having a piano lesson and, as I left, it was some time early afternoon or afternoon and, as I left, I kept on hearing all these fire sirens … going on and I could look across towards the Hudson River. The *Normandie,* I believe, was about 50th Street, in that area, the pier was on 50th Street, and, of course, Carnegie Hall was on 57th Street and you could see all this smoke coming up. I mean, the sky was, over towards the river, all … full of smoke. Of course, I didn't know what was going on until I got home and listened to the radio. … The whole Westside Highway went, I guess it still does, right by those piers and, for a while, the road was closed. … Later on, my father and I took a taxi and … we took a ride down the Westside Highway. We could see the *Normandie* lying on its side there and, yes, well, that was quite a blow. They poured so much water into her that she capsized and was laying on her side at her dock. … I had visited the *Normandie* when she came over. My father knew the chef on the *Normandie* and we had [toured it]. It was one of the largest and just an absolutely gorgeous, gorgeous ship. … Of course, what happened is that when France fell, the *Normandie* … was at sea or escaped and came to New York Harbor, … where it was kind of interned. It was not [treated] as a, I don't know, combatant nation, whatever, in a neutral port. It was not allowed to leave. It just sat there. Then, … after Pearl Harbor, … I guess the United States negotiated with France about the ship, converting it to a troop transport, and that's what they were doing. They had removed lots and lots of the [interior], stripped the interior, and, apparently, … they had piles of … life jackets and some welder; apparently, sparks from a welding torch set fire to …

some of the life jackets. … The fire system on the ship had been disabled, because they were [under] reconstruction, and they had no fire extinguishers, blah, blah, blah. Anyway, it was a real mess. … By the time they righted it and towed it, it was too late in the war. There were talks about converting it, because they had to remove the entire superstructure to bring it back up level and, when they did, … it was too late. So, yes, I was very much involved, interested in that. I still have a few *Normandie* souvenirs. Of course, [they are difficult to see now], because we have Christmas decorations [up]. I have a bronze coin from the *Normandie,* which was a souvenir of its first transatlantic crossing, and, as you leave, you'll see to the left of my door, I have the ribbons from the French Line ships that the sailors used to wear on their hats and I have a *Normandie* ribbon up there.

SI: I did not realize what that was.

AB: Yes. Those are … the three French Line ships, the *lle de France*, the *Normandie* and the *Libertẽ*. The *Libertẽ* was a German ship that was taken over by the French. I think it was originally the *Bremen*.

SI: How much of a blow was it for your parents, particularly your father, when France fell? What kind of feelings did they have about that?

AB: Well, I think they were just appalled. I mean, … they felt they were very fortunate. They were in the United States and … none of [their family members were still living in France], that I know of, maybe some of my cousins. I don't even know if any of them were in the French Army at that time, because my father, the only close relative [of his] was my Uncle Fred. He lived in the United States. The other three brothers were killed in World War I. … My father escaped because he was in Vienna and … became a foreign prisoner, intern, in Vienna, in Austria. … I know that one of my father's sisters is still alive, in Biarritz, … and then, there were a few family [members] that were still in Biarritz, but I think they were either all too old or whatever. I don't think any of them served in the military. So, there's no, really, direct loss of life. Of course, there was a loss of communication with France, because it became occupied by the Germans, but, yes, obviously, I mean, it was just incredible. The French [felt] very secure that they would never lose a war, because of the Maginot Line, the line of defense stretching from Switzerland all the way over to Belgium. … Of course, the Germans broke right through Belgium and went right through Belgium into France and they completely bypassed the Maginot Line. It was a great strategic mistake, because the Germans had come through Belgium in World War I and the whole German strategy, which I think was the Moltke Plan, M-O-L-T-K-E. That goes back to the 1890s or something like that; the best way to invade France was through the Ardennes and, … basically, they followed that same concept.

SI: You mentioned earlier that your neighborhood's character changed with this influx of Jewish refugees. Did you ever get to know any of them? Did they ever tell you about what life was like under Hitler?

AB: … Oh, we didn't really get to know them very well. There were no families that I knew of in our apartment house. My mother did get to know some of the people, because she was able to speak German and they could talk about her days in Berlin, and [I was] never really aware. …

SI: What do you remember about the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked?

AB: Well, it was a Sunday, as you know, and we used to listen to the [radio] in our 79th Street apartment. We had purchased, I guess as part of our move into that apartment in 1939, a nice, big RCA Victor radio, … AM radio and record changer, and we used to sit [by it] on Sundays. This particular Sunday, we were sitting there, reading the Sunday papers and listening to the New York Philharmonic. … That's when they came [on the air] with the announcement, that I think, sometimes, occasionally, they still play that announcement. … The guy says, "We interrupt this program to bring you a special bulletin. … The United States naval base on the island of Ohau…" He mispronounced it. Instead of Oahu, he said, "Ohau." Sometimes, you hear that recording. Yes, that was when we learned about it and it was quite a shock, but, you know, as I say, in a way, it kind of cleared the air on this whole isolationist movement and it was obvious that we were in a war. Of course, we were initially in the war against Japan. … That happened on Sunday and, of course, Roosevelt spoke to the Congress with that famous speech, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy." That speech declared war on Japan and that was on Monday and it was on Thursday, I believe, that Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. Theoretically, they had a Tripartite Pact, Japan, Germany and Italy, but I don't think, … the way those guys operated, [that] they did not have to declare war on the United States, but they did, which was obviously a mistake, … so that we were really not fully in World War II until … Thursday of that week. … That's when all kinds of crazy things began happening in New York.

SI: Was there any kind of paranoia in the days following Pearl Harbor?

AB: Yes. Well, it was not immediately after Pearl Harbor, but, once the Germans declared war, New York City suddenly [reacted]. … Of course, the Germans had been bombing England, Scotland. They had been bombing the United Kingdom and, of course, bombing raids were very common, had become very common, as a war weapon and, somehow or other, the fear came [about] that New York City was going to be bombed. … The Germans did not have any aircraft carriers, the Japanese did not have any aircraft carriers in the Atlantic Ocean and the Germans did not have a plane that could fly from anywhere in Germany, or any of the territories that Germany had conquered, to reach the United States, but, nonetheless, there was [the fear]. Our school, the next week, began having air raid drills. We would go down to the basement, and the city began having air raid drills. … They didn't have any sirens, but they would move fire trucks to street corners and they would run their sirens and [directed that] everybody should get off the street and inside buildings. So, it was kind of panicky. … I mean, it continued, in that, essentially, the city installed air raid sirens all over the place. They installed a huge air raid siren on top of the RCA Building, which is now the GE Building, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. I think it's a sixty-five-story building. They had this big siren on top of that, that rotated 360 degrees, and we had blackouts. We had to turn off all the lights, and that was another problem. New York City could not turn off the streetlights, because the streetlights were on some kind of timers, mechanical timers, that controlled sets of two or three streetlights and they didn't have enough people to go around switching each one of these things off. So, eventually, … I don't know what they did; they developed some kind of a system. We started having air raid wardens. We had guys walking around with armbands and steel helmets, with a Civilian Defense symbol [on

them], which was a triangular [shape with], I think, the letters "C-D" on it, in blue, Civilian Defense. … We had demonstrations of what to do with incendiary bombs. Eventually, … everywhere you'd go, there'd be pails with sand, and that was to use against an incendiary bomb. … One day, … my mother and I went down to a side street off Amsterdam Avenue, I think maybe 75th Street or something like that. There was a demonstration of incendiary bombs, how to extinguish them, and who showed up there but Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia? and he delivered one of his little speeches. He was quite a colorful character and he spoke, was a funny guy. … Anyway, … so, there was all kinds of excitement about that, but the real excitement really happened in January. It had nothing to do with air raids. It had to do with the submarines. … Although we talked about blackouts, the blackouts were just a temporary thing. They'd run the siren and you had to turn your lights off. … We had those, maybe, you know, once every couple of weeks, we had a blackout drill, but the big thing was the German submarines sinking the ships off the Atlantic coast because they were silhouetted with all the lights from all the cities along the coast. It would just create such a glow in the sky that the ships along the Atlantic coastline were silhouetted and the Germans didn't even need to waste torpedoes. They could just sit out there and they could sink these ships by firing their cannon and there was this … interesting book that showed the incredible toll of ships that were sunk. … Finally, we realized what the problem was and they began what they called dim-out rules. … All the neon signs in New York were turned off. All the streetlights were reduced bulbs' wattage and the top of the streetlight was painted black and all headlights on cars were painted black on top. … You only were supposed to use low beams and there were all kinds of things, where all the lighting, all along the Atlantic coast, was dimmed. … We had to buy black window shades for our windows and we were supposed to keep our [windows dark] and, if you had your window lit, somebody, I guess they were either police or air raid wardens, would be patrolling and they would immediately get to you and [you would] either turn off the light or pull down the shade. That was all the New York City excitement.

SI: Was the possibility of an air raid or German saboteurs lurking around on your mind often?

AB: Well, I never sensed that, really. We never thought about it. We didn't think it was possible. I think that the paranoia was perhaps more among the leadership, the politicians, the bureaucrats and so forth, but I think that quickly faded away, … you know, within maybe about six months. I think it was all so sudden and the Pearl Harbor attack was so shocking. It was unbelievable that this island in the middle of the Pacific, which was so far away from Japan, [could be attacked], Hawaii was not a state then, it was, well, a commonwealth or protectorate or something. … Nonetheless, it was all American, except for the indigenous people, but it had a heavy, heavy American population. … Let's put it this way; maybe a parallel, not exactly, would be like the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York. It was totally unexpected and a lot of Americans were killed and, as a result of that, people … began to wonder, "Well, could this happen here?" Now, of course, the terrorist thing, now, in 2005, is still very much a possibility, but the people who really could think about it and were aware, in 1941, '42, should have realized that, as I said, there was no way Germans could fly planes to bomb New York or Washington or Philadelphia or Boston or what have you. As you know, there were some saboteurs that were landed, I don't know what year, I think in '42, … from German submarines. They had missions to blow up some of the manufacturing plants that were turning out war goods, but they were, through a couple of lucky breaks, … detected. … There were some that landed on

Long Island and there were some that landed, I believe, in Florida and they were all captured within the space of a couple of weeks. I believe they were all executed.

SI: At this time in your personal life, what were you going through day-to-day? What were your interests in high school? Were you looking forward to college at that point?

AB: … Oh, yes, very definitely. I was doing very, very well in math and science and I was definitely thinking of becoming an engineer. I was actually interested in becoming an aeronautical engineer, design aircraft, and that was my interest, … as I still had excellent grades in math, all the way through, and I give that credit entirely to my teacher. He made it so crystal-clear and simple that it was easy for me to understand. At least in my brain, it worked perfectly well. … In the meantime, I was developing skills in writing and an interest in history. … I participated in a *New York Times* contest celebrating the, now, I don't know what year, some anniversary pertaining to Thomas Jefferson. This was in 1942 or 1943. You just have to look up Thomas Jefferson, when he was born, when he … died, I don't know when it was. [Editor's Note: The contest most likely commemorated the bicentennial of Thomas Jefferson's birth on April 13, 1743.] … They had an essay contest and I entered that and I won that contest for my school, and then, I got an honorable mention within the city for that essay. So, I had begun to become more interested in writing and history and so forth, but, at the same time, I really was interested in math and science, and so, I did apply to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and I was accepted to that.

SI: Did your parents encourage you towards higher education?

AB: My mother particularly, yes. My mother was very much educationally oriented. … Well, my father had never had [an academic education]. He had just had what you would call, maybe, an early education, and then, he spent seven years learning his trade in the kitchen. So, he was really not into higher education *per se*, but my mother was very definitely anxious and that's one of the things [that drove me], and the other thing is the school I went to. Collegiate, … although it was not called a preparatory school, the bulk of the kids who graduated from Collegiate went to college, … which was, obviously, in those days, … not very common. As I should say, Collegiate School is a private school and I got a scholarship there and I was a scholarship student all the way through. You know, I think tuition cost, then, probably a few hundred dollars, but [laughter] it was still a lot then. So, yes, I think that my mother [encouraged me]; that was very much [her influence]. As I told you before about my transfer from Birch Wathen to Collegiate, my mother was concerned about the fact that I should be pushed to learn.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about the decisions that you had to face as you graduated from Collegiate? On the one hand, you had college and, on the other hand, the service was looming over you. Can you take me through that period?

AB: … Yes. Well, when the war [began] for the USA in 1941, … I was only fifteen years old and, no, it was not likely that I was going to be in the military service. I didn't think I would. Anyway, that was the furthest [thing] from my mind, but, … gradually, and I graduated from high school at the age of seventeen, … as we, all of us, approached seventeen or eighteen, we realized that we became of military age and all of the people in our class were wondering what

they were going to do. … Most of them all had ambitions, that so-and-so [said], "I'm going to go into the Navy." "I'm going to go to;" yes, yes, they would be talking about this, and the alternatives, and so forth. … That's when I started, really, exploring [my options]. I told [you] about the stories about applying for Naval Air and the Army Air Corps and Naval officer training. I did that in January and February of the year that I graduated, so, I had just turned seventeen, and I was of the age where they would accept people for officer cadet training. … There was no debate, "Should I?" or, "How could I avoid this?" stuff like that. Most people did not want to be drafted, at least in our group. … They wanted to select where they [went], what line of service they went into. … One of my classmates went into the Merchant Marine, which was dangerous and acceptable, because there were a lot of merchant ships that were sunk. In other words, they needed people to run their ships and the supplies were all waterborne. … So, anyway, … those choices were discussed and, I don't know, most of them were all made on their own individual decisions, … and then, [as] it happened in my case, as I was not accepted for any training; … then, I ran out of options. … I did not want to volunteer for officer training in the Army, because I knew they would put me in the infantry and I didn't want to go in the infantry.

SI: You decided to let fate take its course.

AB: So, I just let it ride and [I would] see what happens, yes. … As you know, well, [I] had applied for RPI and I was accepted, but I could not get any kind of a financial aid package there. … I was accepted, really, in the fall of 1942 and I was graduating in '43, so, it's long before I was graduating from high school. … That's when my headmaster, his name was Wilson Parkhill, at Collegiate School, … he advised me, he called me in, he called my mother, he said, "You know, I don't know if you're making a good decision, going to engineering school, and you can't afford it, but I also think you have great abilities in English, History and writing and I think I can get you accepted at Harvard and you can get a financial package, because you certainly are eligible for it." … He got the application forms and what have you for me to apply to Harvard and I did and I was accepted and I did get a … small partial scholarship, but I also worked as a student waiter, … [which] completely paid for my room and board. So, the only thing we had to do was pay for part of the tuition, which was, again, some ridiculous amount of money, three hundred dollars; … I think it was, like, I got 150 dollars a semester and they paid the rest.

SI: What was Harvard like in the middle of the war, when you first arrived?

AB: Well, it was very, very different from what you would envision [as] a college campus today. Of course, the campus is still architecturally [the same]. It's a beautiful place, if you like Georgian architecture. Of course, now, they've got so many new buildings that are not Georgian, but, in those days, the primary architecture was Georgian. The universities were running twelve months a year. So, when I was accepted as a freshman, I graduated in June and I reported to Harvard, I think, [at] the end of June. It was almost instantaneous going up there. … The freshmen at Harvard are usually housed in what they called the Yard. They have dormitories all around the Yard and they are in a building, called the Union. That's the way [it was normally] but, when I went there, all the dorms in the Yard were occupied by Naval communications officers, Air Corps supply [personnel], I don't know what else. There were, oh,

Naval supply officers, or, I think, the supply officers were at the business school. There were entire dorms where women, the WAVES, Women something, Voluntary Emergency Service.

SI: Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service.

AB: Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service, which was the Naval equivalent of the WAAC, Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, which was later changed to WAC, Women's Army Corps. Anyway, they were officer training for the WAVES and … the whole place was [like] a military installation, except that instead of, like, in an Army camp, [where] you have only Army, here, you had Navy, you had Air Corps, you had … all kinds of different branches. … They had the Navy V-12 program, which was a program which took kids out of high school and put them into college for a year or two and, at the same time, gave them Naval officer training. … There were only three of the Harvard houses [reserved for students], Lowell, Dunster and Adams House. So, it was Adams, Lowell and Dunster where civilian students were housed, and that was very unusual, because the houses were only for upperclassmen, but I went there as a freshman. … I was assigned to a room in Lowell. … The first day I arrived there, I was had to report for work at the Harvard Union as a student waiter and I worked as a waiter there for the first year, serving, the Naval Officers' Communications School. … They were ensigns, lieutenant JGs and lieutenants in the Navy; that was the highest rank [represented there]. They were all men that were being trained in communications, which meant not only the technology, but also the codes. … I got there early, five-thirty in the morning or something, because it was a military operation and I think everything starts around six o'clock. … There were formations of these guys walking around, marching through, singing songs. It was very unusual. It certainly was nothing like a college campus. It was physically a college campus, but it was basically a military [installation]. The most interesting thing is, because I had such great grades in mathematics, I was put into an advanced algebra course. … Completely, I couldn't understand a damn thing that was going on, because [the professor was], he eventually won a Nobel Prize, a guy by the name of Cohen. [laughter] He would go, "Zip, zip, zip," write these equations on the board, "Zip, zip, zip, zip." "Wait a minute, wait a minute," you know, it was beyond me. I flunked. It was the only course I flunked at Harvard, was math, [laughter] after all my straight As in high school. … Yes, I guess I flunked the first semester and, you know, … Harvard does not waste any time. … Their philosophy is, "If you can get in, you can graduate and we'll do anything we can to help you graduate, if you're having a problem." So, … as soon as I flunked that first semester, it wasn't even the first semester, it was the mid-terms, the Dean of Freshmen pulled me in and said, "Look, why don't you withdraw from that course and why don't you take something else?" … So, I said, "Well, what do you think?" He said, "Well, if you want an easy course, why don't you take military science?" which was the ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps]. [laughter] So, I said, "Okay, I'll go into ROTC," and the ROTC, at that time, was not the official ROTC, in that … I think we only had about twenty of us in ROTC. Formally, … Harvard had a big Naval ROTC and an Army ROTC, which was training field artillery officers for the Army, and that was disbanded in 1942, but they still had the remnants and it was an unofficial program. You couldn't go through four years, but you could take it for a couple of years and, basically, we learned a lot of things about military [life]. … [It was] the first time I got exposed to what they called the Garand rifle, which was the US Rifle Caliber .30 M1. We got brand-new ones that came all covered in cosmolene (a greasy protective substance) and we … cleaned them and practiced with them. Now, we never fired them, but we did dry runs, where

we would be aiming through the sights at the targets, and we would do close order drill with the Garand rifles and that's where I got my "M1 thumb." If you look at my thumb, you'll see that it's indented in there. … Instead of being flat, it has, like, a dent in it and, when you go to inspection arms, in a bolt rifle, you pull the bolt down. It's just a simple thing. With a Garand rifle, you push down on the receiver and you hold it and it stays open. Now, theoretically, when you're loading it, you put in a clip. Inspection arms, you pull down on the receiver, the officer or whoever is inspecting takes the rifle, looks at that to see if it's dirty, whatever, gives it back to you. Then, you have to close the receiver. To close the receiver, you have to put your finger down there, depress a spring mechanism. That will release the receiver to slam shut. Now, you've got to push down with your thumb, get it out real fast. Well, I didn't get it out very fast enough and I got this thing, "Bam," right into my thumb. [laughter] So, I have a permanently dented thumb from my Harvard ROTC, but, anyway, that's a little side story.

SI: Was that a common injury in the ROTC?

AB: Yes, "M1 thumb." … [For] guys who were not used to, yes, who were just learning how to operate that rifle, yes, it's a common injury. You have to be [fast]. They warned you about it, but [laughter] it is a difference between telling and doing it. …

SI: When you entered Harvard, had you already declared yourself an engineering major?

AB: No, I was not an engineering [major]. I had no major [at that point].

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

SI: This continues an interview with Andre Beaumont on December 13, 2005, in Millsboro, Delaware, with Shaun Illingworth. Before the tape cut off, I had asked if you had declared a major at Harvard. You were explaining the system there.

AB: I said, "No, I did not have a major." The practice at Harvard was that … you did not declare a major until you were a sophomore.

SI: From doing interviews with Rutgers alumni, I know that engineering majors were among the few students spared from the draft and allowed to finish their studies. Was that option ever offered to you?

AB: Not really. I had no intention of being an engineering major when I went to Harvard. I never thought of Harvard as an engineering school *per se,* although they did have what was called engineering science, and so, I was not aware that engineers were draft exempt, but I really was not thinking about that.

SI: I was curious, because you said that you might have gone to RPI for engineering.

AB: Yes. … I was going to RPI, I was accepted to RPI as a [student], and I was going there mainly because I really wanted to be an engineer. I wanted to be in aeronautical engineering and

I was doing very well in my science subjects, so, I thought that that would be a logical thing for me to do. Of course, the wise counsel of my headmaster changed that.

SI: Rutgers alumni who entered in the mid-war period, 1942, 1943 and 1944, usually comment that most of the University's traditions had been swept aside by that point. Was that the case at Harvard? Did they still maintain some traditions?

AB: Well, it was pretty much the case. Obviously, there was no football team. There were a few extracurricular activities. The glee club was still going on. There was a radio station; I did try out for that. … I shouldn't have, really, because I didn't have the time to do the, they call it the Crimson Network. … Having been assigned to a house, and the house system at Harvard is very similar to the colleges in England; the universities have their colleges, which are sort of like self-contained units. A Harvard house is a place where you live, where you eat, where you have a library, where you have recreational rooms. We had squash courts. Some of the houses had swimming pools. So, it's like a self-centered unit. Now, Lowell House had a tradition of what they called "the high table" and they continued that tradition during the war. … During the war, the high table, … it happened once a month and certain students were invited to sit at the high table with the master. … You would go to the master's house before the dinner and have a glass of sherry and have pleasant conversation, and then, you'd go to sit at the high table and you are served there instead of going through the serving line. Now, Harvard, before the war, had … student waiters. Who waited on table and you sat down at a table and you were waited on. When the war came, they changed it to the cafeteria line system, and that is when I was working as a student waiter in the union, serving all these naval officers. We civilians had that, but, obviously, it's the cafeteria line, but the high table would be different. You would be served and you would sit up, like, on a stage at the end of the dining hall. … There were no speeches. It was just that you were expected to stand when the invitees walk in … and you also had to dress in a tuxedo. I think that tradition still carries on, at least in Lowell House. Other houses, I think, had different traditions. … I don't know, maybe most of those things were not [cut]. We did have a couple of dances that were held in the dining hall. It was mostly Radcliffe girls that came, but it was pretty stark, because you were going to school under unusual circumstances. … My first semester ended right around Labor Day and I went home to New York and, when I came back to resume classes for the second semester, I discovered that Winston Churchill had attended a ceremony where, you know, all the students were invited, and I totally missed that. Of course, a lot of students were not there, because it was the Labor Day weekend. … I think that there was very little of the real college atmosphere.

SI: Were these accelerated semesters or quarters?

AB: Yes, semesters.

SI: Again, in reading your memoirs, I was really struck by how long the process of getting into the military took, from the initial physicals to the processing to your eventual assignment. That process began when you were at Harvard. When did that begin?

AB: Well, I realized, as I was nearing my eighteenth birthday, [that] when you're eighteen years old was when you were drafted and the drafting process was very efficient. You barely turned

eighteen and you were drafted into the military within a matter of weeks after your birthday. … I realized I turned eighteen January the 3rd of 1944 and my semester, the second semester at Harvard, would not end until late February. I don't remember the exact date, but there was a very distinct possibility that I would turn eighteen and be drafted just before I could take my final exams and I would lose … all the credits that I had earned in my second semester. … The Army had, what they called the Enlisted Reserve Corps and I went [into that]. A lot of my classmates went this route. Some that did not suffered, because they were drafted before they were able to finish their semester, but, anyway, a lot of us, when we were seventeen, were allowed to enlist and made a deal with the Army that … we were not to be called for active duty until after the certain date we would certify. I think we'd get a letter from Harvard saying that the final exam [was on], that the semester will end on, February the 20th or whatever, so that we were eligible to be drafted after that date. So, that was the arrangement. … I went down to Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, where they had a big induction center, where you went through all the physical exams, and so, I passed that and I was sworn in on the same day. That was December the 8th, 1943, and so, then, I just carried a card around. That was all. I was essentially an Army Reserve person. … You asked me about the processing you go through; … it was just basically a medical exam and maybe some sort of a psychological exam.

SI: You actually entered the military in Fort Dix.

AB: Okay, yes. … I received orders to report for active duty, report to Fort Dix, New Jersey. I'm not sure what date I reported for active duty, but it was in March of [1944].

SI: Yes. It just says March.

AB: [When I] went down to [Fort Dix] they told you, "Just bring toilet goods and a minimum amount of clothing and one little handbag with your clothing and report to Penn Station in New York and get a train that went directly to Fort Dix." … I arrived there at Fort Dix and started the famous processing, which took, I think, about five days of medical exams, psychological testing, receiving uniforms and filling out all kinds of documents, getting you registered for Army National Service Life Insurance, … even your dog tags. You went from one place to another to another, where you got all these things taken care of. … Of course, … you walked around for maybe three or four days where all the guys that had already received their uniforms would make fun of you, because you're [in civilian clothes]. … In that uniform, you're a big shot. [laughter] The interesting [thing] that happened to me was, we had completed all the processing and we were waiting for shipment to some place for training and that day, right after breakfast, we came back to the barracks and the sergeant came in and he pulled me [aside] and the guys in the two bunks next to me, you know, all double-decker bunks, and there were five of us. The bunk on the left, the bunk on the right, those two guys, and me were pulled out. We were marched over to a tent where we were informed that the guy that I, that was sleeping under me, had come down with the measles and that we were going to be quarantined. … I think it was twenty-one days, or something like that, that we were quarantined in that tent. At least it wasn't freezing cold, but it was still cool. We had a little coal stove in there and we had our segregated, little toilet facilities and they brought us food and they would come examine us every day, to make sure we didn't get sick. … Anyhow, that earned me a weekend pass to New York, and so, I was able to go home and spend a couple of days with my parents, then, report back to Fort Dix.

SI: How well did you adjust to going from the freedom of civilian life to military life, having to take orders and having your life pretty much set by others?

AB: Well, I don't think it was too much of an effort. First of all, I was very young and stupid, or what-have-you, [laughter] and I had had some preparation for military life, because I had the ROTC at Harvard. So, I knew something about close-order drill, I knew something about orders and military process. So, it was not much of a shock to me.

SI: For some men I have spoken with, it was very shocking to go into the military, in terms of the food and the living conditions, but you had lived away from home for at least a year. Was it difficult?

AB: Yes. I had already [been on my own]. Being at Harvard, we had, well, what in the military they call the chow line, but, at Harvard, we had the cafeteria line and, basically, we used the same type of trays. At least in the training camps, they used these trays that … were either stamped out of aluminum or made out of plastic and, had little compartments in them and your main course and your dessert and everything was [there]. So, I was used to that kind of [eating], being served in that capacity. … Also, I was somewhat used to institutional food. So, it wasn't that much of a shock.

SI: Where did you go once you got out of quarantine and you were assigned in Fort Dix?

AB: Well, … after I came back from my three-day pass in New York, I went back to a barracks and I wasn't there more than a day or two before I received orders. I was to be put on a troop train, heading south. … We had no idea where we were going. Because we were going on a long trip, I think we were at least two nights en route. We were in the standard Pullman cars. The standard Pullman car had two seats facing one way and two seats facing the opposite way, and the bottom of those seats, pulled out and that formed a lower bed, and then, from above there could drop down an upper bed, … We were essentially assigned three to a set of seats. … Because the bottom bed was wider, two would sleep on the bottom and one would sleep on top. … That's how we traveled. There was a mess car (kitchen). … they came to each car and they fed us in our mess kits and we ate in our car. We finally arrived down in Georgia, we were at Camp Stewart, Georgia, which was an antiaircraft training camp. We would do close order drill every morning, and then, we would have calisthenics. We would go through an obstacle course two or three times a week and we would have classes on all kinds of things, first aid, maps, map reading, whatever. I can't remember all the different things, but one of the things was aircraft identification, [silhouettes] which we would have flashed on a screen. At the beginning, they would show you this picture, with different views of these aircraft that you would have to memorize, but, eventually, as you moved into the course, they would flash on the screen, for maybe ten seconds, a silhouette of a plane and you would have to identify. So, that's where I was. I did very well in that and that's why, eventually, the sergeant that was teaching the course asked me to teach it, because I seemed to know a lot more about the characteristics of these aircraft. The big thing that we did. In antiaircraft were ninety-millimeter antiaircraft guns. There also were forty-millimeter antiaircraft guns and there were .50-caliber water-cooled antiaircraft guns. Well, we were in the ninety-millimeters, which were the big guns, and fired up

to twenty, thirty thousand feet. We had a gun park right next to our barracks where we would go and, part of the day, we would learn how to break down the gun, set it up for firing and how to set it up to transport it, how to fire it and I don't remember how many men were in a gun crew, six men, eight men, and each man has a specific role and you do the role of number one, and then, you learn the role of number two. So, we would eventually learn, be trained in all aspects of running the gun, and so, … that took quite a bit of time, because it was complicated and there were a lot of guys that were involved. … So, I became qualified as a ninety-millimeter gunner, and then, they pulled me out, with a couple of other guys. … We were trained on the director. The director was a gear-run computer, manufactured by Sperry Gyroscope, and it factored in the rate of speed of an aircraft, the rate of climb or rate of descent, the rate of turning, it factored in wind, known velocity. … They would have balloons that you would launch and you would see … which direction they flew and how fast they flew. You could factor in the wind at various altitudes and humidity. The whole thing was mechanical and you would have your two guys that were tracking with a scopes one guy would be handling elevation up or down and the other guy would be turning [the] azimuth left or right. So, both these guys were following the target and we also had input from an optical height finder. They just had developed [SCR-584 radar], which also calculated range. … What they originally had was the stereopticon height finder, to operate you'd have to have a certain kind of stereoptical vision, and we were all tested for that. … I don't think any one … in our whole battery of a couple of hundred people qualified. All that information went by wire to the guns and the guns were fired by the men who … matched pointers on the gun for altitude and elevation. Finally there was the fuse setting. There was an opening where you inserted the shell in and it automatically set the fuse for the desired altitude, … and then, they put it into the barrel and fired the damn thing. So, anyway, that was what we [did]. … We finally finished training and went through all the usual qualifications. We learned how to fire our M1 rifles and I ended up as a Marksman. … We learned how to handle hand grenades and we went through a couple of infiltration course runs, where … you had to crawl under barbed wire with a machine gun firing live bullets over your head and they had these places throughout the course where they were setting off small bits of explosives, so that you'd get explosions and you'd get splattered with mud and dirt. … It was a sea of mud. … When we came back from that, we just walked right into the shower, fully clothed, with our rifles and everything, and just let all the mud wash off. [laughter] You're filthy. So, that was the end of that and I had a ten-day pass or seven-day pass, home in New York, and then, I returned to Camp Stewart. … I was assigned to a couple of units that were inactive searchlight units, they were just holding units, and then, finally, I got assigned … to a unit in California and got on a train that was headed out to Camp Haan, near Riverside, California. … There, I was assigned to a ninety-millimeter gun company and I was in the director section and we had a brand-new electronic computer, manufactured by Western Electric, which was inside an air-conditioned trailer, which was very nice to be in on a hot California [day]. The two of us were running that thing and the officer who was in charge of gunnery was in there, too, and [we] went to training out in the Mojave Desert. After that we were supposed to go and deploy to the Pacific. The unit … I was assigned to, [the] 69th AAA [pronounced "Triple-A"] Gun Battalion, had been up in Alaska for a number of years and, finally, when the Japanese were thrown out of Alaska, the unit came back and was reequipped and was going to be sent to the South Pacific, but, as it turned out, we didn't. I was going to say, we went out for final maneuvers out in the Mojave Desert and I was on guard duty, guarding our equipment, and … didn't realize that it got to be about thirty degrees or twenty degrees, freezing cold. I didn't have my field jacket. I had left it back in the

camp, in for dry cleaning. I had a cold and, somehow or other, I came down with pneumonia. I reported for sick call the next day and had a temperature and they finally shipped me [out] in an ambulance and took me back to Camp Haan. I was in the hospital for I don't know how many days, four, five days, before I was really out of it, out of the pneumonia, and then, I was in a recuperation ward for another week or so. … That was where I had that experience of sitting in the screened-in porch, outside, right next to the ward, where we would sit there in the evening and watch the sun set and play cards or read or what-have-you and we were right near the end of the runway, one of the runways, for March Field, which was a training field for B-24 bombers, and just within a week that I was there, two of those guys [crashed], … big ball of flame, black smoke, with sirens. It's a matter of historical record that they had a fuel leak problem with these aircraft and, in fact, I just read something about [that]. They had a specially modified B-24 to fly Churchill around … Then, when I was through with my recuperation, I learned, in the meantime, that the whole camp had been deactivated, all the units had been shut down and all the personnel had been sent for infantry training, to be trained as infantry replacements.

SI: When you were first assigned to the ninety-millimeter guns, how did you feel about that assignment? Were you happy to get that assignment?

AB: Yes. It was interesting. I thought it was a good assignment, because, first of all, it was not the infantry [laughter] and, secondly, it was interesting, because it appealed to some of my mechanical and technical interests, because, … essentially, the aiming of these guns with the director was a mathematical problem and the guns were … mechanical works of [technology]. They were quite complex and they were very well-designed. Well, as I said, … maybe you'll get to it later on, but the equivalent of the ninety-millimeter gun in the German military was the eighty-eight. Now, the eighty-eights that the Germans made were easy as an antitank gun, because it was a high-velocity weapon, and as an antipersonnel weapon, whereas we never trained [for either]. We mainly trained as antiaircraft and rarely did we train as an antitank [weapon] and we had a truck that was driving around and we were supposed to track the truck with our gun and pretend that it was a tank. … I think we did that once or twice, but the American ninety-millimeter gun, although it was quite a sophisticated piece of equipment for those days, it was not as good as the Germans', because it rolled around on two wheels and, to do that, you had to take the whole gun apart and fold things up and bolt them together and attach the wheels and blah, blah, blah, so that it was difficult to move it and set it up, whereas the German eighty-eight was built on a four-wheel carriage that could be easily hauled around. … You had jacks on each corner and you could stabilize the thing very quickly and set it up for firing … and, you know, you just pull it away. This was not the case with the American ninety-millimeter gun. So, that's my little speech about the eighty-eight-millimeter versus the ninety-[millimeter] and I'll tell you, probably, … more about the eighty-eight-millimeter as an antipersonnel gun later on.

SI: During this time, did you spend much time focusing on aiming at individual planes?

AB: Well, yes. … There was air traffic around and, … yes, we would aim at individual planes, without, of course, firing, but, then, of course, we did take the guns out to a firing range where there were women pilots that towed targets. I don't know how far behind, but they were considerably far behind. … They had a long sock of a target that they towed and they towed it at

different altitudes and we would fire at those. … I really do not remember how successful we were at hitting the damn thing, [laughter] but, at any rate, we did also work out on that firing range, firing the .50-caliber water-cooled antiaircraft gun, because … each ninety-millimeter gun battery had four water-cooled .50-calibers, for defense against low flying planes. So, we learned how to fire that and we also fired that at a moving towed target.

SI: A few months ago, I interviewed another man who also trained on ninety-millimeter antiaircraft guns. He commented that firing at individual planes was really drilled into them, as opposed to pattern fire.

AB: … Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SI: You had to pick an individual plane and shoot at it.

AB: Oh, yes. That was absolutely, yes, the doctrine that we [used]. Yes, there was no area firing.

SI: It was a point of pride almost.

AB: No, we would always be aiming for an aircraft, yes, or a towed target, as I said, in practice.

SI: While reading your memoirs, I got the impression that you had faith in the Army system. You knew that everyone in this very technically-oriented unit had scored high on the Army General Classification Test. You thought everything worked at that point, a notion that probably changed when you went into the infantry. Is that accurate?

AB: … Not quite, because it did help me even in the infantry, but, yes, I would say that there were two factors that I think helped me. One, I did mention this in the memoirs, … I was differentiated from … the draftees in that my serial number was 111. … The first one means that I enlisted. So, the others had … the first serial number was four or three, depending on the service command or the area in which they were drafted, but, if you had a number like that, the first number, they knew that you were drafted. So, that, theoretically, made it [more appealing]. I mean, it wasn't that I was *gung ho*, [that] I was dying to get into the Army, I wasn't, [laughter] but I had to go, because I knew I was going to be drafted, and I wanted to go on my own terms or my own time schedule. So, that's why, really, I enlisted. … On the other hand, people see that, "Well, now, this guy is a *gung ho* guy." So, that's number one. Number two, I did take this Army General Classification Test and I did score pretty high on it and there are a lot of guys who said, "Ah, you know, it doesn't mean a damn thing," but I think it did. I think that's one of the reasons why they put me in the director section, because I had a high score. You know, it showed that I was fairly intelligent. So, I think that helped me, certainly, in that. It did not help me [by] keeping me out of the infantry, but, when I got into the infantry, it did make a difference, as, probably, we'll get into that later on.

SI: In California, you served with this unit that had already been overseas in Alaska.

AB: Yes, right.

SI: What did you learn from the older men in your unit, from the veterans?

AB: Well, they were pretty sick and tired of the whole business. [laughter] They had been on this Godforsaken island in Alaska with nothing to do, you know. … They manufactured some kind of alcohol to drink. … These men, … were all older than we were and some of them were married and had children. I mean, they were really, … they were "old men," quote-unquote, in their thirties, but, you know, they would tell us about being in Alaska and how horrible it was, how the weather was horrible and how … they felt that they had been abandoned there and there was really nothing, virtually nothing, to do, except they're standing guard duty or whatever they did. … So, they were [disillusioned], and they really were hoping that they could go home, but they were not [dismissed]. … Everybody was in what they called "for the duration of the war, plus six months," that was the standard phrase, that everybody was [when] he was drafted and, when I enlisted, I enlisted for the duration of the war, plus six months. … So, these guys were not happy campers, but at least they were happy to be in California, and, of course, they had had a chance, … when they came back, to spend some good time with their families and so on. … They were resigned, maybe, to be sitting on some Pacific island with beautiful grass-skirted girls running around and God-knows-what, I don't know, but they thought the Pacific was going to be a hell of a lot better than Alaska.

SI: You were summarily informed that you were out of the antiaircraft and reassigned to the infantry. You were sent to Camp Howze.

AB: Camp Howze, H-O-W-Z-E, in, is it Gainesville, Texas? That's written down.

SI: In-between Denton, Texas, and Oklahoma?

AB: Yes, right. It's just north of Denton and, as I said, Camp Howze rhymes with lousy. [laughter] The barracks were single-story, old barracks with tar paper, I guess wood and tar paper, on the outside and they had, well, double-decker bunks all along and two big, coal-burning stoves, one on each end, and, fortunately, I got there just in time to start the training. The guys from the 69th, when the unit was shipped there, … it was an abandoned camp and they had to clean the place up. They had to dig the pits for the rifle ranges and they had to do all kinds of menial work to make it an operational training camp for the infantry units. So, when I got there, fortunately, all of that work had been accomplished and we started training almost immediately.

SI: You described this training as much harsher than what you had gone through previously.

AB: Yes, absolutely. … Well, first of all, this was in the fall. … I guess it was October, November or something like that and it was starting to get cold down there. We hit cold weather, but it was early, very early, that we would be awakened, maybe at five-thirty or so in the morning, and, well, the night before, you banked your coal stoves, and then, the guy that wakes you up shakes all the ashes out and gets the stoves going, so [that] the place heats up a little and you get fully dressed in your uniform, with your full field pack, which carries all your tents, and, you know, you've got your entrenching tool and your rifle and all your canteen, all the

stuff that you carry in a field pack. You have it ready to go. So, you go out and you line up, and then, you march. We would march for, I don't know, I guess four or five miles before we would get to a place where there would be a truck and we would have our breakfast out there, just around dawn, and then, we would practice, out in the field, the different kinds of maneuvers for infantry attacking, you know, spreading out and whatever. … Well, they kept us on a very early schedule and I think we probably hit the sack at eight o'clock at night or eight-thirty, but it was pretty much, every day, the same thing, and then, … yes, we would go out to the rifle ranges and … get acquainted with the rifle firing, and then, we learned to fire the .30-caliber carbine, we learned to fire a .45 Colt pistol, we learned to fire a Thompson submachine gun, we learned to fire a light .30-caliber machine gun, we learned to fire the water-cooled .30-caliber machine gun, we learned to fire the Browning Automatic Rifle, we learned to fire the bazooka, we practiced grenade throwing, what else? … We had the usual obstacle course and infiltration course. We went through an infiltration course down there. It wasn't quite as bad as the one in Georgia, because we didn't have to go through mud. … The ground was too cold. So, it was just going through that thing.

SI: You were still with the same group of guys, though.

AB: Pretty much the same group, yes, yes.

SI: Including many of these older men.

AB: Yes, oh, yes. They were not happy at all. [laughter] …

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

SI: We were just discussing your infantry training. You said that the older guys were clearly not happy with the situation.

AB: Yes.

SI: As you went through infantry training, did it become a conscious thought in your head that this was going to be much different from the antiaircraft, that you could really get hurt doing this sort of thing?

AB: Yes. Well, obviously, but it was sort of unreal, because, as instructors, they had men, sergeants, mostly sergeants, corporals, who had actually been in infantry fighting in Africa and in Europe, because this was after the June invasion of Europe, so, there'd be quite a few men, and these were men that, obviously, perhaps, had been wounded and what-have-you and they came back and they used them as trainers. … They kept on telling us, all the time, "You know, this may mean your life. If you do this, you may save your life. Pay attention, because this may cost you your life." They kept on pounding that into our head, you know, and, on the other hand, … well, I don't know, at least to me, the reality of it just didn't sink in. I mean, obviously, I knew I was going in the infantry and I was going to be doing this stuff, but, nonetheless, … it certainly didn't scare me any more, although I understood everything they were saying, and we certainly all tried to do what we were supposed to do. … I think all of us had that sort of an

attitude, because you really don't know what you're getting into. … So, we were maybe unrealistic.

SI: You mention the leaves you went on several times in the memoir and you record your reactions to different areas of the country and different subcultures within the United States. What were some of your reactions to the South and to California?

AB: Well, being … there in Camp Stewart, which was just outside of Savannah, Georgia, … I think it was sixteen weeks [total], after the first four weeks, every other weekend, we'd get a pass into Savannah and that, essentially, the pass started after noon on Saturday and we had to be back by, I don't know what time, eight o'clock or something, on Sunday. We had to go through inspection, pass inspection, before we were allowed to take the pass and, of course, half the guys would go one weekend, and then, half of the other guys would go the next weekend. So, those that stayed on the post would do their laundry and go to the movies and what-have-you, but going into Savannah was really very interesting, because it was really a sleepy Southern city, and we would go there in convoys of trucks. I don't know how many thousands of guys [were] dumped in this small city, and we would all go to the DeSoto Hotel, in downtown Savannah, where the USO [United Service Organizations] was located, and we would get assigned to houses, to homes of people who would put us up for the night, for you to stay Saturday night. [At] the DeSoto Hotel, … the thing that struck us, the guys I hung out with were all from the North, and it struck us, … the segregation there. … No black person dared [to] enter the front door of the DeSoto Hotel. You had to go in the back [if] you were a servant or whatever, bellboy or what-have-you. The buses that ran in that city had the practice that the blacks had to sit in the back of the bus. … Several times, us guys from New York, … we would go to the back of the bus and sit there, so that if a black person came in, they would have to sit near the front, which would upset the other people very much, but, anyway, so, in a way, we were doing our little "Rosa Parks" routine here. … [laughter] You'd go to places with these little signs, "Colored Only," or, you know, "No Coloreds." It was really quite an education. It was a beautiful city, and it still is. Of course, it's not into segregation [now]. It was the summertime. It was warm and, I remember, we used to get up on Sunday morning and have our breakfast at the home, with the people. They were always very, very nice to us, [would] give us a nice breakfast, and then, we'd walk around in the city, and it was almost like there was nothing going on. I mean, coming from New York City, with cars and trolley cars and subways and all these noises, [this was] silence and, every once in a while, a car might move around. [laughter] It was really very interesting. Then, of course, we went out to California, which is a totally different situation. We went to Camp Haan, [which] was near Riverside, and we would hitchhike to Los Angeles, [it was] probably a thirty, forty-minute ride. You had no trouble getting a ride. If you wore a uniform, the people would pick you up or trucks would pick you up. Very often, we'd ride on the back of a truck. They'd pick up maybe eight or ten of us, all sitting in the back of a truck, get a ride into Los Angeles. Of course, Los Angeles was a large city. It didn't have subways, but it had trolley cars and we'd go around to different [places]. We never, by choice, … went to Hollywood or the Hollywood Canteen, because that was just a positive zoo, and that was the trouble with all USO operations everywhere. There were just too damn many soldiers, sailors, Marines, everything. It was just a zoo, especially if you're there on a weekend. … Somehow or other, we got a steer to go out towards [the] Huntington Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, get on a trolley car and go out there, and there was a small USO there and, again, they would assign

us to homes of people who'd take us in. … Most of the time, there were little social affairs, dances or even barbecues, where people would have their house open. … There'd be, again, thirty or forty soldiers and sailors and maybe ten girls, [laughter] and so, it was certainly different, in that it was a little bit more urbanized, but, wherever we went, the people were very, very nice. Except after finishing basic training, I really had no occasion to have any leaves. … When we were in Texas. We had a couple of nights [off]. We were trucked down … to Denton, to Texas Women's University, where, again, there were lots of other training camps around in Texas where they would bring in troops, sailors, what-have-you. It was the same old routine, about ten million guys and about half a dozen girls. … The men outnumbered the girls at least ten-to-one everywhere you went. So, that was the only kind of a social, if you want to call it [that], experience we had in Texas. … I stand corrected on one thing; when we arrived in Texas on the civilian train, because I'd gotten out of the hospital, … I was assigned to report to Camp Howze, and me and another guy, a sergeant from our unit, … we were both … given a little roomette, Pullman roomette. So, we had a private bedroom and a little private bathroom and we had chits, so [that] we could eat in the regular dining car and, when we arrived in Fort Worth, we got off and we reported. … There was always an Army transportation [officer] and they would give us either directions to … where we would stay that night or what-have-you. We would go there, check in and we went out to a restaurant and had a steak dinner. … That was where I lost my wallet, or [had] forgotten my wallet. …

SI: Someone returned it to you.

AB: Somebody, or maybe what happened is that I realized I'd lost my wallet and I went back to the restaurant and, yes, they had it for me. They were very nice, anyway. … Then, the other experience in Forth Worth was, we were walking along the street, and then, this big Cadillac came by and the door opens and there were a couple of "gorgeous," quote-unquote, looking girls, obviously prostitutes, who said, "You want to come for a ride, soldier?" and we declined them, and that was our Texas hospitality. We went back to wherever we were sleeping that night, and, the next day, they took us on a truck up to Camp Howze. So, that was my Texas hospitality, one night, one dinner and one invitation. So, that's my experience of different locations.

SI: At any of these training bases in the United States, but particularly in Camp Stewart, did you ever see any African-American soldiers? I know that there were a number of African-American antiaircraft units.

AB: You're right, there were. There were several of them at Camp Stewart. … The camp was a big place and you stayed in your area. … We had our own little PX, post exchange, and … there was a chapel and there was the dining hall. Also, a rec hall, where you had Ping-Pong and pool tables and a Coke machine. Anyway, you stayed in your own area and I imagine that the black units [had their area]. … They were totally black units, with white officers they were segregated, I know that, one time, we were out there on the range, when we were shooting our ninety-millimeters, they were shooting their forty-millimeters, in another part of the range, but we had very little interaction with them at all.

SI: Can you tell me about the process of going from Howze to overseas?

AB: Okay. Well, we boarded the usual troop train, with the usual Pullman car deals, and it was pretty cold then. I guess it was early December, or mid-December, but we went up through Chicago, and then, we cut over to Fort Meade in Maryland, right outside of Washington, DC. I don't know how many nights, two nights or three nights. The one point that I remember, as I remember, I was assigned to KP [kitchen police] duty, working in the kitchen car. The kitchen car had a big, old, wooden, coal-burning stove and ice boxes. … The thing that I'll never forget is that when we had a garbage can full of garbage, they just opened up the door and we just dumped the garbage out the door. [laughter] We were in open countryside, no consideration at all for recycling or environmental concerns. We were served; then, I know, we were served on paper plates, and so, there were lots of paper plates and paper lids and so forth. We had our own [utensils]. We didn't have plastic spoons, knives and forks and so forth. … At Fort Meade, they right away started processing us, that's the Army terminology, processing me for overseas, and, again, you went through all the medical exams. You had another series of shots and all the paperwork, insurance and blah, blah, blah. Everything was checked over, and then, we started receiving all-new, everything brand-new, equipment, socks, handkerchiefs, underwear, all kinds, everything, brand-new, new type, new style field jacket, that we had never seen in a field jacket before, and a totally new design of field pack. Everything was a different [design], brand-new stuff. … Whenever you're in the Army [and] you are issued new material, you had to put your last name initial and your last four digits of your … Army serial number [on it]. My serial number was 11133284. You had to put your last four numbers of your serial number, so, it was 3284, you had to put [on it], "B3284," with an indelible pen. … Everything that you get, you have to mark it including socks, handkerchiefs. Everything was marked. … Then, we … got a brand-new style gas mask and we went through gas mask drill, where they take you in a room with your gas mask in its carrying case, and a sergeant shouts, "Gas." As soon as he says, "Gas," you take a deep breath, hold your breath, open up your case, put on the mask, put it over your head, and then, exhale, blow all the air out, and then, you could breath, and they did this with tear gas. So, you just took this test … to see if the gas mask worked and so forth. … I should've said that we did that in basic training down in Georgia [also]. So, we had brand-new equipment. Everything was wonderful, and then, we were not allowed to leave the post. We were allowed one phone call and I was able to call my parents in New York. … Supposedly, the telephone calls were monitored, so that you weren't revealing any information about where you were or what was going on. But, I spoke in French and I wonder if the monitor thought I revealed the secrets of the war! … One morning, we were all ready to go and they lined us all up. We had our bags- that was another new thing. The old Army, when I first went in, had … the drawstring barracks bags, these bags that you pull the string and you close it. This had a duffle bag, with snaps, and it was a duffle bag with a big web handle, so [that] you could carry it over your shoulder. So, we lined up and as we got on to this Pennsylvania Railroad passenger car, a commuter type car they put numbers on our steel helmets. We had to wear steel helmets on which they chalked the number on as we boarded the train. We had to board in a specific order, so [that] our numbers corresponded with all their documents, and we had to remain seated according to where you were assigned. … The usual process was that you would go to Camp Upton on Long Island or the camp outside of New Brunswick, not Fort Dix.

SI: Camp Kilmer.

AB: Camp Kilmer, yes, for final processing before you went onboard your transport ship to take you to Europe. … We had never been issued rifles, so, we had no weapons. So, we thought, "Well, surely, we'll get weapons at Camp Kilmer or Upton." So, we went zooming through New Jersey. I said, "What the hell is going on here?" Well, maybe I thought we were going to take the tunnels under the Hudson River through Penn Station and go up on Long Island [Railroad] tracks out to Camp Upton. Well, that wasn't the case. We just went directly to a ferry terminal, where we unloaded the train in order of our numbers, and we got onboard a ferry. We walked through the ferry terminal and there was just a the little rope separation and a couple of MPs [military police] and on the other side of the rope were civilians traveling via ferry to New York City from, I believe it was either Hoboken, or Jersey City. We marched on to the ferry and filled up the whole middle part of the ferry. I don't know if you're familiar with ferries. They used to have [them set-up where] the middle part of the ferry was where cars would drive on. Cars would be parked in the middle and on the side would be passenger [areas] and the decks above would be for passengers. So, in this case, we were all in the lower level of the ferry, where the cars [usually] were, and it was filled with troops and we crossed over the Hudson River. … That's when I looked up and I saw the rear of the ship, a dark, big, gray ship, and it said, "*Queen Elizabeth*." … *Queen Elizabeth* was one of the ocean liners I had never visited, because she was never completed before the war. She was nearly completed just about the time … England got in the war in 1939, and they shuffled her off secretly from Scotland, where she was built, to New York, where they did some additional work, and then, they took her around the Cape Horn to Australia, where they finished all work and transformed her into a troop transport. I guess it was in the afternoon because we left George Meade, not too early. By the time they fed us breakfast and we got all our equipment and we marched down to the train, it must have been nine or ten o'clock, I don't recall. So, it must have been early afternoon when we got there to the *Queen Elizabeth*. … We just marched in numerical order from the numbers on our helmets and off the ferry onto the dock and marched to a little gangplank leading to a small door on the side of the ship. There were Red Cross girls gave us a little bag with an orange and a paperback book and a candy bar or something and wished you good luck, and we disappeared into the bowels of the ship. "Follow … the guy in front of you," [laughter] and, finally, we ended up in some god-awful place, way the hell down on the bottom of the ship, I don't know, and they had these bunks that were six deep and we were told, … "You just take the bunks as you arrive. Don't choose one." So, you know, if you're lucky, you may be number one, on top, or number two, three, four, five, or six, one, two, three; so, that's how we got our bunks. … I think I was near the bottom, I would say a number five. We're told to stay there, and then, a guy came around and gave us big buttons that we put on our uniforms, with a color on them and a number, and the number had to do with which meal serving we would participate in and the color designated which zone of the ship we were allowed to stay in, because, apparently, they didn't want [us moving]. There were … apparently fifteen to sixteen thousand people on these ships and they didn't want fifteen thousand going over to the port side to see something and the damn ship would capsize. [laughter] Anyway, so, they had to keep an even distribution load and they served meals almost twenty-four hours a day. I wouldn't say there were any breaks in the way they were serving, but they barely got through serving breakfast that they would start serving lunch and they barely got through serving lunch [that] they'd start serving dinner, etc. … Anyway, we were all down there and given a life jacket. "Put on your life jacket," and then we were all ordered up to the top. … It so happened that the area of the ship that we were assigned to was the forward starboard edge of the ship. It's near the front, on the right side, and so, we

stood there as we went out of New York Harbor and we went right by the Statue of Liberty, quite a sight. … As I learned many years later, … the reason why they had all the men standing out on deck, all in their assigned zones, was that if the ship, by any chance, had … the weight not distributed properly, the ship would scrape the top of the tunnels under the Hudson River. … Every day, we would go out on deck at least once a day and stand out there in our positions, to give us fresh air, and the thing that shocked me, when I first went out there, was that there were no escort ships. I'd say, "Here are sixteen thousand men and there's nobody protecting you from the submarines." … Later on, we learned that the ships were so fast and their zigzagging patterns were such that it was a million-to-one shot that a submarine could ever sink it. … They never did, they never did. … I guess it was about the third day out, or the second day out, I started to feel a little seasick. What finished me off when we were standing out there on some guy, up wind, got sick and covered all of us with his throw up, [laughter] kind of really disgusting. So, that made us all sick, and so, I was sick for about a day or so and I was holed up in a corner somewhere and I didn't eat or move. I read my book. It took us about five days to cross and the last morning we were on the ship, we were all out there. It was a beautiful, sunny, early January day with crisp air, and we were sailing down this bay. … With beautiful green hills on both sides, climbing high up in the air. We were going down the Firth of Clyde in Scotland and we were escorted, or got a brief escort from a couple of Spitfires that came, and flew low over us and waggled their wings and we all cheered up. … We ended up anchoring in the Port of Grenoch, G-R-E-N-O-C-H, which is outside of Glasgow. I guess it's one of the sub-ports that served Glasgow. … There was a reverse procedure, as far as getting on a ferry boat and going into shore. So, we unloaded and got on a ferry boat and that was when I saw my Harvard classmate, Jack Adikes, who had been in ROTC with me, and he had always wanted to be an officer. There he was. With his … gold second lieutenant's bar, on and I could see him up on the upper deck, because, on the ferry, we were, again, down below, where the cars are, he was up above. … I saw him and I waved at him and [yelled], "Hi, Jack." He recognized me, "Hi, Andy, how are you?" "How did you get there?" [We] barely said a word, as I couldn't go up to him. … That was the last time I saw him, because he was killed [in] February, I think in Alsace. You usually didn't last long as a second lieutenant in the infantry. They didn't last long, those guys. We got off the ferry boat and got on British trains with compartments seating six. We stopped somewhere, and ladies gave us meat pies and coffee. … We ended up in Southampton and marched off the train, boarded a converted freighter that was operated by the Sikhs. They all seemed like they were about seven-feet tall. They had these black beards and mustaches and turbans and they carried a long, curved knife on their belts. They were the most scary looking guys we'd ever seen. … Well, Sikhs were part of the British Empire and they were running this ship, and the experience on the ship was that there were no bunks; there were hammocks. … They converted the cargo hold into floors, and each floor had these pipes with these hammocks. … You ran ends of the hammock, from one pipe to another, and then, you had to figure out how to get into the hammock, which is interesting. Anyway, we were overnight across the Channel and we arrived in Le Havre. There, we actually docked. We marched off the ship and we went to railroad cars. … These were the freight cars that were known as … "forty-and-eights" and I always thought they were forty men and eight horses, but, later on, [I] learned that it was forty men <u>or</u> eight horses, but the Army was very nice. They only put about twenty or thirty of us in … a car and, in the freight car, … there was straw on the floor and they gave us each an extra blanket and we had sleeping bags. … So, we'd have a sleeping bag and a blanket and we slept on the straw. … I know we stopped somewhere along the line to get a meal and go to the

bathroom, but [we had to] get back on the train. It was very cold and the trains ran very, very slowly. Some of the guys were able to run alongside the side of the train. That was because the railroads had been so beat up and … the bridges had been bombed out and they had temporary bridges, and so, they chugged along at a slow rate of speed. … It was difficult to keep the door open, because it was very cold. So, we settled on keeping the door shut, and then, opening it every once in a while, to let in some fresh air. You've seen these pictures of the people, …. in the Holocaust, where they rammed in I don't know how many hundred people in one of those little old cars. … You can see the pictures of these cars … locking and I just can't imagine how horrible that must have been, just the transportation, to be stuck in one of those cars, and there's no ventilation. … Anyway, we had luxury accommodations, with straw and blankets. We finally arrived in Belgium, where … everything was covered with ice and snow. … We got in a truck and they took us to this replacement depot. … The replacement depot was [in] some kind of old chateau or country [home], not a castle, but it was a very substantial white building, stone, very, very nice, and we checked in there and they fed us a meal. Then, they assigned us to tents out on a field, across from where this house was, and the tents were on a solid bed of ice and they gave us another blanket. They told us to put two blankets on the ground, put [ourselves] in our sleeping bag and cover our sleeping bag with an overcoat. … Anyhow, I only slept there one night, because, the next day, I was sent off to the infantry unit I was assigned to, which was Company F, 331st Infantry [Regiment] of the [83rd Infantry Division]. The interesting thing is, and I maybe said this before, we left Fort Meade with no rifles, we arrived in Scotland with no rifles, we arrived in France with no rifles, we arrived in Belgium with no rifles. So, we arrived at this infantry unit [with] no rifles, but they had plenty of them, except they weren't brand-new. They were all beat up rifles. They were, of course, … M1 rifles, the mechanism was a little loose and the wooden stocks were, you know, banged up. … Anyway, they did take us out to shoot them and they seemed to shoot all right. … We got this little speech when we arrived. There were eight of us that got off the truck for this unit and we got a little welcoming speech from the Captain. He gave us a little pep talk and told them that they'd been in very hard fighting and in the Battle of the Bulge, they'd lost a lot of men. … The company had landed in Normandy, in June, I think D+14. So the division had been in combat since June and he was the second captain, the first one was killed, and he gave us a little word of warning. He said, "I want you to … follow your orders and I don't want to see any man running away or retreating." He said, "If you do," and he pulled out his .45-caliber pistol, and said, "you will get this." The next guy [who] came along was the supply sergeant and he took everything away, all that beautiful, brand-new equipment that we had, stripped us down to what we were supposed to wear, which is long underwear, wool, olive drab pants and fatigue pants, three layers. We had the same thing on top, wool underwear, wool shirt, fatigue top and a sweater. We had a field jacket on top of that. We turned in our overcoats and we turned in our gas masks. All the tenting equipment, we turned in. We … kept our entrenching tools. … That's when we got our rifles and they issued us ammunition. We had to fill all our little pockets in the cartridge belt with M1 clips, … eight .30-caliber bullets per clip, and we … were issued hand grenades. We put one hand grenade on each one of the straps for our suspenders. … We had to have suspenders to hold the cartridge belts up and we taped the hand grenade on. There were little hooks up there. We taped them on. So, we had a hand grenade on each side, and then, he gave us a quarter-pound canister of TNT, which we were to tape on the front of our cartridge belt, where there was some space. … We were told to put the fulminate of mercury detonator somewhere far away from the [TNT]. … He suggested one place was [to] put it in the little first aid packet, which we wore on the back of the

cartridge belt. We had a poncho or a raincoat, which we … folded and draped over the back of our cartridge belt, and that was our equipment. … We had the new bayonets, [which] were shorter than the older ones, and, oh, yes, they issued us galoshes, a standard civilian galosh that you could buy … anywhere in a shoe store. … We were told to put on two pairs of socks and keep another sock under our shirts, so that you had one dry pair. We were assigned to the third platoon and they put us in a shed somewhere. … Our lieutenant and sergeant, told us the platoon had gone out to attack the village of Ottre and they were ambushed and they didn't know what to do. They were trapped in machine gun crossfire many were killed or wounded and they … sort of froze to the ground. Sergeant Shoemaker tried to get them, crawled back, but there was some German, apparently, who spoke English, and was yelling, "Don't get up, don't get up, don't move." … So, they confused [their orders] and, eventually, … most of them succumbed to hypothermia. I don't know exactly the details, but I know Sergeant Shoemaker told us that these guys froze in their location and they didn't even fire their rifles. They were so terrified and, eventually, the Germans came out and just shot them through the head. … Not a damn thing he could do. Eventually, he crawled back. He had to kill a German sentry. … He came back and rejoined the outfit, but they lost ten men. Anyway, we were the replacements for those guys. So, that was really a very happy way to be introduced, … [laughter] plus, the factor [that] it was so damned cold. You didn't know which was worse, getting killed or getting cold. It was so cold. … Fortunately, the company … had been so badly shot up that we were not really used for any major attacks. We were used as patrols, we were used to run roadblocks and that was it. I mean, we were not assigned the task of attacking a village or what-have-you, which was good, because at least we got accustomed to working with other men that we would be working with, and … they didn't have any casualties, while I was there, that first week.

SI: You mentioned in the memoir that, during that first week or so, you were given some of your most useful infantry training.

AB: Oh, yes, yes. The two things that we were trained in, the first thing that they did [was], when they had a chance, they stuck us in some kind of a gulley or a ditch and they fired … captured German machine guns and German machine pistols over our heads, so that we could distinguish between the sounds of the German [and Allied weapons]. …

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

SI: This continues an interview with Andre Beaumont on December 13, 2005, in Millsboro, Delaware, with Shaun Illingworth. We were discussing this training routine that you went through before you actually went out on combat patrols. They put you down in a ditch and fired different weapons over you.

AB: Yes, they fired German weapons and American weapons over our heads, so that we could recognize the difference in sounds, and there was a substantial difference. Particularly, the German machine guns were very fast firing, compared to American weapons. … Also, they wanted us to recognize the voices of our sergeants, because that was one of the problems that these guys had that were trapped in the snow. They didn't know who was yelling at them, because they didn't recognize his voice, anyway. … That was very invaluable. Then, the other thing that we did is, we went out in the snow and we practiced assaults with marching fire, which

was a technique that we were not at all trained [in] and was essential in practically all our future [engagements]. At least in my stage of fighting, [it] was the basic attack technique by infantry. … Marching fire took advantage of the fact that the M1 rifle was a semi-automatic rifle. Basically, that means that every time you pull the trigger, … you fire the bullet and … there's another bullet in the chamber, ready to be fired again. So, you had eight bullets in a clip, so, you can fire eight times in a row without having to reload your rifle, or having to move it from whatever position you're in. … [In] marching fire, you carry the rifle at your hip and you just aim in the direction of the enemy, with the concept that if you fire a lot of bullets at people, you may not hit anybody, but you have a psychological advantage and, sure as heck, they're going to keep their head down. … They're not going to be looking for you and trying to shoot at you. So, you put a hail of bullets over somebody's head and that'll keep them down and that will give you the advantage of moving up on them. … Then, there was a little trick about the M1 rifle, which the Germans picked up on. The M1 rifle, as I said, has a clip of eight [rounds], when you fire your eighth round, it not only ejects the spent cartridge, but it also ejects the metal clip that held those eight bullets together, and that metal clip comes [out], "Clunk." It makes a funny noise. You fire it; your last shot goes, "Clunk." It makes that noise, I guess, when the spring hits that empty clip. It goes flying. So, the idea, the trick, was that you have a couple of those in your pocket, those empty clips, … because the Germans would know, "Oh, this guy's out of ammunition. He's got to reload, so, he's got to stop. He's got to get a clip, put it back in the rifle," da-da-da, "and then, he's ready to shoot. So, it's going to take about, I don't know, fifteen, twenty seconds before the guy is ready to shoot again. So, that'll give me a chance to shout." Now, the trick is, you take an empty clip and you throw it, and so, he'll think you have expended your clip and he thinks he has time to find you and shoot at you. So, that's when he sticks up his head up and that's when you shoot him. So, that's a little secret system. [laughter] Anyway, that's all the tricks of the trade. They never taught us any of that stuff in infantry training. Never taught us, and those were very important things. I mean, damn it, you never realize that, when you're firing this rifle, that the clip does make a different noise and that tells the enemy, when they hear this, "Clunk," they know that your rifle is empty. … You've got to be aware of that, anyway. … Those were the little things that they did for us, which I think were very helpful. I think it was fortunate that we had the time that they could do this, because, as I said, we were kind of a reserve company. We were not in any assaults. So, we benefited from that.

SI: You mentioned that, when you were in reserve, you were sent on patrols.

AB: Yes, and roadblocks.

SI: Even though those were less dangerous missions, you were still going out on a mission.

AB: Oh, yes, oh, yes, sure. I mean, we weren't sitting around playing cards, no.

SI: When was the first time you remember feeling that you were actually in danger?

AB: Well, I don't know, … a day or two after we had [that training], the squad went out on a patrol with the platoon leader and our squad. We were just basically going out in the snow, somewhere. … Most of the purpose of patrols is to find out where the enemy is and it's not

necessarily to defeat the enemy, but … to get the enemy to commit himself. … The idea is, you go out there and as soon as they start shooting at you, … you just take note of where they are, and then, you don't run away, but you move away. You do not engage them unless they really come out at you. … We went out on a patrol [for] a couple of days, but nothing happened. We did not run into any enemy; nobody fired on us, put it that way.

SI: From reading your memoirs, it seems as though you were fighting the climate as much as the enemy. How did you deal with living in the field?

AB: Well, we didn't have much choice. We … were not allowed to have fires and … whenever we had a chance, we would go in a shelter or something, if we came on a barn or someplace. … Most of the time, well, that we were in reserve, we were housed in barns or sheds of some sort, so [that] we were out of the winds, but, you know, you just didn't change clothes. … We did get scarves, … Army-issued scarves, that we were able to wrap around our neck. … We had these little, wool caps that we could pull down over the ears, so that it kept your ears warm, so that, basically, our face was the only thing directly exposed. We had gloves, but we didn't have mittens. The worst part were the feet. The feet got numb and … you'd stamp up and down on your feet and I remember, once, I don't remember where we were, but … we were able to build a fire and I actually stuck my feet, my shoes, my galoshes, in this fire and it didn't do any good, didn't feel anything. [laughter] So, it was really [bad], yes. … The cold, I think, was the most horrible aspect of it. You just never really got warm, but, you know, they would give us hot coffee and hot food. We were fortunate. We were able to get [supplies]. Most of the time, we were not that cut off that we had to eat cold rations. … Our company was able to [eat hot meals]. … This was, basically, I think, a general policy, that wherever possible, you get the troops a hot meal. … They would have the mess kitchen set up somewhere, and then, they would load up all these pots of food and so on in a trailer and a jeep would pull the trailer and bring you the food, to wherever you were. They also brought mess kits, because we didn't keep our mess kits on us. We used half of a mess kit, and we kept the spoon in our pocket. They filled the mess kit with hot food. We had our canteen, which had a canteen cup attached to it, so that you take your canteen out, pull the cup out, and then, there's a handle that comes up, snaps in place, so [that] you have a cup for your hot coffee. … So, that was always good. I guess I did talk, somewhere in my memoirs about the famous Army coffee. There was only one kind of coffee. It was hot, it had condensed milk and sugar in it and that was it. You had no choice, no black coffee, no decaf, just that's it. It was always the same. [laughter] It was very sweet. They put a lot of sugar in that stuff.

SI: Once you began going into the field, what were some of the things that you learned that you could only learn by doing, things that they could not even teach you in this crash course, like distinguishing your artillery from the enemy's?

AB: Well, yes, that was [one], yes, you quickly [learned]. Well, of course, you saw the movies and you could tell, from the movies of World War I about shells, when they'd come in, that they sort of scream and they sort of whistle, "Shhhhh, boom." So, you could tell that and, usually, you could tell when the gun went off. You could usually hear. In the distance, you'd hear, "Boom," in the distance, and then, … you could tell as the shells come in on you or come over you. So, yes, you did learn that. In the Ardennes, I never had to deal with the eighty-eight-

millimeter gun. … I talked about that earlier, but the eighty-eight-millimeter cannon, used as an antipersonnel weapon, was absolutely frightening, because it was unlike a regular artillery piece. An artillery piece, as I said, you could usually hear somewhere in the background, the distance, a, "Poof, ka-boom," you know, and then, the shells would come in and, as they came in, you could pretty [much] tell how close they were to you or not. … If they were close, you hit the ground right away and … the shell hits the ground, explodes. … The shrapnel does not go perpendicular to the explosion. It almost goes up and makes an arc, so that … you don't necessarily have … ninety degrees of shrapnel. You usually have an arc, maybe thirty degrees up, and then, it falls all around and the shrapnel is red hot. I mean, it'll burn you. It'll burn right through your skin, your uniform, but, anyway, the eighty-eight was such a high velocity weapon that, [when] the gun was fired, it'd go, "Boom," and the shell would explode almost instantaneously. They'd aim the gun about ten feet above the ground and they set the range to where they figure you were. If you're five hundred yards out, they figure that they set the fuse so that it explodes when it's five hundred yards out, so that it goes, "Poof, boom," and you have this explosion right on top of you. You cannot duck, because it's almost instantaneous. … I did not run into that until later. I mean, we did. But, we didn't have to deal with that in [the] Ardennes. In Ardennes, we had mortar fire that came on us and the mortars, again, it's a relatively short-range weapon, so [that] you could hear [it]. Instead of hearing a, "Boom," you hear, it's kind of a, "Whoop," it's dropped into the tube and a propulsion charge explodes in the barrel and it comes over in a high arc. It doesn't make any real noise as it comes down. … I never had any [trouble]; … a problem in detecting mortar, because, usually, you could hear it being fired, although you didn't know where it was coming until it landed, and then, when it landed, you knew where their target was. … If you were not in the target, you were all right. If not, you're in trouble.

SI: They were not a "screaming mimi" type of weapon.

AB: No, we never dealt with those rocket things. … I've seen those [since] and I never saw them or heard them [then]. … I think there was, intentionally, … some kind of a whistle or some kind of a gadget on there, so that they did make a noise coming at you. So, we called them the "screaming mimis." … Talking of rockets, … after we were pulled out of the line completely in Belgium, and I forgot what little village we were assigned to, … we were then within the area where the Germans were firing the V-1 rocket. … It was not a true rocket; it was like a self-propelled bomb, which had a ram jet engine, which made a terrible racket, and it was a guided bomb, but it was not [a rocket]. The guidance wasn't very sophisticated, so that they generally directed it in the direction of a target and hoped that it would do some damage. … We would hear those things flying overhead and they did make a noise, like a, "Prfffft," you know, a very loud noise. … They were fine as long as you heard the noise, but, as soon as the thing cut out, that's when you knew that … the propulsion stopped, and then, it became a glider and it just glided down to Earth, where it hit and exploded. So, if you heard the thing and it flew over your head, you were happy. If you happened to be near where it came down and you heard that silence, you had to say, "What the heck? Where is it? Where? How close was it?" and whatever. I was only close enough to one, once, where it hit the ground and it … rumbled. I think they had a ton of explosives in them.

SI: Where was that?

AB: That was in Belgium. They were shooting … at Antwerp and also at Liege, which was very close to us. Liege and Namur were transportation and supply centers, and we were very close to them. … The one that came close was really a bad shot. … I don't think that we were in line for those that they fired at Antwerp, which was a major port, but they were firing at it, but they fired thousands of those things. It's amazing how many they produced. … Of course, they fired V-1s at England for a while, and then, they got the V-2 rocket, which was a true rocket, and they fired those … mainly at London, I guess, and those were frightening, because the people couldn't hear them. They would come down and [there would] be a tremendous explosion. … It was a psychological weapon, and it killed quite a few people, destroyed quite a few buildings, but it certainly did not cause the people to scream and say, "Stop the war," or, "We surrender." So, it failed in that role.

SI: When you first joined your unit, you were assigned as a runner. You mentioned that you did not feel well-suited to that job. What did that job entail?

AB: … Every platoon … is commanded by a second lieutenant and each platoon has three squads. … There's a platoon sergeant, and each squad has a squad leader, who's a sergeant. The platoon runner is assigned to the lieutenant and his job is to run messages from the lieutenant to the different squads, wherever they are, or to company headquarters. … This is if you don't have a radio, and we did have these 536 "handy talkie" radios, which were AM radios and very ineffective, had a lot of static and didn't have a good range, and you couldn't [talk effectively]. Anyway, they were virtually worthless. So, ninety percent of the time, you had to rely [on a runner]. If … the lieutenant wanted to send a message to one of the squads, … the runner would go and [the lieutenant would] say, "Find Sergeant So-and-So and tell him so-and-so." So, that was the job of the platoon runner and I think the main reason why he picked me was because he saw my chart. … I don't know if he was dumb enough to think I enlisted because I wanted to, but, nonetheless, he saw I enlisted and he saw, number two, I had a high score on the Army Classification Test. So, he figured, "Well, here's a smart guy." Oh, he also saw, "He went to Harvard." I had one year at Harvard. "Oh, this guy's got [to be] brilliant," you know. … So, he wants a smart guy and so forth, but he didn't know that I was just a clumsy oaf and I could not run well and I was really clumsy. I was never an athlete. You know, I could swim. That was the best thing I could do, is swim. I played tennis and I was not good at that, I played basketball, I was not good at that, played volleyball, not good at that, whatever. [laughter] … I wasn't going to tell him. He says, "Beaumont, … you're going to be my runner." So, I said, "Okay." So, I didn't know what the hell I've [gotten into]. Then, he told me, "You stick with me." So, that's all. You stick with him and you go wherever he goes, and then, … you're his errand boy. That's it, and so, now, that's the job of the platoon runner. After a few times [that] he used me as a runner, … he would notice that I … would stumble or I was [slow], and the idea is that you run. You don't go [slow]. He says, "Go tell So-and-So," you just don't pick up and walk slowly, you run [laughter] to the guy, because, obviously, he wants the message to be sent. … There were very few occasions where he really used me in that capacity, because, most of the time, I was back with the squad. When we were doing our roadblocks or what-have-you, we weren't doing much maneuvering, but … we did quite a few maneuvers with the platoon, the whole company did, and that's where he saw me operate, or non-operate, as a runner. So, that was the job and I

didn't last very long. I think it was maybe a month or a few weeks [as] a runner before he replaced me.

SI: After this period of patrols and roadblocks, your first combat maneuver was the assault on Loveling.

AB: Yes, that was really the [first engagement]. We had pulled back, went to Belgium, … and that's where we did a lot of unit training and that's where, I guess, he saw my functioning and non-functioning as a runner, and then, we crossed the Ruhr River on pontoon bridges and dug in somewhere. I cannot remember where, … outside some town, and we barely got dug in that we got orders to move up, and we moved into some, again, little town somewhere. … When we got there that evening, they fed us dinner and they told us that we were going to assault this little town called Loveling, which was in the suburbs of Dusseldorf. … on the … south side of the Rhine River there. Then, we … had this meeting with the Captain and the lieutenants and they gave us this report from intelligence, saying that the town was defended by barbed wire, with trenches, and there were minefields. They scared the hell out of us, telling us about this town, and that we were going to make an attack at the crack of dawn, so that we would have to eat our meal and go to bed immediately and we would be awakened at three o'clock for an early breakfast. … We would jump off and march towards the [town] and launch our assault as soon as [dawn broke]. … I went in my sleeping bag and I shivered most of the night, out of terror. I was really scared to death, because they really painted a very horrible picture of barbed wire and mines and people shooting at you in trenches and, oh, my God. So three o'clock came and they didn't wake us up and finally, six o'clock's over and what the hell's going on? Six o'clock, they wake us up and they feed us breakfast, don't tell us a damn thing, and so, we marched off and we march off and, there, we come upon this company of Stuart (I think) tanks, which were a new light tank with a seventy-five-millimeter cannon and a whole different track system. The bogey system for the tracks was patterned after the German system. The German tanks were far superior to ours. The only trouble is, they didn't have enough of them, but … this was a brand-new thing. … They said, "Okay, by squad, you were to hop on these tanks," and so, we got on the tanks. They started rumbling down the road and we passed a battery of 105-millimeter cannon that were apparently shelling the town, and then, we got to the edge of the field and we could actually see the town, with the explosions from the artillery coming all over, these flashes all over the damned town, and then, the tanks spread out in an assault line and started moving towards the town. … That was where I had my little incident where I was sitting on the back of the tank with all these other guys and, all of a sudden, there was an explosion and I was thrown off the tank. … I thought, "My God, I've been shot already," and it turned out that my fulminate of mercury, a detonator for the TNT, which was in my first aid packet, which was in my back; … I was sitting on the back of the tank, right on top an air vent. So, that was a nice thing on that tank. … It had hot air coming out of the back. [laughter] So, [it was] the heat that made it detonate. Anyway, I was able to run back, … climb back on the tank, the tank stopped and they fired their .50-calibers into the town, and then, they fired their seventy-five-millimeters into the town, and then, finally, we [were] ordered, "Get off," and then, … in assault formation, we were supposed to move into the town as soon as … somebody opened fire. We were supposed to go into marching fire, and so on, and so forth. Well, we started assaulting and that's when a couple of bullets started coming our way and I had that first really scary bullet, the one where, I swear to God, I could feel the heat of the thing going by on my left side. I said, "Oh, Jesus, God," and so,

right away, Blackie, who was our … squad sergeant, tells us to hit the ground and Blackie was the sergeant from our [squad]. … He was a guy that was promoted to [sergeant before joining the infantry]. He came over, like me, as an infantry replacement, but he was a radar technician. He was a very nice guy; he was not a combat leader. Anyway, … he was from Arkansas and he had a family and blah, blah, blah. He was not suited to be a squad leader, but that was our lieutenant's mistake. He appointed him squad leader because he was a sergeant, but that didn't carry, and so, anyway, … he ordered us down, and then, Drucker comes running over. He says, "What the hell is wrong? Why are you guys laying down. You've got to attack this town. Get up, get up, get up, go," you know. He [Blackie] says, "Well…" [Editor's Note: Mr. Beaumont imitates Blackie hemming and hawing.] So, [Lieutenant Drucker said], "Get up. Get those men going." "Oh, yes, sir." … So, we got up, and then, we noticed that most of the firing was coming from a shed. I could see that. I started firing in there. … I had the BAR man on my left. I said, you know, "Put some bullets in that building there." We tried to shoot in the windows, because they were shooting through the windows of this shed. … So, we went in, [found] two or three dead ones and they then surrendered out of there. Then, we started going through. … We were getting shot at from houses and, one-by-one, I mean, we would set our movement on these things and shoot back and we had guys who had rifle grenades, which was very good. A rifle grenade is a gadget that slips onto the end of your rifle and you put on, like, a little mortar shell and you fire a blank round of ammunition into the thing and it shoots it off and it's a very good short-range weapon. It's like throwing a hand grenade, except it goes a lot further than a thrown hand grenade. So, we fired these rifles, these guys firing rifle grenades, into the windows and, you know, [they would] blow these guys up in there. … That was one of the things, my famous story with the sauerkraut, which I love as a food. [laughter] … We got some Germans in this sauerkraut factory, which was all these bins of concrete, rectangles of concrete, and inside each one of these rectangles was sauerkraut, I guess in different stages of rotting away. I don't know how you make sauerkraut, but I guess you just sort of let it rot.

SI: Soak in a brine.

AB: Yes, yes, some kind of a liquid. [laughter] … So, we had thrown hand grenades in there and, eventually, cleared out the building and, as I said, there was a dead German soldier in a vat of sauerkraut! How the hell he got there, I don't know. … So, we moved, cleared out the town, and we thought we were going to stay in these houses overnight and the civilians were all [gone]. The houses were all [empty]; most of them were empty. I don't know. … I saw a couple of civilians, … one time, [who] were running across the street in front of me. I said, "(*Raus, raus*?)," "Get out of here." There were soldiers who were shooting at us, we're shooting back and forth, and these guys, … a man and woman, come out of the house. They run across the street. "Jesus Christ, you could get killed." [laughter] … I don't know, they must have had some kind of a shelter or something, anyway. [laughter] … You know, you're stuck, and then, we were in this house and we got up to the very roof, the top floor, and we kept sort of like an observation post up there. Then, we pulled out of there. We had dinner. We pulled out of there and, that night, we marched for a mile or two, and then, we came upon this small hill and dug foxholes all around that hill. … That was when I couldn't understand that we were, the guy I was digging with [and I], … facing the direction in which we came and didn't realize, at the time, that we were cut off, we were surrounded, but nobody attacked us. … We were ahead of the rest of our troops and there were German troops behind us, as well as in front of us. …

That's why we were sort of built like a circle on this height. So, we stayed that night. Then, the next morning, … that's when we moved into the city of Neuss, which was directly across the Rhine River from Düsseldorf. It was a pretty substantial city, with six-story stone buildings, typical European city, and I was really scared that we were going to have a terrible of time. … Really, if they wanted to, they could fight door-to-door, building-by-building, but we really did not run into any serious resistance. The only thing that seemed to be going on was the tanks. There were tanks that were shooting at our tanks or our tank destroyers and there were eighty-eight-millimeter armor-piercing [shells]. Now, armor-piercing, as opposed to the personnel or antiaircraft, is just that. It's a heavy, steel thing and it's designed to pierce the armor of a tank. We moved up, got into a square and we were told to stop and our squad was given the job of putting up sort of a little defense around a machine gun, which was going to cover half of the square. … So, the machine gun was in a bakeshop on the corner and I was with the machine gunners. There were about four of us, and then, there were other guys that were upstairs, providing cover, but we never were attacked. … The only trouble we had were the civilians, who kept on coming out of air raid shelters and we kept on telling them to get back in, and then, finally, when all the tank firing stopped, and … there was artillery coming in, but it wasn't too bad, and then, … it all stopped. The civilians came out and the lady from the bakeshop offered us cookies and stuff and we were afraid to take it, because we thought it might be [poisoned]. So, from there, we moved to occupied houses along the banks of the Rhine River. … I should say that, during that night that we were on the hill, in a circle on top of a hill there, dug in, … our brother company, the E Company, reached the Rhine River and almost captured a bridge, which was blown up just about the time that they got there, but that gave our battalion the claim that they were really the first Americans troops to reach the Rhine. So, we were very proud of that accomplishment and my father read that in the newspaper in New York, [which] said, "83rd Division troops reached the Rhine River," which was a great psychological thing, because, in World War I, the Rhine River was the last line of defense for Germany and it was a psychological barrier there. Anyway, we moved into these houses along the river and didn't do very much for a couple of weeks. We had our mortar people, [who] were lobbying mortars across the river, and the machine gunners had some, .50-caliber guns and would shoot at any targets that made some movement across the river, as we were across the river from big plants and there wasn't really very much activity. We did get shelled. We had one shell that landed very close to our building, blew up the building right across the street from us, but that's when I got the opportunity, the so-called opportunity, where they … [told] me that the Captain wanted to see me, and so, I reported to the Captain. He says, "Beaumont, how would you like to join our communications squad?" So, I said, "Yes, sure. What does that mean?" He said, "Well, you carry one of our SCR-300 radios," and so, I said, "Well, okay." So, I'm being promoted into this new job and I really liked that. I mean, I got in with a bunch of guys. We got very close. There were about five of us, all pretty young guys. We had a communications sergeant whom we reported to. He was a very nice guy and he had the responsibility also of having all the maps for the company. He stuck with the company commander and we'd have the current map for wherever we were handy, so that that was his prime job. The SCR-300 radio was about a forty-five, fifty-pound, forty-five, I guess, pound piece of equipment. It was FM radio, so [that] there was no static. It had a possible range of maybe five miles, but it was really good within a mile or two miles and it was far more reliable and effective than the little "handy-talkie" SCR-536. We were supposed to have one, but, through all the magic of requisitioning and whatever, our unit had three and the purpose of having three was very good, because one would always be with the

Captain, one would be with the assault platoon or on a patrol, and then, there would be another one that could be assigned to somebody else and would be just in reserve. So, we learned like we learned. Without [formal training]. I didn't become a radio technician. The only thing I knew was how to check the damn batteries and how to turn the damn thing on, how to hook up the antenna. We had two kinds of antenna. We had a short-range antenna and we had a long, telescoping antenna, which was about, I don't know, six feet long or so, which extended the range, which was good for long-range transmission. Well, then, I had to learn the lingo. You know, we had our call signs and, you know, [you say], "Over," and, you know, the code words, "Delta" means you're being shelled by our own artillery and I don't know what else, but, basically, it was learning to [speak in code], and then, of course, learning … the alphabet. Today, they don't use the same alphabet, but the idea is, "Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog, Easy, Fox, George, How, Item, Jig," you know, for letters. In another words, so, "Able-One;" … we had "Flair-Two Able" and "Flair-Two Baker" and "Flair-Two Charlie," for our three [platoons], and the company was "Flair." Anyway, so, we had to learn all that, but it was very easy. … Then, I turned in my M-1 rifle. I got an M-1 carbine, which is very nice, which is a lot lighter, but I'd be carrying a forty-plus-pound radio instead, but the carbine was [lighter], and then, I had a different kind of cartridge belt, because you needed the … different kind of clips for a carbine, and I believe I don't know how many [clips]. I think there were eight or ten. They were a shorter bullet for the carbine and a shorter range, but it was [for protection], and then, our supply people had converted all our carbines to automatic carbines. So, you had three positions, safety, semi-automatic and automatic, and, [on] automatic, it just fired, "Brrrrr," just, you know, one, two, three. It didn't stop. Semi-automatic was every time you pulled the trigger. … Then, we got called back, and then, we went to Holland and that's where we started practicing river crossings, in these little wooden, eight-man boats you'd paddle across the river and we thought we were being trained to cross the Rhine River. …

----------END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE----------

AB: … We were in Sustern, that region of Holland, and we practiced our river crossing, across canals, primarily, which were pretty big. They weren't as big as a river, but it was good and we just learned how to put these boats in the water, how to paddle together and get out, and so on. So, you paddled back and forth and, finally, we got in trucks and, one day, we drove across the Rhine River on pontoons, on a pontoon bridge, and we started moving up the Ruhr. … I guess our first major engagement was Hamm. … There, we had to clear out the northeast section of the city of [Hamm]. … There, it was pretty well-defended. We had to deal with several machine gun nests. … Now, at that time, I was working, I was carrying a radio with the Captain, so, I wasn't necessarily with a direct assault [force], but we would be clearing out this area and he would be giving orders, with the radio, for one platoon to move one way and one platoon to move another way. Finally, we stopped for the night and we were halfway to the canal. That was the Dortmund-Ems canal there. … This was an interesting place where we stayed. … It was obviously a whorehouse. There was a big bar downstairs and upstairs were all these little, tiny rooms with beds. It was either a very cheap hotel, with not many amenities, [or a brothel], but we slept on the floor and the Third Platoon was with us, the Company Headquarters and the Third Platoon. That was where my buddy, Verlin Twedt [was]. He was very close with me when I was in the Third Platoon, a very, very sweet guy. He's a farm boy and he was the guy that I got really closest with when I was in that platoon. … Then, he woke me up that morning

and pulled me around in my sleeping bag, we used to call them "fart sacks." He was dragging me around on the floor and making fun of me and, finally, anyway, they pulled out, the Third Platoon, and then, the Lieutenant, [Donald] Duncan, who is the first [officer], the exec officer, comes over and says, "Beaumont, get the radio. We're going for a walk." So, we walked, the two of us, through ditches and, you know, hedges, behind hedges, whatever. We walked way ahead of … where our company was and we were obviously somewhere behind the German lines. I didn't know. We didn't see any Germans, but we knew we had cut across and we wanted to get an elevation. He wanted to get an elevation where he could see across the canal, because there were the eighty-eights [that] were shooting at us with antipersonnel [shells]. … The eighty-eights, as I explained to you, were a very deadly and terrible antipersonnel weapon. So, finally, we found a farmhouse and we crawled up to the attic and there was a window there and he was able to spot [them] and he told me, "Okay, start transmitting information, where these guys are," and I couldn't transmit. So, I had to take my short antenna off and put on my six-foot antenna and stick it out the window. … I started to transmit when, obviously, some guy over there spotted us and they started shooting eighty-eights at us and the damn thing hit the house and we just threw ourselves down the stairs and ran out of that damn house. … Within a couple of minutes, that damn house was not standing, but it was a crazy episode. [laughter] Thank God; … really, I took the radio off, I threw it down the stairs. He went down head first. I think I went down feet first, "Vroom," oh, God, and we ran out of there. We ran into the woods somewhere and he transmitted. … I don't remember whether they got air support or artillery, something. … They got those eighty-eights, but, … when I came back, that's when I found out that Twedt had been killed. I have been in correspondence with his sister and brother, today. I still get Christmas cards; we, in fact, got a Christmas card a couple of days ago from them. … They don't know how he got killed, but he had his head blown off when the damn eighty-eight [shell] exploded very close to him, terrible, but it was quick.

SI: You mean they never found out. You never told them.

AB: … They received a letter [saying] that he was killed-in-action somewhere. They never found out the exact nature of his death. I don't think that they bothered to tell them, you know, the details and, even then, they gave them the wrong details, because they gave them the name of another village where he was killed.

SI: In your memoir, you mentioned that, when you first joined your unit, the veterans were hesitant to become friendly with you.

AB: Oh, yes, with the replacements. Yes, that's very true.

SI: Did you ever reach that point, and, if so, how quickly?

AB: Well, you know, there were replacements that were coming in all the time. … It was a continual stream. As we would have men wounded or killed, there would be more replacements that were coming in and, even … when we left Belgium, we were still very much under strength, and so, we got quite a bunch of replacements after we pulled out of the line in Belgium, in the Ardennes. … I was not as [affected], did not have that attitude, as much as the guys, the few guys, that were still there from when they had landed in Normandy and they had fought in the

hedgerows and they had fought in Brittany. They had some tough battles in Brittany, outside of St. Malo. In fact, I have a very dear friend in France; … it's a whole other story, but he was a little boy in St. Malo, in Dinard, a port across the way from St. Malo, and his whole family hid in the cellar and my brother, my half-brother, came along and, since he spoke French, spoke with them and he brought them food and so forth, because they hadn't had food. Anyway, they dug out a bottle of champagne and drank champagne with my brother, and so, I had contact with him, through very strange means, but, anyway, it's a long story. … Now, we're very close friends with this French family. This man, who was a four-year-old kid in 1944, became a colonel in the French Army. … He's retired, now, of course, but, anyway, what I was getting at is that they were men that had [fought together], and that was one of the battles that the 83rd fought. … My brother was not in the 83rd, he was [in] the Eighth Division, but the Eighth and the 83rd cleared St. Malo and Dinard and that area. … So, those guys that were back [there], … they had fought in the hedgerows in Normandy, and then, they had a terrible, terrible fight in the Hurtgen Forest, which you may have heard about that. That was, apparently, one of the worst kinds of war, because, at any rate, it was just terrible. … So, they had a lot of baggage. There weren't too many of them, but … the thing was that you sort of looked upon these new guys and said, "What the hell do they know?" and you're afraid of them, because you have to rely on [them]. The infantryman's world is a very small world, say, five hundred yards or something around you. You don't know what the hell's going on and you know who's here, who's there, who's there, and, you know, you count on this guy over here to help you, if you have [trouble], if somebody [attacks], you know, whatever. You're a very close-knit, little group. … If you don't work together, you're really in trouble. … When you get new guys and they don't fit in, they don't know what's going on, it's just like these guys that were killed in the snow, because they were replacements. They were all replacements. They had just barely gotten their feet wet and there they are and they didn't know what to do, and so, there is that, always, this attitude, very much, that you'd look upon these replacements as [worrisome], not [that you are] superior, but you're kind of afraid of these guys, because you know they don't know what's going on. They don't know you and you don't know them and so on. … It takes a while and, of course, that was really the break that I got when I went to this communications squad, because that was a small group of us and we all knew what we were doing and we were working very closely together and we were doing diverse things. You know, we were working with [others], sometimes with the Captain, sometimes we would be attack platoon, sometimes on a patrol, … but we all, you know, knew what the other guy was doing, and there was always two radios. Whenever … the company was doing something, there was two radios that were going. … The other thing is, we had to keep guard duty on the company headquarters twenty-four hours a day, seven [days a week], which is another terrible thing. We never got any sleep. …

SI: At this point, you were up in the Ruhr Valley.

AB: Yes. We cleared Hamm, and then, we moved on up and I can't remember the next-to-that city that we got and we found all these vehicles [there] and there's a trainload of trucks, German or captured American trucks, and so forth. … Basically, the division transformed itself into a mechanized division, where … everybody was riding on trucks and we were assigned a cavalry unit, the 113th Cavalry Group, and they provided a little bit of strong support. Otherwise, we were all riding in two-and-a-half-ton trucks and jeeps and that was when we started. … I can't

remember the name, maybe it's in my memoir somewhere; … I can't remember the name of that city where we started.

SI: Paderborn?

AB: … No, no. Paderborn was where the First and Ninth Armies hooked up to complete the circle around. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

I guess you're right. It was Paderborn, okay, yes. Paderborn is where we found all these trucks, yes. Yes, so, that was a very interesting time then, because … we encountered very minimal resistance and we're rolling down these roads. … These cavalry groups had an M8 armored car, which is a six-wheeled vehicle with a little thirty-seven-millimeter cannon and they had a couple of armored jeeps, jeeps that had armor plate welded or riveted on the sides, and mounted a .50-caliber machine gun and that was it. So, the armored jeeps would go zooming down the road until something happened, somebody stopped them or shot at them, and then, they'd zoom back. … Then, they'd come back with the M8 and see whatever they needed to do. … Then, they had a German-speaking officer in one of the jeeps and we would come to a town, that we would stop [outside] and the jeep would go into town and demand to see the mayor of the town and demand that the town surrender. … If he agreed to surrender, then, we would drive right through the town and, usually, when we drove through those towns, they had white sheets hanging out the windows and people waving white napkins, everything white. They were waving these white flags and so on and some of the people would be looking at us, not understanding that we were there [for real]. … That was where we covered several, I forgot, I have it in my memoirs, hundred and something miles in ten days, or something like that, before we reached the banks of the Elbe River. … We met virtually very little resistance, [took] a lot of prisoners. They'd come out of the woodwork, out [of] the woods, out of everywhere and they'd throw their equipment on the ground and [put] their hands up, and we didn't know what to do with them. We just told them to march back, in back of us, and, I don't know, in the opposite direction from where we were coming, and I don't know whatever happened to those guys. I imagine most of them disappeared into the woods and emerged as farmers or what-have-you. … It's too bad we didn't have an empty truck. We could have piled up all those weapons and Luger pistols and all that stuff and sold it as souvenirs and we would [have] become millionaires, [laughter] because there was a big market in [German weapons], especially Luger pistols. You could sell those for a couple of hundred dollars. Guys from the Air Force, you know, they would die for something like that. … I was in the last truck in the convoy. I had the radio for the back of the convoy and I mentioned it [before], … we had captured all these trucks and we had enough guys that could drive, but we had, also, … assigned to us two Quartermaster trucking company trucks that were driven by black drivers. Now, the Quartermaster Corps had a lot of black troops and there were lots of QMC trucking companies that drove these trucks with black drivers and they had come up to Paderborn to deliver some supplies and we took them over. I don't know how, but, in other words, they were released from their QMC company and they were assigned to Company F, 331st. So, we had these two black guys driving these trucks and I was in one of the trucks where this black guy was the driver and it was really very interesting, because, as we would drive through the towns, these people would gasp and point. They'd look at you, because most of

these people had never seen a black person. … Whenever we would stop, they would come up and they'd either look at them, and some of them would reach out and touch his skin. … I mean, first of all, these black drivers were very, very upset. [They] said, "We're not combat troops. We don't know anything about [combat]," you know, and … we said, "Well, we'll protect you," and so on, but, finally, they realized that they were a curiosity and they were something special. They suddenly changed their attitude. They were important people. [laughter]

SI: How did you, specifically, and the men that you served with feel about the Germans? How did you feel about the different types of soldiers that you encountered in battle?

AB: Well, as far as the typical German soldier, which was the *Wehrmacht*, they were just people like us that had been drafted. … By that phase, by that time in the war, they were reaching pretty much to the bottom of the barrel, because they lost thousands and thousands of men in the war on Russia, as well as in all of the [other theaters]. You know, they had lost thousands of prisoners in Africa, the Afrika Korps, … and all the fighting in Europe, and we did take thousands of prisoners. So, you know, we felt sort of sorry for them. … The ones that we really did not have much sympathy for were the SS, [*Schutzstaffel*], who wore black uniforms and they had the little lightning rods symbols, and, anyway, they were the real fanatic, Nazi killers. … They were the ones that perpetrated most of the atrocities that were attributed to the German Army and, certainly, I think I had never personally witnessed anything, any of the SS atrocities, that I knew of. I mean, we were certainly well aware of several of the massacres during the Battle of the Bulge that were committed by SS [forces] and, certainly, we … learned enough about their fanaticism from all the guys who'd fought in Normandy and so on. So, the common [approach], the standard operating procedure, was that if you see an SS, you shoot him on sight. We did not take any SS prisoners and they rarely … surrendered anyway, because they knew they were going to be shot, because they shot our prisoners. We shot their prisoners. … As far as the civilians are concerned, they were, you know, … very confused people. The main thing was that they were very well-dressed, very healthy looking, rosy cheeks, and that was one of the interesting aspects of the war, was that when there was fighting in France and Belgium and all those countries, the people there … had been literally starved to death, like my friend there. … They were hiding in the basement there in Dinard. They were driven to raising rabbits for food and they had to keep [it] a secret that they were raising rabbits, because the Germans might have taken them. [The] Germans took all the food for themselves. There was very little at all left for the civilian population. … So, these people were starved, … their clothes were all ratty, they were thin as a rail, … compared to the Germans, who were healthy, happy people. It was a real contrast. Of course, when the war was over, the American soldiers there fell in love with these beautiful, blonde German girls that were all healthy and cute and well-dressed and so on. [laughter] So, I didn't mention that; while I was in Belgium, there was a farm family that, one night, we were in their barn and they invited us [in]. Well, I spoke French, so, I got ourselves invited in. … We got around their fire and they served us hot chocolate and, fifty years later, I went to Belgium. … They had two little kids, a boy and a girl, and, fifty years later, I met the boy and the girl and we had a champagne dinner, instead of hot chocolate. We joked about that. … I think that's in my memoirs, where I just thought about the civilians. …

SI: How often were you able to use your ability to speak French?

AB: Not very much. Belgium was the only place where I really spoke with civilians. The one other time I spoke French was just about the time where we were covering; we'd just about reached the Elbe River and we were in this town called Calbe, I believe, C-A-L-B-E. … [For] some reason or other, the Captain came to me and said, "Beaumont, I have a special mission for you. Please escort these two nurses through our lines. They have a very sick patient on a gurney or something, which they want to move from one place to another." I don't know why. Anyway, so, I was all alone with these two nurses and one was at the front and the other was on the back of this gurney while they [went] through the city streets, pushing this guy on this thing. I got to the hospital. It was a German, obviously, hospital and we go in the lobby and it's full of German soldiers. I said, "Jesus Christ, what are they going to do to me?" They didn't do anything. … There were people there and they started talking to me and we couldn't communicate very well in English, but I asked, … "(Y'at-il quelqo'un içi que parle français?)" "[Does anyone here speak French]?" and some guy [said], "Yes." So, I was able to speak with a guy in French and he translated in German, because they asked me all kinds of questions, "How did you get to here?" They all thought we had just been dropped by parachute and that, … you know, we were just an isolated group. They still thought the German Army was fighting on the Rhine River and that the armies were pushing back the Americans. I mean, they had no clue as to what was really going on. So, that was where I used my French, speaking to the German people.

SI: That comes up several times in your memoirs, that the Germans were fooled by the propaganda put out by the Nazi Party regarding the war.

AB: Yes, yes. They were totally unaware that we were [winning], that's right. … When we came through these towns, these people were just amazed and, as I said, in that hospital setting, they thought that we were some kind of an elite group of people that had been parachuted in or somehow had snuck through their lines, because we were practically on the banks of the Elbe River, which is, like, fifty, sixty miles from Berlin, and they couldn't understand that. They didn't believe that that was possible, yes.

SI: You wrote in your memoirs that your unit liberated a few slave labor camps and a prisoner of war camp. What do you remember about that experience?

AB: Yes, yes. Well, that was when we were zooming through the territory on our trucks and the only thing was that, … whether they were slave laborers or prisoners of war, these people were all absolutely walking skeletons. They were really in terrible shape. They were dying of hunger. They begged us for food, they begged us for cigarettes, whatever. We gave them whatever we could, but we had to keep our own rations, but we gave as much as we could to these poor people. I imagine that something behind us came along and, eventually, they got [organized], because they were just [wandering]. Masses of people would come up to our trucks and [say], "*Cigaretten, cigaretten, chocolat*, food," you know, whatever, and you could see they were in terrible shape, but we had to move on. … We didn't go into any of these camps. We just got to the places and opened the gates. … The gates were really already opened, because the Germans had fled, and the guards, at least, already had fled. So, they were there, coming out, and they were just wondering what was going on, and then, they saw all these American soldiers and were really very desperate for food.

SI: Before that, did you know much about the Holocaust? Had the news gotten around yet about the camps that were being liberated?

AB: No, not at all, never. I imagine that, somewhere, there was something that came out, but I never was aware of this whole systematic process of, you know, rounding up people and shipping them to camps and putting them to death. There was very little of that known in the United States. We knew … that the Jews were being persecuted and were … being driven out of the country, were being kicked out of their jobs, were being put into ghettos. That was a known fact, but we didn't know that there was a systematic program to actually kill them. … I don't think the American population knew … much about that at all.

SI: What were your final days of combat like?

AB: Well, … you know, we got to the banks of the Elbe River and we found … [that] there was a bridge building, Engineer bridge building, company there. They had air compressors. They had blown up these big pontoon things and they also had a whole bunch of those wooden assault boats that we practiced on in Holland. … We were on the banks and I guess we were getting organized to cross over the river and we got some artillery fire there. Well, it wasn't bad, and then, we paddled across the river and virtually nobody, I don't think anybody really fired at us. Maybe there were some somewhere out off the left or right; there was some machine gun fire, but we crossed over the river with no problem, and then, we walked to the right, and then, I gathered that we were assigned the job of protecting the right flank of the bridgehead and we walked and we dug in for the night. … That early next morning, we came upon, or they came upon us, a bunch of [Germans], a German patrol on bicycles with about five or six guys on bicycles and our machine gunners eliminated them in about two seconds. … That morning, we were really very lucky, because the engineers had inflated some of these pontoons and made, like, rafts and they were able to raft over the jeep with a trailer of hot breakfast. So, we had a hot breakfast that morning, and then, we got out of our holes, and then, we marched into an area where there was a lot of shooting and we didn't know what was going on. … I was assigned to the Captain. I had the radio with the Captain and we were [in] two platoons. Two squads of the company, no, two platoons, actually, went into an assault formation in the woods. We emerged from the woods and there was the village of Kamerite and all along on the edges of the woods were our machine gunners that were pouring lead into that village and the mortars, our mortars, were shooting in there. … There was one tank destroyer, which is like a tank, except it had no roof on top of the turret, assigned [to us] and they had rafted that thing over and, … literally, well, all our guys stopped firing, and then, we moved out from the woods with marching fire and moved on this town. … That was where we got, I don't know, three-quarters of the way, and then, all of a sudden, we got a crossfire from machine guns. … Then, thank God, there was a ditch with ice cold water … that was up to here. Our pants were soaked, but, anyway, we managed to escape that. … I think there was a couple of guys that got wounded in that phase. … Well, eventually, what happened was that they ran out of ammunition; no, actually, the Third Platoon was on the right and they made the flank and they flanked that right machine gun from the rear and they eliminated it, and so, there was only the guy on the left that was still shooting at us. … He didn't shoot at us unless somebody made a move, and then, he would, right away, begin to shoot, but we started doing little tricks with him, helmets held up in the air, to try to get

him to shoot. … He'd shoot, but we couldn't find him and the Captain kept yelling, "You see him, Beau? You see him, Beau?" "No." I spotted the house where he was, but I didn't realize he was dug in on the ground and I was looking at the windows and I was shooting into the windows, but he obviously wasn't there. So, finally, the shooting stops and we're waiting for what comes next. Nothing's going on. We're looking, nothing's going on and, finally, all of a sudden, these guys come up with their hands up, "(*Kamerad*?)," and that was when the machine gunners that were in the back, they just chewed them up, and then, we got up and ran into town and got into a house and took off our pants, [laughter] at least me and the Captain and these other guys [did]. [laughter] We had all these wet pants and [we] brought in the wounded to that house. So, that became the company headquarters, I guess, and that was where my buddy, [Forest] "Duke" Hyland, who was in the communications squad, they had some prisoners that the Third Platoon had captured and Duncan said, "Hyland, you march these guys back. Do what you want with them," and implying, if he wanted to kill them, kill them. So, Hyland found a ditch of cold water and made these guys march through the ditch with their hands up. So, that was his revenge for the cold [water]. [laughter] … So, we didn't stay there. We just moved out into the [field]. Finally, this last time was Hohenlepte, where we dug in. Originally, Company Headquarters, … we set up headquarters in a farmhouse and I guess we were in there one night, and then, the next morning, all hell broke loose with all these [weapons]. We were getting shelled with artillery and mortars. … It was so bad that one tank destroyer that was with us turned around and went back, which made us feel really great, but it so happened that, you know, it was a, company or whatever it was, of officer candidates, German officer candidates, and they attacked us, but they weren't really infantry. They weren't really trained. … Well, basically, what happened is, our machine gunners trapped them in a gully and the mortars started dropping mortars into the gully and I had to radio to another company, "Can we borrow a trailer for mortar ammunition?" and they must have put in hundreds of mortar shells in there, and then, … we did call for air support and they had a couple of tanks, … and then, the air [support] blew up the tanks and that was the end of that, about fifty or sixty dead Germans down in that ditch. They were bad. … Then, again, we moved out into the fields and that's when we built the field CP [command post] in a big hole and covered [it] up with logs and dirt and that's where I spent the rest of the war, the fighting war. … The Captain stayed in town, in the house, but, always, one of the lieutenants, the executive officer or the first sergeant or somebody, was out there with us. … There's four or five of us that slept in that little CP and we were all connected. That was another job of communications squad, I didn't even mention it, was to lay down telephone wire and we had these rolls, spools of wire. We could just walk along and two guys carried the spool and they would unroll [it] and we'd set up a whole defensive perimeter with all these sound-powered phones back to us and we had a phone back to Company Headquarters. So, it was all hard-wired. We rarely did that, because, most of the time, we were advancing and we never had time to lay wire. So, we were pulled out of line once replaced by another company or platoon from another company, and we had to clean out and attack on the right flank. … We came across a US Army mess truck that had been abandoned and a couple of jeeps that had been abandoned, but, anyway, we did push back the Germans and the Air Corps came along and blew up their tanks. … That was the end. That was really the last fighting we were ever in and that was where one of the guys that came in with me in Belgium, and was assigned to the Third Platoon, was killed and that was where our lieutenant got really off his rocker and found a couple of German wounded prisoners and shot them. He was so angry that this kid, a very nice kid from Brooklyn, redheaded kid, … was killed and the war was practically over. It was, you know, weeks before

the war was over, a couple of weeks at least. We knew the war was over, … because we were told we were not going to advance any more. So, all we had to do was repulse attacks. … Then, we sat and waited for the Russians and the Russians were a big mess, drunk, shooting up in the air and, oh, God. When we pulled out of the bridgehead and … the Russians came in, [the] Russians came in first and we watched them come in and they were all a raggedy bunch of people, with all kinds of funny uniforms and they had women and they were riding on farm wagons, farm tractors, horses, Studebaker trucks, German trucks, everything under the sun. … You look at the American Army and everybody's wearing the same uniform. I don't think there were two guys … that had the same uniform and they had blue jackets, gray jackets, brown jackets. … So, then, the civilians were escaping ahead of them. That was the thing; we were right [there]. Our company, our field headquarters, … where we had dug that pit, was just about a hundred yards in from a road that ran right out into the German territory, towards Berlin, and that road was, towards the end of the war, … full of people with baby carriages, wheelbarrows, wagons, whatever, escaping, pulling their possessions, escaping. I don't know if they ever managed to escape, because I don't think our engineers would let them cross on the pontoon bridge. Maybe they did, maybe they did, I don't know, but they had to get across the Elbe River.

SI: Then, you became the Army of Occupation.

AB: Yes. We became the Army of Occupation. We occupied one village, where we served as prison guards for this great, big, must have been some kind of a factory, huge building. It was full of German prisoners and we were their guards for, I guess, a week or two, and then, we pulled back to another little town, … Gittelde, and that was where, somehow, Louis, I don't know how he found me and he was a staff sergeant and he pulled up in his jeep … and we had a chance to chat, take a few photographs, and we moved out of there, into Bavaria. … The other places all became part of the British Zone of Occupation … or the Russian Zone, really, partly was the Russian Zone, and then, the British Zone, and then, finally, we got to Bavaria, which was the American Zone. … First of all, we were housed in a hotel, and then, they moved us out of town. The town of Pocking, P-O-C-K-I-N-G.

----------END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO----------

SI: This continues an interview with Andre Beaumont on December 13, 2005, in Millsboro, Delaware, with Shaun Illingworth. We were just talking about the Army of Occupation. You were stationed at a hotel in Pocking, Germany.

AB: Pocking, is about, I guess, … fifteen, twenty miles outside of Passau, which is a beautiful medieval city on the Danube River, but we were first in the hotel, and then, we went out [to], there was a German airfield. … When we got there, there were several squadrons of Air Force fighter planes based there, the P-47 fighter planes, and eventually most of them got removed. There's still one part of a squadron [that] was left, and so, the barracks were all empty. So, we moved into the barracks there at Pocking Airport and we settled into more or less of a routine of getting in new replacements and reequipping ourselves. They required me to have a rifle, instead of a carbine, because I wasn't supposed to have one, and so on, and so forth, but we began training to be part of the assault on Japan. … We started regular training exercises on the airfield and around the airfield and, as I said, we got a lot of replacements. Our captain and the

executive, most of the officers, were all returned to the States. We got all-new officers, mainly because those other officers had served for quite a long time. Most of them had been wounded at least once or twice and, you know, they all had Bronze Stars [or] a Silver Star. They were all really decorated veterans, had seen a lot of fighting and they were returned to the States. I don't know if they were discharged, but, whatever, they were gone. … It was summertime and it was nice countryside and we had a camp of Hungarian refugees on part of the airfield and they were held in the camp by the military government, because the military government wanted to make sure that there were no Nazi sympathizers or war crime people that were hiding within that group. … They would be releasing them to return to Hungary in small groups, but there was a little railroad track that ran from Pocking to the Pocking Airport and our guys found a little diesel switch engine and a bullet-riddled passenger car, and we had our little shuttle train that would take us from the airport into town. … We could go to the Pocking Hotel and have a beer and, every once in a while, we would have a big dance with the girls from the Hungarian camp that would come in, I don't know, maybe only twice during the summer. Big event of the summer was the visit of General George S. Patton. … George Patton was, his army, … commander of the Third Army, Commanding General, Third United States Army, TUSA, and he had the 83rd Division when he first landed in Normandy. The 83rd Division was assigned to him. It was taken away from him for the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest, and then, for the Battle of the Bulge and, for the rest of the war, we were either under the First Army, which was under General Courtney Hodges and the Ninth Army which was under General William Simpson and we were switched between the First and Ninth several times. … Anyway, when we came back to Bavaria, we came back under Third Army [command] and we were under George Patton and we had a review, a division review, which was staged on the Pocking Airport for the benefit of Patton, and we worked on that thing for at least a week. First of all, we had to get all our class A uniforms all fixed up, all our medals and we had our helmet liners. We didn't wear steel helmets, just helmet liners, lacquered, and the Third [Army] and 83rd Division patches glued on them and everything was, you know, all cleaned up, and then, we would go out and practice. … Our battalion, the Second Battalion, was the battalion selected to represent the 331st. There are three regiments in a division. The 83rd Division had the 329th, the 330th and the 331st. Each regiment, was entitled to have one battalion in the review and our battalion [was selected], mainly because we were there and the other companies were in the area. It was convenient. I don't know, the other guys, they had to truck in from the 329th or 330th, but … all the aspects of the division were to be in that, the division artillery, the division engineers, whatever, the division medical, the division transportation, da-dat-da-dat. … Everything was represented in that parade, and so, everything had to be picked up and the division band came in on a Monday. They stayed there the full week and, every day, we would practice marching in battalion, mass formation, which is a huge bunch of men. I don't know how many men there were, probably about a thousand men, this huge bunch of men. We practiced to the *Washington Post March*, march in review. We would form up, and then, we would march in review, past the reviewing stand, do it over, do it over, until the lines were perfect. We were like West Point cadets when we got through and we were all lined up according to height, you know, the tallest guys on the right and the shorter guys, da-da-da, and the guys with the most medals in the front. … It was a big theatrical performance. Anyway, the big day comes. Here comes Georgie, in his personal DC-3. The plane lands on the landing strip. Soon as it stops, they opened the window and they put [up] the flag, the red flag with the four stars, the general's flag, and so, he taxied up to the area close to the reviewing stand, you know, and he's met by our general and they are saluting

each other, and then, they go up on the reviewing stand and the order comes, "Pass in review," and we go through the *Washington Post March*, "Dada-dada, dada-dada." You go through the whole routine we went through all week long, and then, finally, we are told to line up. We're marched, I guess, to the edge of the field and we were all lined up on the edge of the field and Patton comes, personally, down the line and, you know, talks to every soldier in the front. I mean, as he comes to you, you go to inspection arms, you go like this, you wait and, you know, he says, … "I see you got a Purple Heart. Where'd you get wounded, soldier?" "Da-da-da." "Oh, yes, that was quite a fight." "Da-da-da." "Oh, well, gee, you've got a Silver Star. Yes, you're a brave guy, a good guy, yes." Every guy, he had a comment. It was incredible. I mean, I was in the second row, so, I could hear all this stuff as he's going down the line. … He had something to say to each soldier and there must have been, I don't know, a couple of hundred at least, in the front rank, at least from our battalion; I don't know how many, anyway. So, then, after he's through with that, we would break up and he had a platform in the middle of the field and we're to form a big semi-circle around this platform. He gets up on this [stage], with the loudspeakers, and he congratulates us on what a great-looking outfit [we are], how proud he is of the 83rd Division and the 83rd Division in France, when he needed them, we came, and the 83rd Division, da-da-da. … The famous line, I'll never forget it, is, "And, now, you're going to go over there and beat those fuckin' Japanese. I tell you, if those yellow-bellied bastards could see you sons of bitches, they'd shit in their pants." [laughter] Those were the exact words, good old George. You know, we all were laughing, my God, "Gee, this [guy], oh, boy;" so, that was it. So, he got on to his plane and took off. … Then, you know, we were just ready. We continued the maneuvers, we continued training and reequipping, maneuvers, new replacements and all this stuff, and then, finally, one day, we line up and, no, we heard about the atomic bomb. We didn't know what the hell this meant. Then, you know, about a week later, I don't know, five days later, whatever it is, "Line up." We're ready to go the next day. We had all our stuff lined up, packed up. We were going to go to the Grafenwoehr … German Army Training Grounds, and they're still there. Grafenwoehr is the main military training ground, field training ground, for the German Army and I guess it's used by the US Army, too, but, anyway, we were going to go on trucks and they lined us up and they said, "Well, we're not going. The war is over." We said, "What?" … So, that was just like a reprieve from a death sentence. We were not looking forward to going to attack the Japanese, because we thought the SS were bad, but I think the Japanese were even worse. They were suicidal and, in fact, I was just reading a book about the whole mentality of the Japanese and how this whole, the suicide thing, really was very common. … "You should never surrender in war to the enemy. Better that you commit suicide and better that you kill yourself killing some of the enemy," and that was the doctrine … and we were aware of that. We were kind of scared about that whole deal. So, it was a great relief, great relief. Yes, so, from then on, I spent most of my time [as a clerk]. The company clerk was a guy, Dave Rosenberg, and he'd been there with the outfit all the way through Normandy and all through the whole war and I guess I could type and I could spell [laughter] and they made me the acting company clerk, and so, I did all the work of a company clerk and I typed up commendations for medals. … The Captain told me [to] type one up for me and I did, for my actions during the Rhine fighting, and, anyway, the big thing was that you'd get five points for every medal and the five points [mattered because] you need a number of points to get home. I've forgot what you needed, originally. You needed something like seventy points to get home and I think I only had thirty-some-odd points, based on how many months you're overseas, how much combat you were in and blah, blah. They had a whole formula, but you also got five points

more for every medal. So, everybody in the world was awarding medals and my batch of citations were forwarded up through regiment and division and Army, and then, it got up to the next level and I guess the overall Army supreme headquarters decided, "No more medals, except for exceptional valor or very, exceptional deeds." So, all these hundreds of citations were wiped out, and it didn't break my heart, but at least I was hoping I might get home a little bit earlier. … So, I was working as a company clerk and that's when, one day, I got picked out and put on a truck and sent to Munich, Germany. … They dropped me off at *Agnestrasse* in Munich, which is a post office building, and I found myself with a bunch of other guys from infantry outfits and we were going to replace these men running the 205th US Army Postal Unit in Munich. Postal units were the units where I realized the depth of the back-up that the military has. I mean, … Munich was full of Army ordnance units and medical units and Signal Corps units and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. There were MP units, everything, every kind of a unit under the sun. I was there and these were all supporting the fighting troops. … There were two postal units that were necessary to receive, post the mail from the United States, sort it out for these different outfits, and then, take the mail back and ship it back to the United States. So, we had, essentially, two post offices that served I don't know how many hundred units around the Munich area. … We were all part of the Third Army, … that they called TUSA Rear, Third Army Rear, and that was where I really appreciated what the rear echelon life was like, because we arrived there from our infantry outfits. Now, as infantry we were doing pretty good. We were living in nice barracks. We had our own bed. We didn't have double-decker bunks. We had a nice dining hall. … We went there with our mess kit every day and we got fed. So, when we arrived there in Munich, at the 205th, … one of the guys says, "Okay, now, it's time. We've got to get in the truck and go have dinner." So, we all run for our duffle bags to pull out our mess kits and we come down, (we were up on the second floor) … the stairs with our mess kits and the guy says, "What the hell are those for?" So, we said, "We're supposed to eat with these." He said, "No, you don't need those. Leave them." So, we left them. We go to this big casern, it's a big dining hall, and there's this tablecloth and there's china and there's knives and forks and there's waitresses and you get served. I mean, it was just like, you know, going to a restaurant. "What is this?" It was incredible, and that's where I saw Mickey Rooney, who was the Third Army special, whatever, special events guy.

SI: Special Services?

AB: Special Services, yes. … So, we had to quickly get accustomed to this, the soft life. We had maids that cleaned our rooms and made our beds, cleaned the whole facility, came in every day and, after a while, … we stopped eating at that big dining hall and we ate … in a little restaurant, where the food was absolutely fabulous. It was prepared by, I don't know, a Hungarian or German, some Polish, I think it was Polish chefs, and the food was fabulous and we were served by these Polish waitresses and there was an orchestra that played at lunch and dinner, while we were having meals, oh, my God, and there was a general hospital about ten blocks down the road. They had a night club that they ran and you could go there and buy beer. They had New Year's Eve parties and whatever, an orchestra, pretty good [duty]! …

SI: How soon after that did you come home? How long were you in the Army of Occupation?

AB: Well, I was in; … I know the dates are in there, somewhere. I don't know what time of the year, but it must have been October or November that we arrived in Munich and I went home in May '46. … Instead of riding in the forty-and-eights, we rode in German passenger cars. There were bullet holes in the roof and some of the windows were missing, but, still, it was better than sitting on the floor of a freight car, and we went to Le Havre and we boarded a ship called the SS *George Washington* and I would learn, later on, that the SS *George Washington* was the ship on which the 331st had been transported from, I don't know if they came from New York or [if] they sailed out of some other port, and sailed to Europe, to Scotland, I believe, or Ireland, where they were off-loaded. … We arrived in Staten Island and … they had all these signs on the docks, "Welcome Home," and they had a band on the dock, playing, and somebody sang. … We got off the boat and marched on to Pennsylvania Railroad coaches. … Everybody screamed when this train started to move, because it must have been moving at the regular pace, but, compared to the trains in Europe, then, that would crawl, this thing was just, "Shoof." We thought we were, like, in a rocket. It was incredible. So, we were back home and I got a pass, because I lived in New York. … They took us to Fort Dix, got a pass into New York. So, I was able to go into New York for a weekend and see my parents, and then, I had to get back, go back to Fort Dix, and spend two days or three days [in] final processing to get discharged. So, I was discharged in June of '46, and I had that summer off, and then, I resumed my studies at Harvard in September. … Then, we were on the regular basis, except that I took [classes in] the summer of '47. I took three courses during the summer. That way, I was able to accelerate, so that I graduated in February of '49. … Things were back to normal at Harvard by then and we had a football team, we had a band, we had pep rallies, we had, you know, everything. … Nonetheless, that was it.

SI: Were most of your classmates GIs when you went back?

AB: Practically one hundred percent, yes. Most of them were either men from my class or the Class of '48. In fact, I have quite a number of friends from Class of '48. They all had been in the Navy or Army or had served in the military. … The Class of 1950, which was the class that entered in September of '46, … they're still a lot of veterans in that. I mean, there were some guys [that had stayed]. … One of my roommates before I went in the service was 4-F. He had very serious asthma and, by the time I got back to Harvard, he had already graduated and was going to Harvard Business School, getting his MBA. … I think he finished in the fall of '46, when I … reentered. … Here's a guy, he was a 4-F during World War II, years later, he became Assistant Secretary of the Army. [laughter] … I visited him. … They had a special flag for him, which he kept after he left. He served for two years, three years, and he had a special flag. He's got it in his house, a special flag. In his office, he had an American flag and he had the flag of the Assistant Secretary of the Army and he has pictures of him getting off these transport planes with all these troops lined up, saluting these big shots coming down the plane, … and he's a little guy. Anyway, you'd never think of him [that way]. It was funny. [laughter]

SI: What was his name?

AB: His name was [W.] Brewster Kopp. I truthfully don't know if he's still alive. He lives in Connecticut somewhere; I'm not sure. … He was a corporate guy, vice-president of different corporations, and so on, and so forth, financial guy, primarily.

SI: You graduated from Harvard. What was your major?

AB: Economics.

SI: I see that you also went back for graduate studies at NYU and …

AB: Penn. Yes, I left Harvard. I graduated in February of '49 at Harvard. I would have gone to the Harvard Business School, but they didn't accept people in February. They only accepted you in September, … but Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania accepted you, and so, I entered and they also gave me credit for some of my economics courses and statistics courses that I took at Harvard, so that I was able to enter Wharton in February of '49 and graduate in June of 1950. Instead of having to go two full years, I went, really, one-and-a-half years to Wharton, to get my MBA, and then, I went on. After I was working in New York, … I went to graduate school, the NYU Graduate School of Business, downtown. I was working on my doctorate and I completed all my work for a doctorate, except for writing a dissertation. … When I got to that point, one of my committee guys died and another guy went to another university. I had, … basically, a new committee and, at the same time, I was offered this job in a Ford Foundation project that would require me to travel really extensively and I found myself traveling, basically, usually, three days a week. … It just didn't [work]. I couldn't, you couldn't do it, so, I just dropped it. I maintained matriculation for a couple of semesters, but I said, "It's not worth it. I couldn't possibly do the research and the writing," and then, I had a new committee, where I have to come up with [a new thesis]. … I don't know; they didn't like my [thesis]. I don't know. The whole thing, it was too bad. I mean, I did all this work, and then, it didn't make any difference, because, you know, I think I'm very happy with what I was able to do.

SI: Could you give me a brief overview of your career?

AB: Well, yes, my first job, after graduating from Wharton School, I was hired at Rockefeller Center, by the corporation that ran Rockefeller Center, in those days. It was called Rockefeller Center, Inc. I was hired as an assistant to the personnel director. I primarily interviewed people for jobs and did assorted jobs in personnel management, and then, I became assistant to the vice-president for industrial relations and I helped prepare us for negotiations, which is a year-round job, with the unions. We had one-year contracts. We had [the] Service Employees International Union for elevator operators, porters, cleaning men, guards, Service Employees International Union for the cleaning women, it was a separate union in those days, and then, we had skilled trades. We had carpenters, electricians, painters, plumbers. I don't know. We'd go through the whole gamut, because we had all our own skilled trades. So, we had a lot of different unions that we had to negotiate with and there was always stuff going on. You got through, you signed a contract, and then, … you've got to prepare for the next year; maybe this union is very sore. Anyway, from there, … one of the jobs that I was assigned to by the vice-president was to integrate the white collar staff and I got in touch with the National Urban League and I got to know a man by the name of Julius A. Thomas, who was vice-president of industrial relations, … a delightful black gentleman. He was an honor graduate of Howard University, couldn't get a job and he worked for some fifteen years as a Pullman porter. He could tell you more stories of

what happened in those Pullman cars [than anyone], but, anyway, he finally got a job with the Urban League in Louisville, Kentucky, and, eventually, ended up at corporate, at the headquarters in New York, for the National Urban League. He was a vice-president. He found the black architects, black accountants, black secretaries and so forth. … My next job, I went to NYU. This is going to pick up again with Julius, but I went to NYU. This was when I was still working on my doctorate. I got the job to set up a career services program for business and they wanted a business graduate who knew something about business organizations, because all they had was teacher placement in teacher careers. So, the people who did that were all education majors and they knew nothing about corporations or business. So, I set up the career services program for business and I set that up in Washington Square and I set up a sub-office at the Graduate School of Business, to counsel and place the students and arrange for campus interviews from corporations, and so on, and so forth. … I did that for just about seven years. Then, one of my professors went to work for the Ford Foundation in 1965, my statistics professor from NYU Graduate School, and, well, he had not too much of a role, but the consultant to the Ford Foundation was Julius A. Thomas. … Julius was very much concerned that the historically black colleges were not getting their students into industry and into … a broad range of careers. The black colleges were graduating people for three main areas, what they used to say, "Teachin', Preachin' and Healin'," education, ministry or medicine. That's most of the graduates and most of them went into teaching, teaching for black schools, doctors, doctors for black people, ministers for black churches. I mean, it was that [way]. So, anyway, … it tied in with the Ford Foundation being interested also in Civil Rights, 1965. They wanted to do something. They had all kinds of programs and they approached the College Placement Council, which is the professional organization for career services in the United States. They say, "Would you like to help us and run some kind of a program?" … They said, "Sure, we would," and they discovered that they were a 501(c)4 corporation. They did not qualify for a grant from Ford Foundation. You had to be a 501(c)3. You can only be a 501(c)3. You have to be a 501(c)3 to receive money from a 501(c)3, just remember that, if you apply for a foundation grant, or an individual. Anyway, churches are 501(c)3s. Anyway, so, they set up a separate corporation called College Placement Services and a friend of mine from RCA, who was in charge of college relations and college recruiting for RCA, approached me and said, "Beaumont, would you … be interested in … heading up this new program at CPC?" … I happened to have, on my staff at NYU, a couple of black professional people. I had a couple of counselors. … NYU is a big school and NYU was a commuter school, so, we had a lot of part-time jobs for kids, because kids were working their way through college and they needed part-time jobs. … I had about five people that were placing kids in part-time jobs. I had four people doing professional placement and, you know, [were] in jobs in business and graduate placement. We also worked with alumni. Anyway, he invited a couple of black people working for me. I said, "Okay." So, I applied and it so happened that Julius Thomas was on the board of directors of this organization. So, that was a very helpful thing, and then, this professor from NYU, when the thing came up for the Ford Foundation, he saw my name, yes. So, I got *carte blanche* from the Ford Foundation and the people at CPC liked me, so, I got this job and I did this for twenty-two years. I trained people to make visits. I visited practically every black college in the country. I got to know the presidents and deans and I set up visits for consultative teams. I trained the people to [do] these consultations. I reviewed their work and submitted these reports to the institutions and we sent follow-up visits. We worked with corporations to raise funds, so that they (the colleges) could hire people, that they could build placement services, [that] they could

renovate space for placement services. We got a deal with the government through the Higher Education Act of 1965, I believe, Title III, "Aid to Developing Institutions," where I was able to get grants, too. At one time, I had as many as sixty colleges that were getting grants through Title III, for the development of career services on their campuses. … Then, we broadened out. We started working with the Hispanic schools, especially in Texas and the Southwest and California, and, the last stage, we worked with a couple of Indian [schools]. There's one really good four-year Indian college, the rest were primarily junior colleges, and so, that was what I did until I retired in 1987. … During that time, [at] some time, I got married, I got divorced, I remarried in '87, I moved to New Jersey and I got a job with the National Foundation for 'Ileitis and Colitis, as their northeast regional director. … I had chapters from Burlington, Vermont, to Buffalo, New York, to Reading, Pennsylvania, and, of course, Philadelphia, Boston, New York, to raise money, and I don't know what our budget was, [but] we raised about six million dollars in New York alone and, you know, Boston would come in with two or three and Philadelphia, a couple of million. So, we had quite a big budget to raise money and this was mainly what they called events fundraising, so that you run these; I don't know if you're familiar with these fundraising dinners, where corporations buy a table at a thousand a seat, you know. … So, [if] you've got ten seats, you've got ten thousand bucks. … When I worked for the Rockefellers, they would send me, often, to [the] Waldorf-Astoria, to some charitable thing, where they had bought tickets and they didn't go. They'd send the flunkies, and so, you get, generally, people that are filling seats that somebody's paying a thousand dollars for. In those days, when I was at Rockefeller's … I did that. That was interesting, but both my wife and I decided that we wanted to get away from New York and the rat race and we had some friends that lived down here in Ocean City, [Delaware], and we visited them. … Many times, we said, "Well, why don't we open up a bed and breakfast in Ocean City?" … We checked that out and we decided, no, a bed and breakfast is not the way to go, because it's a twenty-four seven job and they [only] sound like [fun], because we liked to go to bed and breakfasts, and so, we decided not. … So, we were looking around and we saw some townhouses for sale in Millsboro. We thought we'd look at them and [they] looked very nice. I wanted something on the water and I thought I could go out and fish in the ocean or something. … Well, we looked at that and we had a friend who was in the real estate business. She said, "Why are you looking at townhouses? You'd get a much better buy looking at a house," and she gave me a referral to some guy she knew down here, who was in real estate, and he showed us several houses, including this house, and we just fell in love with this house. There was a hot tub in that room. … Now, it's a media room; we converted it. … Anyway, they had this place open and the hot tub was bubbling away and, you know, the lake was out here, beautiful, with the ducks and la-di-da, and so, we just fell in love. It was all on one level and not too big, but, … you know, it still is a very beautiful house. We've done a lot of changes since we bought it, but we've been here now since 1990. So, that's fifteen years, July of 1990. … My wife got a job immediately in her field. She was in disability services. She worked for Cerebral Palsy in Jersey. She worked for the Association for Retarded Citizens in Jersey. When she came here, she was picked up by Easter Seals, because … the Easter Seal director in New Jersey knew her and recommended her down here and they had a job for her and she started work right away for Easter Seals. … I got a job as a director of a Community Theater, because I've been an actor, an amateur actor. All my life, I've acted and I never did it in college, but, in high school, and, later on, … when I was living in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, I did acting in quite a few plays, and then, I directed a few of them. So, it was tied in with me and I've acted since in a lot of the plays at this community outfit. Now, I retired from them in 1997.

So, I have been fully retired since 1997, but I acted just a few weeks ago in Burlington, Vermont, where my daughter lives. … Over Halloween, she works as a volunteer for some charitable group that runs a haunted forest kind of thing and they raise … about almost a hundred fifty thousand dollars over Halloween weekend or what-have-you, and they get thousands of people that come there. They pay twelve-fifty to go through this thing and she was handling the tickets for them and we arrived there early and we called her up on our cell phone, because we couldn't get into the house, because nobody was there. So, she says, "Why don't you come out here, where we are?" So, I went out there with my wife and, you know, talked to her. … One of the guys says, "By the way, we need another guy for the Dr. Knotts role," blah, blah, blah. [laughter] So, I said, "Well, what is this?" "Oh, it's very easy." They hand me this script, three pages. "You learn this script and that's all you've got to do." So, I said, "Well, can I go out there and look at it?" and he said, "Okay, we'll take you out there." So, we walked and it's about a mile on a muddy path into the woods, you know, where this thing was set up. … I won't tell you the details, but, anyway, I said, "I'm not going to do this, walking in the woods in the middle of the night," and it was muddy. … So, they said, "Well, we'll take you out on an ATV and we'll take you in and back." I said, "Fine, I'll do it." What they didn't tell me was that I had to do this role fifty times. I worked with three other actors, … two guys and a woman, and, you know, we had to do this routine. They bring these people in batches of fifteen or twenty and they're led by a guy with a torch and, you know, … they come to your spot, and then, … you go through your routine, and then, they go on to the next one. So, I had to do this thing fifty times, … but it was fun. So, anyway, so, I still act. So, I think that should be the end. Don't you think so?

SI: Okay, yes.

AB: Bring down the curtain. [laughter]

SI: All right. This is an excellent place to end.

AB: Unless you have some burning questions.

SI: There are plenty of things that I can ask about, but I have kept you much longer than you probably thought it would be.

AB: I never expected it would go [this long. Do] you know it's four o'clock? We've been at it six hours.

SI: Wow. We should wrap it up then.

AB: I can't believe it. …

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

Reviewed by Nenad Dudic 3/25/06
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 9/5/06
Reviewed by Andre Beaumont 9/11/06