

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK N. CLARK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Steven Melton: This begins our second interview session with Frank N. Clark on October 23, 2009, in Lebanon, New Jersey, with Steven Melton and ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you, Mr. Clark, again for having us here to follow up on our first session. For the record, where and when were you born?

Frank N. Clark: Oh, I was born in a little town that I guess consisted of maybe a thousand people at the very, very most, in Nesquehoning, Pennsylvania, which is in the heart of the--well, I shouldn't say the heart of, but it's on maybe the fringe area of the anthracite coalmining area. Eastern Pennsylvania, generally, is about the only location where you can get anthracite coal, as against hard coal, where you can go down to West Virginia and get it, and other places. So, yes, it's a small mining town, made up mostly of, oh, a lot of immigrant people, very, very new immigrants, very few second-generation immigrants. So, it was a good town. We had about six or seven churches in the town--so, that gives you an indication [of] how dangerous it was to be underground using explosives and mining. ...

SH: When were you born?

FC: I was born in 1923, on July 21st.

SH: Okay.

FC: And the doctor was late getting to the house. My mother threatened she wasn't going to pay him, because he was late. [laughter] ... However, that same doctor was a very, very good friend of my father's, so, the good doctor, I know, took that jolt very lightly. [laughter]

SH: Okay. We will continue now with the questions.

SM: When you went over to England from the US, do you remember the name of the ship that you were on?

FC: Yes. I was on the *Queen Elizabeth II*, which was the second ship. ... Let's see, ... no, excuse me, I think it was maybe the *Queen Elizabeth I*, because it replaced the *Queen Mary*, and the *Queen Elizabeth* came over from Britain pretty much empty, to escape the air bombardments and for its own safety. ... It was then utilized in troop transport, back and forth, to the Firth of Clyde, up in Scotland. [Editor's Note: The RMS *Queen Elizabeth* was launched in 1938 and converted to a troopship at the onset of World War II. The RMS *Queen Elizabeth II* was not launched until 1962.] ... So, instead of having passengers in a suite, we had like, oh, my goodness, a platoon in the suite. [laughter] Yes, pretty much like twenty-five to thirty guys were in the suites, one, two, three [bunks] high. ... Yes, so, that was the *Queen Elizabeth*.

SM: Did the officers have similar quarters?

FC: I imagine the officers had similar quarters, but maybe they only doubled up on it, perhaps, but, see, the United States Army had a corps, or I should say, they had men, servicemen, who were in the transportation section of the Army. ... They traveled back and forth, and forth and back, and back and forth, at least on large vessels. Now, some went over on merchant ships--no,

I don't know if they went over on merchant ships, but, ... well, I should say much smaller vessels. ... I know that there was a man from Westfield, who I got to meet after the war, who was in the troop carrier division and he made, like, oh, twenty-five trips back and forth, roundtrips, I should say, ... but we had mostly British complements onboard, their troops. They're men who were in the bakeries down in the ship's hold, in the mess hall. We had our men down there, too, from the States. [As a] matter-of-fact, I even met a cook sergeant, as I was down in the bottom of the ship, trying to beg for a loaf of bread to eat, because I didn't necessarily like the way the food was being cooked. ... I thought, "Well, I can subsist on bread, maybe, because there's plenty of water to go down with it." ... That chef had been in Camp Fannin, Texas, when I was taking basic training, and there was a division that was formed down there, and then, sent overseas, and I think they had a liberty bell on their shoulder patch. I don't remember the number, but, anyway, those men were from that post. ... I don't know how long they had been there at Camp Fannin, Texas, but they weren't going to stay there much longer. That's why they were going over, but the American officers, usually from second lieutenant to captain, I think there were ... a few captains, they were to keep order. I don't remember running across any MPs [military police], I really don't, but everybody, though, seemed to be enjoying the trip. So, there was a minimum of problems. ...

SH: Did you get the loaf of bread?

FC: [laughter] Yes, I got it and shared it with some other guys that, likewise, were, what would you say, "future vegetarians?" [laughter] but I'm not a vegetarian, though, no. ...

SH: What did you not like about the food?

FC: Oh, it was food that my mother never cooked and put on the table. [laughter] I wasn't that used to it, and being the only son in the family, I was the "prince" and I had three "servants;" I had three sisters. ... So, no, my mother had an Irish cookbook, and that is the thinnest book in the library. [laughter] So, as she sharpened up on it, I even found fault with some of those [recipes], you know, but, no, I wasn't [pleased]. For instance, the British chefs mostly were boiling things. You know, they were great for boiling chicken and, if they made stew, stew was being served, the chicken was boiled before it went into the pot, to help make the soup better. ... No, it was [not good], just didn't appeal to me, you know, but I survived, though. [laughter]

SM: What did you do in your downtime on the ship? Did you hang out on the deck at all?

FC: Yes, I hung out on the deck, because I was curious to see, "How are we going to [go]?" Well, first of all, "In what direction are we going in?" I didn't know if we were going to be going east from New York Harbor and if we were going to go east for a short while, and then, go south, which would mean, "Hey, we're going to go through the [Panama] Canal and over to the Pacific." We had no notion of where we were going. However, we had a blimp above that guided us the first day, and the second and maybe even the third day, to give us plenty of safety from sub ripples or a stray pocket battleship being on the horizon. ... However, ... aboard ship, though, there was still a huge map of the ocean from the American continent to the British Isles. They had a map there that, in the past, when there were passengers on that *Queen Elizabeth*, that would show where they were from day to day to day. Now, that thing was in port all the time.

[laughter] It didn't show any progress. So, that kept us not knowing where we were, you know, ... and then, they had target practice. I don't recall there being any escort surface ships, strictly air [cover]. Some flights would go over. ... I imagine they must have been dropping something, because, ... yes, I think they had a gun on it [the ship]. I didn't spend much time at the stern, but I was up mostly at the bow, where the Lloyd's of London insurance bell was, and it was stated, "This was put here by the Lloyd's of London," and I thought, "Well, gee, at least they're insured." [Editor's Note: Lloyd's of London is a British insurance market.] Yes, no, but [as for what] else, throughout the day, there was nothing for entertainment. You made your own entertainment. You just ate and, generally speaking, after you had your breakfast, and that could come any time between maybe five in the morning to twelve noon, ... then, you would eat, walk out of the dining hall, and then, get in line for the evening meal, because that's the way it was. ... In-between, one could get involved in a crap game, or something like that, yes, but there's no training, no indoctrination, no movies, but time went, and I don't recall there being any alcohol either, like a PX [post exchange] or that onboard. No, it was strictly "Dutch treat," you know, ... but, on that trip over, though, the British troops, I should say maybe the equivalent to our MPs, they had a game board. ... It wasn't really a board, it was like a cloth, a big, white napkin, and it was a game and I think it was called "Queens and Anchors," or something like that, [Crown and Anchor]. I never got involved in it, but there was a lot of money on top of it. ... The British guys knew how to play the game and they were really, really getting American dollars. They were really, really [winning]. ... Of course, they had the usual lookouts for the officers that would frown on that gambling, because, whenever you're [dealing with] a loser, sometimes, you have a poor loser and he has a tendency, maybe they're going [to] do things differently, you know, yes, but that was very, very popular. ... I didn't go back down into the [hold]. First night onboard, as we left New York Harbor, I had a bunk in ... one of the suites, but that was the last time I stayed there. I found out that, after the second day, I had to switch over and not have the suite section. My address changed to the deck, and the deck is where all the latrines were. ... As the boat would hit these waves and go up and down, so did the latrines. They had two exits, forward and reverse. So, I'd look for a spot that was very, very high. ... It would never rain up there and I stayed there. I kept my stuff there and it was still on the floor. ... The lifeboats were up too high; you couldn't stick anything into them, but I stayed there and I was as fresh as a daisy when I arrived over there, as I was when I left. There was no [Mr. Clark sniffs]--none of that stuff there. ... Of course, during the day, ... you had freedom, though, to go all over. Now, they didn't want you to go down where I went, down to the bakery area, because I guess there were too many guys down there trying to get food, but I went down, and I don't know, might have been during that really dead part of night when a certain amount of activity drops off. ... Who knows? maybe the officers were then having their rations, you know, [laughter] but we weren't bothered, though.

SH: How long was the crossing?

FC: I believe the crossing was about five days, and I had no idea that we were going to land on the main British Isles, but I remember going up through that space between England and Ireland. ... So, then, by that time, I was pretty well convinced that it was Europe. [laughter] ... I was baffled, though, the whole time [that] I was onboard, to see these huge poles, looked like poles or columns, about two or three in a pile, and, whenever we docked, on the Firth of Clyde, they elevated those upright. ... Upon docking, they started to lift [material] out of the hold, and that's

why those poles were laying down, and then, put here. I don't know why I [was interested in them]. Of course, hey, I'd never seen a ship that big in the past to know--what do they do on a ship besides float? [laughter] ... That, I became aware of, and so, upon arriving there then, I guess, oh, yes, that's right, when we arrived, I think it was such that, in the river, we were in one direction in the morning; this thing went around as the tide [left]. [laughter] ... Then, of course, then, they discharged us the next morning and [there] happened to be a lot of empty railcars there for us to go south. It was rather crowded on the British trains, ... but it was all new to me, you know. It was refreshing my old geography and I kept inquiring, "Where are we at now? I know we're in Scotland, but where are we at now?" and the guys say, "Well, mate," he says, "we just crossed over into Britain. Can't you smell it?" [laughter] I remember his words; it just sort of tickled my fancy, you know. If ever you were in the New York Subway system, you'll notice that [smell?] when the train is moving and you walk from one car to another, just like the conductor does. Well, you had the same thing on those British trains. ... That's where the Scottish or British troops would be on station to keep guys from, well, maybe, when the train goes slow, from jumping off the train, and he was there ... for a purpose, not just to get fresh air. ... I don't know how far down we went. I have no idea. I know we couldn't go all the way down to Southampton. We had to go down somewhere, I don't know where, because they were prepared for us there. They were prepared for us, ... but we were in an area, though, where there were quite a number of alerts, aircraft alerts, when we got down into Britain. [As] a matter-of-fact, after the second night or so, second or third night there, there were some hits in the area where we were. ... There was some damage done ... to the quartermaster's food section, fortunately, and some fellows were able to get large, military-sized cans of jam or butter or mayonnaise. ... We were naturally looking for the butter, so [that] we could have it with toast, and the one we got, though, was margarine, yes. [laughter] So, that was the end of that uncalled for benefit, you know, of getting something. ...

SH: A little scavenger hunt. [laughter]

FC: That's right. So, then, it was at that location that we were given our weapons, and there's no such thing as, "Hey, you get target practice," and this and that. No, no, you just put a clip in the M-1 and, when you get to where you're going, shoot it off and that'll blow the Cosmoline out of the barrel. That's all. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Cosmoline is an anti-rust lubricant used on firearms.]

SH: That is what they told you.

FC: That's right. So, no such thing as, "Oh, elevate the click on the sight, you know, for left or right accuracy," you know, none of that. "No, don't fret and worry about it." Initially, I guess they did, but, then, they found out, hey, very, very few times are you going to be popping that thing out where a little bit here, a little bit there is going to make a difference. It's going to be up so that you're either hitting him in the ribs or you're hitting him in the head, [laughter] and you don't need much windage for that, but that was a surprise, to become aware of [that], yes. You would think that, "Well, gee," you know, ... because I remember guys used to go around with those badges on, gee, and they had all these attachments that went on to it, too. They were proficient in this and that, and that and this, hanging, like, little tiny signs, metal clips, onto their

Sharpshooter Badge, and there was no heed about that. There was no guarantee that your sight was [Mr. Clark makes a clicking sound] perfect or imperfect, you know, yes. [laughter] ...

SH: What had you been trained to do? What was your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]?

FC: ... I think it was 745, I think it was, "745, Rifleman," yes, that's what it was, yes, rifleman, ... as against mortarman or [someone who] would have a different expertise. Oh, yes, we knew how to go through the movements that the mortarman would normally do, but you were specified as, well, [that] you had some education, you know, that was liable to be useful. [laughter]
[Editor's Note: Every military job has a coinciding Military Occupational Specialty code.]

SM: Did you have any training exercises while you were in England?

FC: None, none of that stuff, no. It was just [being] on the alert all the time, because you can ship out at any time.

SH: What time of the year was this?

FC: This was in late September, very early October, yes, and not cold, not really cold weather, but it was before snow. ...

SH: This would have been in 1944.

FC: In '44, that's right, because the change in latitude there, it's surprising that they are considerably north of where we are here in this state. Yes, so, ... there was no training whatsoever. Oh, they had; I don't know, did they have movies? Well, I don't know. I know they gave out passes for guys that wanted to go visit town. ... They would never have black Americans go into town the same night that Caucasians would go into town. They generally tried to avoid that, yes. Of course, ... going in as a replacement, as a 745 rifleman, there were not many, but, whenever you were given a pass into the local town or village, you would find mostly 745 guys, as well as others, but they were all white and you wouldn't find many other Americans. ... I think there was a minimum of problems, too, you know.

SM: How did the civilians react to your presence there?

FC: Well, I never had any direct experience, because I never took a pass into the town, into the village. If I had space to sit down [and] do something, I'd probably be writing, maybe, a V-mail to my parents, or, I don't know, just existing, really, just existing. I wasn't looking for the kinds of entertainment that most guys with a lot of testosterone go into town [for], you know. I was above all that stuff. So, I knew that there was nothing in the village that I wanted to go in [for].

SH: Where had you done your ASTP training in the States?

FC: I had gone to Michigan State College in Lansing, Michigan. ... There was a large number of Army Air Corps cadets there who were [in the] ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program], but they were, of course, geared to be in the Air Force, most likely to be a pilot or one of those

that goes onboard for other [purposes]. [Editor's Note: The Army Specialized Training Program gave Army personnel college-level courses in several areas of specialization, such as engineering, medicine and foreign language. The Army Air Forces cadets may have been part of the College Training Detachment program.]

SH: Such as navigation.

FC: Navigation, may have, yes, or maybe some of them ended up on the ground, you know, doing the loading, and so on, and so forth, but, yes, that group was there. ... Now, there, I took training for aerial photography, having been turned down by the Marine Corps for enlistment because I had very, very poor color perception. Somebody sort of classified me as, "Hey, maybe this guy here could be an expert in interpreting aerial photographs," to see what time of day it is. ... Sometimes, they get information in a photo and they don't know what time of day this was taken. ... Then, you're to learn [that] from the hypotenuse of the triangle, rather than the horizontal and the vertical, but you took those all into effect to find out the time of day. Well, the bottom leg of the triangle, that leg gets shorter and shorter and shorter as the sun is up high, but, as the sun is lower, the shadow is going to be longer, because it's picking up the vertical and that's casting a shadow. ... Then, I was supposed to be able to indicate, and I couldn't see how that could possibly have been, I was supposed to be able to interpolate by that measurement, and looking at the surroundings, you could then tell how tall the buildings were or how tall the factories were. ... It was sort of a lot of wishful thinking, you know, [laughter] but we also did surveying. ... I thought, "Gee," sort of, "hey, I'm liable not to need that damn rifle," you know, and my hopes went real high. "I might not need that damn heavy thing," [laughter] but, anyway, yes. ... That ASTP, of course, they were all mostly guys like myself, that had gone in there after a year or two of college. ... Yes, that's right, I think that was generally one of the requirements that they had, and there was an expectation that, "Hey, the war's not going to be that much longer. Maybe for occupation, you'll be involved in [that], stick you in." In other words, ... "You're liable to be able to use what extra brains you might have upstairs, plus, what more you're getting from your training here, to be helpful in reconstruction of [war-torn lands], occupation duty."

SH: How disappointed were you when the program was shut down?

FC: Oh, hey, I just took it like, "Hey, Christmas has come and Christmas is gone," you know. I had no opposing thought about it. I thought, "So be it," you know, and, yes, I had no thought about it, no thought. ... [Editor's Note: In 1944, the ATSP Program was curtailed to meet the need for replacements overseas. Up to twenty-four thousand Army Air Corps cadets and seventy-three thousand other ATSP cadets were transferred to the Army Ground Forces as enlisted soldiers.]

SH: You were then quickly transferred and assigned.

FC: That's right. They quickly lined me up and stuck me on a train, that I didn't know whether it was going east or west, but it came east and right to Camp Kilmer. ... Of course, some of the acquaintances, ... men that ... I was friendly with, they got on another train and they were going to San Francisco, ... but, yes, I was shipped into Camp Kilmer. ... No, it was Fort Meade, in

Maryland, that's right. That's where I was shipped to, Fort Meade in Maryland, and then, from Fort Meade, I was shipped into Camp Kilmer. ... Then, when the *Queen Elizabeth* made its return ... voyage, then, we piled onboard that one.

SH: Is that when you were assigned to the 28th Infantry Division?

FC: No, no, I wasn't assigned to that until I was on the frontline. [Editor's Note: The 28th Infantry Division entered combat in the European Theater of Operations on July 22, 1944, and would see 196 days of combat.]

SH: Really? You were in England as a replacement, not knowing where you were going to be assigned.

FC: Not knowing where, or when. ... It was at night that they did the, "You, you, go with this guy, and you, you, you, go with this guy." They had guys there that needed replacements for their squads and they took that pile of guys around, this truckload, and made us first, "Count off." "One, two, three, four, five." "Okay, number four and above, go with him. Four below, go with this guy over here. ... You are now transferred from the replacement responsibility to room and board." [laughter] I remember the officer that greeted us as this big six-by truck, transporter, brought us in. Stuff was popping right and left and he didn't have to tell us to get down. We watched what he did. When he went down, we knew we doggone well better get down. I remember. [laughter]

SH: You were not assigned until you were actually in Europe.

FC: That's right, that's right.

SH: Steven, I believe you have some questions pertaining to prior to Mr. Clark's unit assignment. You wanted to talk about crossing the English Channel, correct?

SM: Yes. When and how did you cross the English Channel?

FC: You mean going over?

SM: Across the Channel.

FC: Crossing the Channel, yes. ... I'm pretty certain we left from Southampton, [England], or like [how] New York City could almost include Bayonne, Jersey City, but [the] Southampton area, because there was a vessel there that ... was sea-going, or should I say mostly Channel-going. [laughter] It was bigger than a ferry boat that goes across the Hudson River here, but it was ... a smaller version of the *Queen Elizabeth*, much, much smaller. ... I don't know how many guys [were] onboard there, maybe three, four hundred at least, I would think. ... It had a British crew, British vessel, and I don't remember [when], but, anyway, it was always [at] night that we made these moves. ... Of course, we were depending upon the tide, ... but we [were] transported at night. ... So, we left at night, boarded at night, left at night, and I have no recollection of how close other vessels were to us, because there was so much activity that we

didn't [look], and it being dark, we could only see what you could see, like, walking down a dark street. ... We couldn't project out to see how many other people are here. ... Navigation lights, I guess they had some of them, but it was uneventful, anyway. ... I know, when we got over there, we had to leave that vessel by cargo nets, that is, cargo nets almost like the shape of the windows over there, with the frames in-between and crisscrossed, and about that space, but it was all rope and we went over that. That was how we got out. ...

SH: Into smaller craft?

FC: Into a smaller craft, yes, into an LCT [landing craft, tank] or something like that, landing craft, ... but I know that I wasn't too fast in going down that cargo net, because I had so much weight on me, and, plus, you can make progress only if there's room for you to make progress. The guy lower, if he hesitates, well, that's the space that you're supposed to be in, because there's a guy coming down on top of me now. [laughter] ... I lost my grip, because there was two bodies on me, coming down, and that was too much for me to hold, all that weight, our duffle bags and weapons, that I went thundering down, head over tea kettle, onto the bottom, on top of other guys. ... That was a very, very unpleasant landing, yes, but that's how we ended and that was Omaha Beach. ... There was a very, very high elevation from the water level up to where we were going to have to walk, and that was serpentine, a very, very slow [rise]. Well, we're supposed to go up there, but we're going this way, sure, because, [if] you went this way, [straight up], it'd be too steep. So, we're going up gently this way, and then, curving around again, and then, making another "S" curve. ... As you went up high, [viewing] the sea, you wonder how all that material got there and how much of it was sinking, how much of it was getting wet every day and spread all over. You couldn't deviate too far this way or that way, because there was something already there and you considered yourself lucky that you don't have to climb over it, you know. ... So, that got us up to the top, and then, no, there was no activity. There was no enemy action on us at that time, but we got to the top. ... It's all new to everybody there and they placed us into the old six-by truck, with the seats on both sides. ... That hauled us then to a railroad bed and [we were] put on a train and that train went. We didn't know which direction he was going to go. East, south or west, we had no idea, but I do know that we had to go east, because I remember the railroad was very, very near [a cathedral]. We could see from a distance that huge cathedral on the [Eure River], in Chartres. They have this big, circular, stained-glass window, huge, I don't know, must be over a hundred feet in diameter, ... but I remember that was in the distance. We could see that. [Editor's Note: The Chartres Cathedral is located in Chartres, France, about fifty miles southwest of Paris.]

SH: They took you all the way from Omaha Beach to west of Paris.

FC: That's right, that's right. We were west of Paris, yes, that's right, Chartres, because it was [determined by] as their supplies were going. The supplies had the priority routes and the fuel. ... Then, "You're going to get there, you're going to get there. You're flexible." So, that would seem to be, like, a great distortion, ... and that was the old, what they called "forty-and-eights." ...

SH: Can you explain to Steven what a "forty-and-eight" stands for?

FC: That's right. These railcars could carry eight horses or forty men. [laughter] That's how crowded they were, yes. They could stable eight horses, then, forty men, [laughter] ... and they were cold. Oh, it was cold, yes.

SM: This was the fall, I assume.

FC: Yes, yes, the fall.

SH: After you got off of the train, was that when they assigned you to your line unit?

FC: When we got to the destination off the train and put us into trucks to get us in closer, away from the rail line, yes, that's when we [were assigned]. ... You're never introduced to anybody, you know, [like], "This is So-and-So." You're just there, like, "Oh, here I am, here I am." So, I ended up being assigned to the First Squad of A Company, First Battalion in the 112th Regiment. That's luck of the gods--I won the lottery. [laughter] ... Somebody else got into, say, B Company in the same regiment, and I guess some of them from that [got more soldiers], whoever had the biggest need. ...

SH: How long did it take you to become acquainted with the people in your platoon?

FC: Well, as one says, the old saying, "Misery loves company," well, yes, a lot of these [men were]. Well, when you were new like that and you're meeting these [guys], they're so glad to see you, because [a replacement's arrival means] you're not going to be the first guy in the squad now. You're going to be maybe the fourth or fifth guy in the squad. You're [the replacement is] going to get it. ... You have a chance now to be number one. So, now, you are the point man of the squad. You are the point man and, on patrol, you are the first guy. That's how they lose so many guys, yes. ...

SM: I guess the replacement troops were at a bit of a disadvantage, not having been there with the original group.

FC: ... Oh, that's right. They were long since gone, yes, most all those guys.

SH: Was there anyone there who talked about the horrific fighting that they had gone through?

FC: Oh, yes, that's right, ... your platoon sergeant, oh, yes, he was very [talkative]. He was tickled to death to be able to, "Psst, psst," tell us about his luck. [laughter]

SH: Did he?

FC: Yes, that's right.

SH: Do you remember his name?

FC: No, I don't remember, no, ... don't even remember the Lieutenant's name. I have no memory.

SH: Did they talk about St. Lo and the hedgerows, any of that fighting?

FC: Oh, yes, they spoke of [it]. See, I arrived there in the Hurtgen Forest. [Editor's Note: The 28th Infantry Division had joined the fight in Northern France's hedgerows in late July 1944. The division did not advance through Paris until August 29, 1944.]

SH: When they were going into the Hurtgen Forest.

FC: That's right, that's right, and, now, that would be just a little bit past Aachen in Germany, where the Siegfried Line, with its dragon teeth fortifications are. [Editor's Note: On September 11, 1944, the 28th Infantry Division arrived at the Siegfried Line and continued fighting. Not until October 1944 did the division arrive at the Hurtgen Forest.]

SH: I am just going to put this on pause for a moment. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay, before.

FC: Before I was assigned to the 28th, I remember bivouacking in a factory building in Liege, Belgium, and a horrendous explosion took place during the night. ... I recall a lot of talk being at the breakfast meal and it was supposedly the result of a "buzz bomb" making a premature landing. So, ... that's what, of course, caused that big, big explosion. [Editor's Note: A "buzz bomb" was a V-1 rocket.]

SM: This was before you were assigned.

FC: This is before I was assigned, yes, that's right.

SH: Was that the first ...

FC: That was the first indication I ever had that, "Hey, [Mr. Clark takes deep breath] you're getting closer to this thing now." Yes, that was the first thing, yes, and then, again, in Liege, I can remember, we were still under the replacement ...

SH: "Repple-depples," they called them.

FC: The responsibility, under their wings, and we were able to leave the building and get on the streets in Liege, a very short distance from the building. ... There was a bakery there and we were able to go in there and barter and make a deal for, again, a loaf of bread, the old standby. [laughter] ... I didn't even think we went even for the sweet buns, or this or that, but we knew that the bread was something that [we could eat], and it was, you know, the long loaf. ...

SM: From Liege, I guess you were then assigned to your unit.

FC: That's right, from Liege, my next move then was to be transported by truck from there to the Siegfried Line. ... Then, I don't know how many hours, or this or that, it was, or even if it was a day or a half a day, after being in Liege overnight, and then, getting the bread, until we were meeting our new caretakers, yes, ... but we were very, very welcome, very welcome, and piled off, as they say. I don't even remember how many guys were with me when I was dropped off. ... I don't remember what it was, ... because there were so many milling around, you know. It's [a situation where] you were picked out and you didn't know how many were coming. It's night, it's dark and all you know is that it's very noisy and the sky lights up now and then. ... The Lieutenant goes down and everybody else, at his suggestion, dropped, yes, if you weren't already down. [laughter]

SM: This was artillery fire.

FC: I would say it was, yes, because the sky would get good and bright from the explosions, yes. We couldn't see that it hit, [Mr. Clark pounds his fist], ... we could just see the above part, yes, because you very seldom see where it'll hit. It's the after effect that makes the brightness, that it's bouncing off the heavens, the clouds. ...

SM: How did you feel the first time you experienced that? Was it scary?

FC: No. I was so naïve, I had no idea that they [were dangerous]. ... I just took it as part of the trip, you know. I didn't start to sweat or anything like that. ... I was so used to almost doing nothing that, "Hey, I'm still almost doing nothing here in Liege, eating bread and getting in the truck. Now, I'm meeting some new people," ... but, when I did get back to where the squad was, though, that was very, very awakening.

SH: What happened?

FC: Well, they had lost quite a few men and we replacements were going to go in and take their places. ... That night, we had to assist in the stacking of belongings, doing, like, KP work, only it was [that] they had the belongings of some of these men that are now gone. ... This is their duffle bag and, of course, the bodies are still there.

SH: Were they?

FC: Yes, still there, and they're getting ready to move back and another battalion is going to come in to where we were. ... They were going to give the First Battalion a chance to recuperate, and then, for us to now get to meet them and know them, because we've already seen [combat], and then, we also had to [remove remains]. After a couple of days' action there, the bodies are still there, waiting for Graves [Registration] to come. ... There were so many times that the 28th had gone ahead and lost ground and went ahead and lost ground [that] there was numerous areas where there was strong evidence that my predecessors had a very tough time. ...

SH: What was the terrain like where you were? When the sun came up that morning, what did you see that first day?

FC: Yes. Well, at night, I remember, when I was ... within maybe two hours of, or an hour, an hour-and-a-half, maybe, of being officially in the 28th Division, that night, it was sort of, like, on an incline, not very steep, but very, very gentle, and, outside, there was no woods there. I had no idea that it was the Hurtgen Forest, because this was all wide open, like big fields. [Editor's Note: The 28th Infantry Division relieved the Ninth Infantry Division in the Hurtgen Forest in October 1944. The 28th suffered over six thousand combat casualties before it was withdrawn and redeployed south to help counter the German Ardennes Offensive on December 16, 1944.] Of course, at night, you can only get a glimpse of that when you would see the sky light up. [It] could have been farmland, but it wasn't mountainous. It was relatively modest, not hilly, and outside the tree area. ... After a day or two, when we were pulled back, because another battalion was going to put us in reserve, the casualties that we had--they had been there for a few days--they were already like wood. ... We were advised that, "Hey, we're not going to leave anybody. ... As we back up, we're not going to leave our guys here that served with us. We're not going to wait [for Graves Registration]. Well, even though the Americans are going to come [up], we're going to bring back these guys with us." ... So, we put them into a truck, [someone] helped us get them, and they were there, protected with a tarpaulin, ... because Graves Registration was very, very busy. ... After about four or five days of fighting in that whole area, we got the word that we were going to be moved and we were put into trucks and hauled down to the Ardennes. We didn't know it was the Ardennes, but that's where we ended up. We were hauled down to the Ardennes. The 28th took a very, very bad battle there [at the Hurtgen Forest], and another division was coming in. I don't know whether it was the Ninth [Infantry Division or another]. [Editor's Note: The Fourth Infantry Division relieved the 28th Division.] I don't remember. You don't know who's coming in to take your place, ... because, by the time things filtered down to you, it has changed. It's not the same anymore, it's different, or he [the message deliverer] got it wrong, but, fortunately, that was the end of that fighting up there for my squad. ...

SH: In the Ardennes, was it forest?

FC: The Ardennes was both, mostly forest, though, yes. ... Well, of course, the forest up in the [north], further up north, in Hurtgen, they were predominantly like pine trees, not too many deciduous trees, with leaves, and, down in the Ardennes, that was, well, a pretty good mixture.

SH: What was the weather like?

FC: Snowy and wet, snow. It was below freezing. It was considerably below freezing. ... Our foxholes always had water form in the bottom, from thaw, from your body heat and, also, from the water table. ... Of course, there were reservoirs in the Hurtgen Forest area, that you could realize that ... there were two reservoirs there, almost side by side, I guess, but that meant there's a big water table down there. ... A lot of it doesn't flow together on the surface, but down below, it does. ... When you're digging down four feet, four-and-a-half feet, four feet, you're hitting that underground well, and, of course, your feet are in it.

SM: Did a lot of the soldiers get trench foot or anything else?

FC: Yes, of course. One never really knew, you know, why a guy wasn't with you the next morning, you know. You wouldn't know when a guy left, what took him, whether it was a wound or health in some way, you know. You get headaches, all different kinds of days, you get bad colds, sniffles, and you just can't operate efficiently like that. So, they might pull you out for a couple of hours, ... and then, get you back, depending upon how your squad, company has done that day. It's hard to say. You can't always get a hold of the first sergeants and the company clerk. ... He'll say, "Oh, he'll be back," but he may not be back for two or three months, meaning that he's back in the hospital now. It wouldn't indicate that he's got frozen feet or anything like that.

SM: Do you think you were properly equipped for the weather at the time?

FC: Well, apparently, not as well as the Germans were. The Germans, you noticed they always wore boots. They weren't shoes, they were higher boots, you know, and were waterproof. Well, see, they had been the specifications for their uniforms, and so on, and they had a long period of time to develop those. They had been training for ten years, at least, before they opened up in 1939. They had a history of [military preparedness], with the maneuvers that they went through and the training, where here, [in] the United States, it was, "Well, what we think is the best." ... The best [for footwear] was a sole and a heel and just protect your ankle, so [that] you don't break your ankle in walking over rocks and bogs and stuff like that--keep your feet. With the Germans, they had the boots for the water and the warmth and continuing [to fight]. We had the eyeholes for the laces and the tongue and water'd come in. Germans didn't have that problem. They didn't have eyeholes in their shoes. They were prepared for it. ... I know a fellow in Whitehouse Station, [New Jersey], that I don't remember what outfit he was in, but he got a very, very bad case of frozen feet. I don't know if he was infantry or what, but I ran into him over at the Veterans Administration and he could hardly walk. ... Outside of his house, there's a bicycle there and he'll get on that bike and he can ride that up to the shopping mall. He can go in there and get a coffee and a bagel, and then, come back home and, later on, have lunch or something like that, but he doesn't go up by car, because he uses that bike for a ride down to get a haircut. ... It's a lot easier on his feet than trying to get into the car, and I didn't know that it was frozen feet until the Mayor of Whitehouse Station told me that she had asked him, one time, "Whatever happened to you?" and he told her it was his feet. ... There's a man down the street from me here, he's dead now, his feet were frozen. ... He would just take short walks around here, not too far from home, but he was anguishing from them. A lot of men, I know, when I was in the hospitals, that they had frozen feet, yes. See, there was no [protection from water]. Nobody had rubber galoshes. ... Well, I'll put it this way; once our feet got wet, you were uncomfortable. Your efficiency was dropping. It was painful with every step you'd take, and some of them were so bad that the toes'd turn black. ... When I say turn black, [Mr. Clark taps on the black microphone stand for emphasis], real dark, and it just destroys all the tissue down there, yes. See, we had to wear the leggings, where the Germans had the boots. [With boots], you didn't have to wear the leggings, the boots came up high enough, so [that] you could walk through wire and stuff that's on the ground level. ... To protect the shins and all, we had to wear leggings, canvas leggings, and they weren't watertight at all. ... Today, I don't know what shoes they're doing today. The paratroops wore longer boots. Their boots were longer, and that got to be almost a mark of, "Oh, I'm in the Airborne." They had these so-called jump boots and that gave them protection on their upper ankle area, and so on, and it sort of set them out as *gung ho* guys

and, "Only the 101st can wear these boots." We had to carry an extra pair of shoes. I had to carry an extra pair of shoes with me, so that if they ever got so bad, that I could take the wet ones and stick them in my duffle bag that was in the company someplace, at the depot, and put the dry ones on. Well, what are you going to do? Some guys would take the shoes and they would [heat them] with a little fire, if they're back from the line and their feet are cold, ... or even if it's during the day. They would build a little hut, like over the top of the foxhole, with branches, and throw a tarpaulin over it. Then, they would take the shoes, the extra pair of shoes, and they would burn them. ... I've seen them sit there with their knife, with the bayonet, and just, as that, the heel on that shoe, was burning, just scrape it, because, if the ash part accumulated, it was smoky. ... If you kept it clean a little bit, as it was burning, you didn't get as much smoke. It was a comfortable fire if you scraped it, versus just letting them smolder and burn. ...

SH: Was that to dry them out?

FC: No, that was ... to give them warmth. Can you imagine that? Because there's snow, you couldn't get some dry wood to burn. This would be a brand-new pair of shoes. ... See, we didn't have gasoline, either, handy, like tankers did, but they could always get some gasoline, though, from one of the vehicles assigned and that would start it, or paper, yes, and that was rather dumb. That was a big problem, though.

SM: Why was that?

FC: Of personal neglect; ... we couldn't take our shoes off, because you never know when you have to go, ... but it just came; it was a hazard that came. It was either that or something else. ...

SM: In terms of the commanding officers, at the Hurtgen Forest, I guess General [Norman] Cota was in charge.

FC: General Cota, yes.

SM: What did you think of the overall strategy, looking back now?

FC: Well, when I was in there, in the forest, in our battles, engagements, all we were aware of was that there's two dams here and we are to advance and protect those dams from the Germans blowing up those dams and, therefore, flooding the Hurtgen Forest area, so that when our heavier armored vehicles are going to come through here, and following up, we infantry, when the supplies keep coming, they're going to be handicapped, because this'll be all flooded. This is what we hear. Scuttlebutt is what we hear. That's all we got, scuttlebutt, yes. [Editor's Note: "Scuttlebutt" is a military slang term for gossip.] We never got to get the exact facts and reason. To the best of the officer's knowledge, he would tell us, ... as best he could, what he knew was coming about. So, now, looking back, I often wondered why they didn't bypass that area. You know, if there's a road down here and you can't get through it, there's traffic, well, here, naturally, you would think, "Well, I'll take a different route." "All roads lead to Rome," [laughter] no, that's what it is, and why was it that we had to? because we knew that there was a history of divisions in the Hurtgen Forest. ... That much we knew. We saw the casualties and we saw the

other divisions that came in here prior to us and we saw the remnants of their equipment in Schmidt and in Vossenack. We saw remnants of vehicles there that weren't retrieved yet, and we could tell, from just looking at the bumpers on the cars, what divisions were there. ... So, we had our time there, but I often thought, because you have plenty of time after the war to think, "Gee, whiz, why did we butt our head against the wall? You know, all you had to [do was] open up a door and go through the doorway, a different way to get in, in through the wall. Why did we have to go in [and] protect those dams that way? We could have went around them and encircled them, because the Germans were all sitting there. Everything was zeroed in. They knew what the terrain looked like." ...

SM: I guess they had the better positions.

FC: And they had everything from the height of their position. ... Well, they'd been there before, but, if you're going into something that you've never been in before, you don't know the distance, you don't know--there's so much you don't know. They knew, they had maps, and we had maps, too, but we didn't know that they had that kind of a detail, like the Germans had, but we got very, very little. All we'd get was, "This is what we're going to do today. This is our objective and we're going to strike off at 0500, and then, we're going to make it to this grid," and we just got news of what we were to do and not why. We're just told (that one of?) the dam; "Why?" "Well, so that the earth remains still passable by heavy equipment."

SM: What was the highest ranking officer that would be down there on the front when you got there? Would it just be a lieutenant?

FC: Mostly second lieutenants, ... occasionally, though, you'd run across majors, ... on the battalion level, you know, yes. The company was asking a little too much to expect to see a captain around or a first lieutenant running around, because he's got so much there, other [areas of responsibility], but the Major was about the highest officer that we would see, because that's fast action, you know. ... Sometimes, you'll think, "Well, General Cota will visit this group." Those guys are always watching who's going forward and who's going back. They're getting all those reports and they can't be away from their responsibility to steer [things] where help is needed. Once in a blue moon, you'd run across a major, very seldom, if ever, see a colonel, very seldom, captains. Well, you're beginning to expect a lot on a captain, but the highest ranks that I ever remember encountering alongside of us, with us, nearby, was a major and that was exceptional.

SM: What do you feel was the biggest danger? Was it artillery or snipers? Were there mines?

FC: Oh, yes, there were mines, because that was the most serious one for the infantry. Why? because we were the first to go through, and the Germans, being tired of retreating and attacking and retreating and attacking, some of them would mine. ... Who's going to determine that there's mines there? Well, casualties [are] going to tell you that, and then, the engineers'd have to come in and see where they are then, but my [answer is] ... artillery, because artillery was cheap, yes, but mines were devastating. ... See, when the ground is hard and frozen and cold like that, it doesn't go for easy digging, but a lot of the mines would be underneath a pile of brush or leaves or something. ... Going through a wooded area, though, was always preferable than to walk

through a field to get to where you're trying to go, try to get close to them, because the roots would interfere with ... the bursting of the explosives. Say the Germans put mines in here; usually, it would be in a field, as against in where there's roots, because there wouldn't always be snow or leaves where they wanted the mines for their protection of their position. ... We would never know it until somebody triggered it, set it off. Just like these guys now today and the explosives on the sides of the road, they don't know they're there. [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark is referring to improvised explosive devices (IEDs), roadside bombs used against American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early twenty-first century.] Some of them are in the ground, some of them are on a mound, just a pile of snow, or a pile of sand here [in Iraq or Afghanistan]. You don't know. Everything's not flat, but we didn't run into too much of that, though. I think it was artillery.

SM: Artillery.

FC: Yes.

SM: Could you distinguish the sound of the "eighty-eights" and everything? [Editor's Note: The German eighty-eight-millimeter artillery piece was a renowned antiaircraft and antitank weapon.]

FC: Yes, but, well, the "eighty-eights," ... they were primarily antiaircraft, and then, they discovered that the "eighty-eights" could also kill a tank, because of the armor piercing ammo. Yes, you could tell the difference between artillery, because, when you hear, most of the stuff that we would hear over the din of the noise--and it was very, very, always extremely noisy--this ear is hearing something and this ear is hearing something, too. You could always hear a mortar, because you would hear the, "Whompf." ... The cut would be short distance and you could hear the noise it makes leaving the barrel, "Whompf, whompf," and then, of course, you'd hear the explosion, but the mortars always go up, and then, down. Very seldom will the mortars go up and over, very seldom. They are designed to go up and down, and in place of a rifleman, ... because it's too dangerous for a rifleman to do that. So, they fire the artillery. Artillery, you'll hear the [multiple blasts]. Artillery seldom fires once. Mortars generally fire once, ... but, with artillery, they usually will have six, seven, eight, twenty artillery pieces of different caliber plowing away at their targets. [laughter] ... Yes, you can hear them, and then, there was another form of artillery that came into being, that was very popular, ... the rockets, the rockets that were introduced by the Germans in the late autumn and fall in '44. [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark is referring to the German *Nebelwerfer* rocket artillery, nicknamed the "Screaming Meemies" by US forces.]

SM: They would shoot those at you.

FC: They came out en masse. You know, if you've ever looked at a picture in a newspaper which says, "Hey, here's a housing development, and they have all of these things on the roof to get solar energy," and you take a look at that and you see that the whole roof is covered from one end to the other, ... that's the way these rockets were fired. ... The centers were the width of the wall over there, from that corner over to this corner, the center, and it would be almost like fifteen to twenty, maybe, rockets are going from this little space. ... Naturally, they're only

going to go just so far and they're going to smother that area, wherever they land. It's going to cover, cover, cover, where artillery would come here, there, yes, ... and the noise that they made, it was scary, frightening, because you know what's coming in. ...

SM: Would they do this at night or was it more of a daytime action?

FC: Mostly in the morning.

SM: In the morning?

FC: ... In the early morning, ... oh, hours before it gets daylight, to soften everything up, and that's where the Germans had the advantage in them backing up [into] their territory, where they didn't have the advantage throughout France and Belgium, and so on. The American advance was able to speed up and go through faster [then]. When they met opposition would be in Western Germany, where they're defending the "Fatherland," and who knows? maybe their great-grandfather's farm is being destroyed here. They had that [motivation], plus, they had the knowledge of where everything was, how that land looked like. We were just second guessing. We had maps, but the maps were not down to detail, you know. It was like having a roadmap, even here, to find your way to get to, say, Atlantic City. Well, we'll see there's going to be nitpicking, there's all these little towns. God, you'd never know we had that many towns between here and Atlantic City. That's the way the Germans had them. They had them like that. The ones that we had, it was more like this, yes, "What's out here?" yes.

SH: [laughter] Just major towns noted.

FC: Yes, yes.

SH: Was there a lot of fighting within the towns?

FC: Excuse me?

SH: Did you fight a lot to hold different cities or towns or crossroads?

FC: Yes, yes, that's right. That's why it was ... always so dangerous when you're new coming into a combat situation, where you have replaced somebody, that somebody has to be the sacrificial lamb. He has to be out there. ... Somebody has to be out there and wait. So, they would usually have a guy that is new [take the point], because nobody wants to be out there. We want to see him, know that he stepped on a mine or he's [got] sharpshooters seeing him. ... So, therefore, it's a place that only fresh people go, and then, gradually, then, they end up in the back, and the first thing you know, then, they'll become a corporal or a sergeant, because they have experience now. ...

SH: That happened with you.

FC: No, no, [laughter] but I wasn't always the number one man. Yes, I was number one man for, oh, I think about the first three or four situations that we had, and I was glad to become the number four.

SM: Did you ever have any weapons malfunction or run out of ammunition, or have trouble getting supplies through?

FC: No, no, because I carried my cartridge belt and two bandoliers, [a belt used to carry cartridges and hand grenades], all the time, and whenever I lost a bandolier, fired that off, there was always [another]. It was quicker. It was just like, almost, a big pocketbook, you know, on a strap that took no space and dangled. ... Of course, there was always a load of bandoliers available to us, yes, and we never had any real shortage, because we always [carried ammunition], if we weren't [otherwise occupied]. Now, we also had to carry a lot of mortar shells with us, because the mortar shells were very, very helpful to the infantry guy, because they could use the shells up fast and they could no longer always carry their own loads, because of the rates they fired them. They needed a little help here and there and that's where, ... many times, the Lieutenant's vehicle, his jeep, would be used, for transporting that. He always had plenty of stuff ... in that jeep, yes.

SM: How reliable were the rifles? Did they have to be cleaned like the M-16s today?

FC: Well, yes. There were very, very few malfunctions, because we took care of them, if we could, you know. It's like skipping the pill today because you're too busy, you can't [take the time], but whenever you had a chance, instead of sitting down and burning your shoe to keep warm and cleaning it off with a bayonet, that's when you would sit and disassemble [your rifle] and oil it and clean it, so that you're "protecting your protector," you know. We all knew that this was your lifeline, it has to be dependable, and, furthermore, you know, [laughter] after using it, that you've had no misfirings. No, none of them ever wore out, yes, because there was always another one, and, sometimes, you would lose one. ...

SM: Did that happen to you? Did you lose one?

FC: No. At one time, I got rid of one because I had a chance to get a carbine, [a smaller version of a rifle], but, then, I found out that the carbine wasn't for me, no. It didn't ...

SM: I guess that was a lighter caliber.

FC: Well, same caliber, but different loading mechanism. The rifle had a clip of eight and you just opened it and shoved a clip in that, but, with the other, it was like a metal clip that clipped in. You had to have it--I don't know how to best describe it, but the rifle ... had a clip that just held four and four, one left, one right, one on top, one on top of this one, up until eight. ... The carbine, I guess, would have maybe ten rounds in it. ...

SH: You got rid of the carbine and went back to the rifle.

FC: Yes, I got rid of the carbine. That's right, I went back to the [rifle], because, yes, there was no real advantage to it.

SM: While you were at Hurtgen Forest, did you ever hear about Private Eddie Slovik?

FC: Oh, yes, yes, I did hear of him. That's right. I don't know, I think he was in the 112th Regiment. [Editor's Note: Private Slovik, the only American soldier executed for desertion in World War II, served in G Company of the 109th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division.]

SM: Was he? I am not sure.

FM: Or, I don't know, ... he could have been. He was a deserter, or something like that.

SM: Yes, he was the only deserter executed.

FC: That's right, he was executed, yes.

SM: Yes. Did you know about that at the time?

FC: No, over there, no. I just learned that after. I never heard anything about that, what became of that, yes. I think, yes, he was in the 28th, yes. That's right.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay. Are you ready?

SM: Yes. In terms of your physical shape, you said you did not have a lot of training when you got to England. Did the battle get you in shape?

FC: That's a tough question to focus down to. Let me have the question again now.

SM: In terms of your physical shape, as you went through battle, do you think that made you become more accurate with the rifle?

FC: Oh, I see what you mean now. Okay, you got more experience, that's right. You know, you can anticipate a little bit more, about what's going to come next, and it's a learning experience every day, yes, because you're getting better at your job, you know. You're more alert and attentive, you know what to listen for and whose voice it is. Is he the Sergeant, leader, or is it another private directing traffic here or suggesting that you do this, you go this way out? No, you become more apprehensive of [things]. You're a little bit smarter every day. "Hey, if I could survive until today, hey, I think I can survive, then, until tomorrow." You don't forget what you've learned, what you've experienced, yes. So, the more you practiced your job and the more jobs you got, the sharper you were, the more alert you were.

SM: At Hurtgen Forest, how close was the combat? You had bayonet training and everything. Was it more of an up-close thing or over open fields?

FC: No, no. Well, the Hurtgen Forest was really a tree here; there's another tree right next to it, growing up and interfering with its canopy; over here, there's another tree. You can barely walk through it. You could never drive a vehicle through it, unless it was actually carved out.

SM: Yes.

FC: But, the trees were that close ... and they were immune to tank traffic, you know. So, you knew that it was going to be ... a sniper [who] was going to get the first guy in your squad as you're trying to chase the Germans out of there. That sniper is protecting a machine-gun nest or he's protecting a mortar squad. ...

SM: The snipers were a big problem there.

FC: Well, they were the first alerts. They were like the rooster crowing, to let everybody, all his people, know that, "Hey, the Americans are assaulting now," yes, but, on top of all that din, they would always [get drowned out]. If we're trying to force them out of this position, we know that they're going to sacrifice a man to cover them, because, you know, when you hear a shot go off, you don't know just where it came from, but it's giving them a chance, the Germans now, to make their shift in position, ... [perhaps] to move aside and allow you to keep going through, where you'll be led into a minefield, and the sniper, ... he actually [serves as a rear guard]. Well, ... when we're retreating, backing up and falling back, we have them, too, but we don't ... always call him a sniper. A sniper would generally indicate a guy that's just sitting there, looking to pick off one guy, telescope length, a distance away. These guys would be as far as, oh, maybe across the street where that painted curb is from you here, and you would recognize that he can see you, with a fairly good amount of confidence that when he shoots at you, he's not necessarily looking for your head, ... he's just looking to see if he can disable you, hit you anyplace. He's not looking necessarily to fatally kill you, although it's liable to be [fatal], but that sniper, he's not really a sniper. He's covering their retreat, he's covering their chance to enable them to move and do something different, and he's going to slow you down, and then, they can always circle around, or just move sideways, or call in [support]. You'll hesitate, then, they'll have their mortar zero over to you now and take care of the rest of the squad, yes. So, there was a great difference between sniping and shooting, yes, yes.

SM: Would they generally target officers?

FC: Well, from their distance, you couldn't always tell the rank, this or that, but the first guys in the line are usually the ones that are unfortunate [enough] to be number one, but, yes, they would go for rank if they had a choice, you know. They would rather take out the one that is the leader, you know. Yes, they'd go for the sergeant, you know, the one that is directing. They could see [who he was] from the way he's pointing to you and the way he's dressed, too.

SM: Did they take out any of your sergeants or lieutenants?

FC: Well, we've had [losses]. Yes, lieutenants are [vulnerable], because they're more mobile and they're generally always carrying a carbine. Very, very few of them would carry an M-1

rifle and they were, by far, ... with the most frequent ones [casualties], because they would have to ... expose themselves, yes.

SM: Were there a lot of self-inflicted wounds? Did a lot of men go AWOL or anything?

FC: I never heard or saw that in my time, no.

SM: Did you capture any German POWs or anything like that?

FC: Yes, we caught some Germans, especially when they were really disadvantaged; they were already wounded and, therefore, dociled. We'd capture a number of them, but to capture them intact as a viable attacker, no, no. ... Now, most of those that I encountered that were sort of taken prisoner were shell-shocked badly, badly hurt, and that's why they're packing up. The Germans weren't sissies, you know, very, very few of them, unless he was a [non-German]. ... See, the Germans had both the German blood guys as well as men from other subjugated countries, and you wouldn't run into a non-German officer, like, from a subjugated [country], say, from Czech [Czechoslovakia], say from, oh, Poland or one of the occupied [lands], that the Germans had occupied and they put them in [the military]. Usually, they wouldn't be of an officer rank, ... nor would they necessarily be a non-commissioned officer, like a sergeant or that. So, ... those instances were few.

SM: Did you ever disobey any orders or question your orders at all?

FC: Well, in a lot of these instances, we in the squads and platoon levels, we had more experience for the situation that suddenly pops up. Every, almost every, second, you can either have the same situation or something different, and something worse. So, when you have to make a decision, this or that, we know what our objective is. So, the Lieutenant in charge of the platoon, and, many times, he's not a [lieutenant]; sometimes, he's not even a lieutenant yet. He's still a sergeant, because the lieutenants have gone. Yes, they've already been casualties. So, now, the guy that's giving you all these orders is a sergeant, yes, but he's going to be a lieutenant tomorrow when he gets his bars, because he has earned it now, battlefield [commission], ... but, when you know the objective, he doesn't have to command us to do this and do that. He will just warn you, "Watch your right. Watch your right," or something like that. ... A lot of that stuff, I think, stems from movies, that they [portray it a certain way]. No, you're pretty much there, making your [own decisions]. You know where you're supposed to go, you know what your objective is. You know, he'll tell you, "Okay, now, on this one here, we're going to go in that building and I want you to go in one at a time and kick the door down if you have to. Three guys in back, watch him, and then, when he gives you the clear [signal], come rushing in. Be ready for everything, right and left, but don't hit him," because one shot, you don't know whose shot it is from, you know. Go into a building, into a house, sometimes, the Kraut is injured to a point where he can't prevent you from coming in and he can't do anything about you being in and he's just a casualty. You don't know that, and neither does the Sergeant or anybody else know. It's on the spot, you know. It's just, "Keep going, keep going." ...

SM: How long, during the Hurtgen Forest battles, were you doing that before you got any relief?

FC: Well ...

SM: I think that was the longest battle, up to that point, fought by the Army.

FC: Yes. We're given a mission; the mission might take two days to achieve.

SM: Yes.

FC: ... And maybe you won't ever do it, you know, ... because there's so many things that interfere with your hearing it correctly. ... No, it's almost like you're self-propelled, you know. You're doing this thing, you know. "Hey, I'm covered by the guys in back of me. We're all in the same boat. We want to get over there and we're all helping each other watch here." ... They can change a position and say, "Hey, slip some tracers, a tracer clip, in," and to point out where you think there's somebody, and, now, ... it's pretty much you're running your own show, but the shepherd is the Sergeant or the Lieutenant and he's keeping it focused. He's alert, because he knows that, at a certain time, from his briefing, that there's going to be an artillery boost up there. So, you figure you've got to get there by a certain amount of time, because, here, we had to be up there. After they cleared them out, you can go in while they're still stunned and recovering and making adjustments to their defense. It's all free. Yes, there's no hard [rules]. Every minute is different, every minute is different, and the guy that was supposed to be with you, watching you while you're going in there, unfortunately, he's not with you anymore now. He's injured. So, what are you going to do now? The other guy was giving me all the directions--he's not there. So, you're very, very much on your own.

SM: How did you cope with all the carnage and everything, the high casualties? Did you turn to religion or anything at all?

FC: Well, there was no need for turning, but, oh, yes, you become more concerned, more respectful of, hey, [a higher power]. Well, it isn't a case [of turning to religion], because, you know--I don't know. No, I don't think it had any effect on me at all, because, hey, I was always practicing a faith, and so, it was really no different. It was just tougher, and you have no fear for the unknown, and that, I think, ... you'd have to be crazy or so to go through this if you weren't fearless to some degree, you know. ... I guess Hollywood says, [laughter] "Oh, you get faith because of this." ... Well, hopefully, you didn't lose it in this, from that; you gained it. Well, that's [okay; if] you want to say you gained it, you gained it, but, really, you have it or you didn't. No, you're less fearful, and you know that you have a right cause, and so many of your fellow men are doing this, so, it must be. We all are sticking together to do this and accomplish this, because it's expected of us, and so, we do it willingly. Otherwise, you would run into people that would be walking around and going back, deserting, or something, if you didn't have the moral intention and guts to keep going, despite seeing [that] the guy over here suddenly isn't with you. ... You can feel very bad for him, but [you think], "Gee, I'm so glad it wasn't me, that it was in his area." Yes, that's it.

SM: Do you think the bond between you and the other soldiers was what kept you going?

FC: Yes, because you figure misery loves company, and he's watching out for my butt. ... He's protecting me and I'm protecting him, and somebody else is protecting somebody else. ... We're all in the same boat, trying to keep it afloat, and we're going. We're getting closer to our goal and, hopefully, we're winning. Hopefully, we're doing the same thing and we're achieving the objective, what is expected of us. I guess that's one of the major things, "What's expected of you and what has been asked of you and what is your goal today? Did you do your best to accomplish that and did you do it all the way or part of the way?" ... Yes, you always think that what you're doing is right.

SM: Could you talk a little bit about the Battle of the Bulge and the offensive by the Germans?
[Editor's Note: The Battle of the Bulge or Ardennes Offensive began with a surprise attack by German forces in the Ardennes Forest on December 16, 1944, and ended at the end of January 1945 when the Allies reduced the German salient. It was the largest battle ever waged by the US Army, at a cost of nearly eighty thousand casualties.]

FC: ... Yes. Well, in the Battle of the Bulge, that I experienced, was crowded into about ten or twelve hours; well, active hours. Prior to it, on the 15th, which was the day before it started, it was a usual, normal day. We were, so-called, rebuilding strength, recouping, learning a little bit of training, practicing and showing new replacements how to prepare themselves for what's liable to happen. ... We're out in the open, so, we can't do the training in the daytime. We can only do it if we get into a wooded area. ... In the daytime, what do you do when you're building up your strength again and you're in reserve, like we were in the Battle of the Bulge, before it started? We cut wood, burned it to keep warm, formed a cover for our squad to be all together, like Knights of the Round Table, and talked to these people until everybody knew one another. "What is expected of us? What do you do when you see one of your fellows badly injured? Who's going to take care of him? Are you going to walk on and leave him, and leave it up for some other [soldier to do], because you always have a medic with you? ... How are you going to mark this guy's position? Does the world stop because one of us twelve got hurt? What are you going to do?" "Well, do what you can, but, if you can't do it and achieve your directions that you were expected to do and achieve, you have to go for your objective and leave him, because, as long as we're going forward, somebody else will have a better opportunity to ... [treat him]. Sure, he may not make it, maybe if you got him right now, doctored up, but that's it. You're not a doctor. Your job is to do this and that. The medics will do that, or the follow up." Now, that's entirely different on your moving out to another area. You don't leave that guy there, you take him with you. ... That's when your future instructions were to do that. The objective is over. You don't follow that anymore--you can't, because you were given directions to shift. So, when you got directions to shift away from that objective, now, you can take care of that person. So, when you see him, just hope that, if you want to really help him, make sure that the objective is shifted and you can, because, you know, we're not always close like we are here. Our squad might be covering from way up at the end of that court to the back of this court here. There's distance between us, significant distance, over voice and noise, and you can't always hear instructions. You have to slow down or they have to catch up to you to [communicate], you know. ... You're adjusting every second, every minute. So, you do have time, we did have time, during that entrenchment period before the Bulge started, to acquaint these new people [with] what we're doing, and it wasn't always just a private that was injured. Sometimes, it was a corporal or a sergeant that got hit, and so, one of your fellow guys now becomes the sergeant.

He's [in charge], not officially yet, but, within another day, because the Lieutenant's not going to have anybody else ready to lead your squad that you're in because that sergeant's gone. So, you got promotions, but you can't always get a sergeant from another company to come over here, because he has the rank already and the experience. He wants to stay over there, because he knows that he's got good guys with him and he's lucky, he's [survived], so far. His exposures are not quite the same as what yours are, but don't change things. He knows people. ... You're pretty much on your own. ... Well, it's almost like "monkey see, monkey do." That's the intelligence level you need, [laughter] you know, but it has to be "monkey see, monkey do." Yes, monkey do--do what's expected of you, do what you have to do--and so, some people would call it religion, some people would call it luck. Well, it's maybe a little bit of both, and sometimes the luck that you're sharing, a little bit of it, it's bad, bad luck. ...

SH: How many days did you have of this kind of training?

FC: Well, in that area, we must have had ...

SH: Before the Bulge happened.

FC: Yes, before the Bulge happened, close to three weeks, I think, two weeks, three weeks. ...

SH: Do you know where you were?

FC: Let's see. ...

SH: I am going to put it on pause while we look at the map.

FC: Okay.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Can I put it back on?

FC: Yes. That's right. We were in the area around St. Vith. We were certainly northeast of Bastogne. Gee, if I heard some towns mentioned that I might have been [in] ...

SH: Here is Bastogne on this map. St. Vith is up there. You said the 110th was south of you.

FC: The 110th was south of us, yes, yes, the 110th was south. We were [in] the northern part of the Bulge when it started, the northern part.

SH: Okay. You were south of Malmedy then.

FC: Yes, that's right, we were in this area here. See, we're south of, well, I think Malmedy was maybe a couple of miles off of us, ... because the whole time that we were there in that section of the Ardennes, I never had any appreciation of where we were, north and south. All I knew was that Wyltz, W-Y-L-T-Z, [Wiltz, Luxembourg], was where the division headquarters were

and we were maybe parallel, but east of (Holzthum?), and that there were other divisions outside of the 28th that were to our north. ... I never had a map, you know. [laughter]

SH: That is amazing.

FC: Yes, that's right. I would only know that from road signs. ...

SM: When were you called up to the battle?

SH: When did you know that the Bulge was taking place?

FC: Oh, I see. Well, I knew; well, I was on a patrol, with maybe most of the squad that I was in, the night before, on the 15th, and we left in the evening, late evening. It might have been, if I were to take a guess and say, oh, maybe about ten o'clock, [that] we started to very, very slowly head into the German line of defense. We're heading toward that and it was taking us [awhile]. ... We had to just take our careful time. We were going to check and see if there were any activities, vehicles, or hear vehicles, movements, and so, we left and we were, I think, approximately a hundred feet from where there was a nest of Germans. [From] where they were, we were a good hundred feet, ... maybe 150 feet at the most, because we could hear metal closing, like car doors, truck doors. We can hear metal slamming against metal. Now, what in the world was ever written down on the paper, why, the buck sergeant who was with us, I have no idea of whatever he wrote, what was that, ... because, with it being dark, you have no idea of even how far through the woods and all you see all this. ... I just would judge, from living on this court, I wonder, if it's very quiet at night, I might have heard somebody slamming the mailbox on the mail delivery spots back there at night, because it'd be extremely quiet at night in that sector, and so, that's why I figure we must have gotten too close, to about, what, like maybe that distance? That would be approximately something under two hundred feet or so, because, then, you don't hear much. I remember, too, you don't wear your helmet, you have ... a cap on, a knitted cap on, and you could [hear a lot], even between crunching on snow and this and that. ... So, I'd say it might have been about ten o'clock at night that we left our secure area and got this close to the German encampment in front of us, and then, we'd come back. ... Now, how long did we stay there? We must have stayed there, oh, I think, approximately a half an hour, and then, we slowly came back, not knowing whether, as we advanced on to that patrol, ... the Krauts had a patrol out also. ... We didn't want to engage in a firefight, if we could, because it would be very, very confusing. So, it took us a much slower trip. ... It was at least comparable to the slowest that we went, and that we were afraid of maybe meeting a German patrol that moved into an area that we thought was clean as a whistle. So, we avoided them. So, when we got back to our lines, the buck sergeant went into the CP [command post], or the "CT," the tent, [laughter] tented, and the rest of us stood in line, because our cooks had come up with some pancakes. I don't know if they had other stuff there, the syrup for it, but I never used [it], never put syrup on pancakes anyway, but they had marmite cans full of [pancakes], insulated marmite cans, like thermos things, big. ... Gee, I can remember getting a canteen cup with a little coffee in it and about maybe five or six pancakes, had no sleep all night. ... I ate one or two of them and I tucked the rest of them into my field jacket, and I made my way to my foxhole. That hole that I was in was about four feet deep and maybe eighteen inches in diameter and, on the top, ... right across the top of my foxhole was a wire going over to the Lieutenant's foxhole. How far

over? I don't remember, and, on top of that wire covering the foxhole, that is where I always, at night, kept my raincoat, because it kept body heat in and it kept that night dew off me. It kept warmth [in], and so, I can remember, with the pancakes, getting in. I had no trouble finding my foxhole that hour of the morning, ... might have been three-thirty or four-thirty, no, three-thirty, four o'clock in the morning. I got the pancake, had them in the hole, and still quiet ... as could be and the snow was on the ground around me, a lot of footprints, and so, I got in and I got in the foxhole. ... I had my rifle with me and I put the butt of the rifle down in the bottom of the foxhole and it tilted the top part, and then, I put my body on this side. ... I was sitting with this thing in-between my legs and my hiney was resting on this, and this is what was keeping me [supported], giving me rest, so [that] I could go to sleep. ...

SH: The butt of the rifle?

FC: On the rifle, laying, sitting on it, yes, and there were other foxholes out here, further out on the line. As the far out defenders of [our unit], anybody coming in, they would alert us guys up here, because this wire was going across my area to the Lieutenant's [foxhole]. So, I thought it was pretty good safety, because the Lieutenant was close by, yes. He wasn't, "Phew," further, further away, he was close by here more, and I don't know how long I sat there in that position, but I know the safety was on the weapon. ... It was very audible when you snapped it into position and, as I'm in there, now, my head is underground. I can sense footprints, ... almost like a herd of something that's coming. I hear strange noises ... and I don't know what they are. All I can hear [is], because they're stopping, they're going, and then, they no sooner go, then, they stop, and then, I hear sounds again coming. ... How far away that running started, I couldn't tell you, but it was significantly far enough away, [because], gradually, then, I could hear it louder and louder and louder. So, I'm still there with my [shelter], asleep, you know. Now, I'm awake, and seconds go by, after me being awake. ... Oh, boy, I put my hands above my head, raised the canvas up a little bit, looked. There's a Kraut there, closer to me than you are right now.

SH: We are talking about two feet, three feet.

FC: Maybe a foot from the rim of my foxhole, maybe a foot away from my rim, and he is there with a [weapon]. Now, I don't know who's responsible for all this noise, because this guy is crouched, bent over. He's not upright, he's crouched over, because he's still moving. He's still ready to take another way. He's not stopping, you know. He's got that position for a considerable amount of time, I figured, because I can hear it coming, and then, he stops, and then, him and other [guys]--maybe many, many more other guys. That was the first signal that this was something that's going to raise a big problem, and that I'm now convinced, when I look, because you didn't have far to look, and it's still pitch dark, I can see this big German tubular thing that they carried on their left shoulder, like a gas mask protection thing. He's got one of these little, ... almost like an (ATV?) gun. He's got [that]. It's a wire handle on it, typical of what tankers used, and so, he's got this thing, and I could see that in his hand, his left hand. ... Now, I'm looking at the tank, "Gee, that's a [German tank]," because I don't think any of our tank outfits, at that time, had that type of a short, stubby gun. They might have. I didn't know, but at least from my basic training, no, I don't remember any American tanker ever having that short thing. Sure, he had a pistol, I knew that, but these Krauts had this thing that was very, very abbreviated, no long stock on it or anything. I'm baffled at that. [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark may

be describing the German MP 40 submachine gun with a folding stock, often used by tank crews as a personal firearm.] When I see it's a Kraut, I was afraid to [Mr. Clark makes a clicking noise], take the safety off, where he could have heard it, and so, I just stayed there. Now, he's moving. Now, I'd look and I could see more people further away. There could have been another guy on the other side of the foxhole, I don't know, but I didn't know what I could do. I couldn't get the safety off or this guy, when he's crouched there with me, he'd have heard it. I was going to get ready to let him know I was there, and then, he disappeared. Now, I'm thinking, "What am I going to do? ... This is an attack. How did he get by our first line of protection to my rear, where I was last night, and beyond? How about those guys in the foxholes in the back? They didn't alert us." Well, I could see why now. These Germans had an objective and they weren't going to do anything to slow down their objective. Their objective was for them to advance and intermingle and get past [our lines], into us, as far as they could, before daylight. So, I thought, "Well, there was no alerting, shooting from back there. I can't get the safety off or this guy's going to hear me." This is all compressed into, like, eyelash time, ... you know, blinking time, plus, over a good night's sleep, you know. ... Then, I see he's going for it, and I see all the long group of others moving. So, I thought, "Well, I'm not going to alert anybody, because all he would have to have done would be just drop a grenade and I'd have it," and as well as all the other guys. ... I would say all of this transpired, from the time that that German got here and he woke me up, if it was twenty or twenty-five seconds, or thirty seconds, it was a long time. It was that [quick]. I had to really figure, "What is expected of me now, to do this?" Somebody up ahead, when these guys moved up further, opened up. When they opened up, everything happens. God, ... these Germans were spraying everybody, and it wasn't long until some of them were disabled, ... but everybody else in the foxholes now is getting alert. ... I don't know how they ever sensed that these guys were Germans or [ours], because I never got a chance to review that with them, you know, and so, they advanced. Now, we're all getting up out of our holes, because we can see that these fellows that did the initial shooting, they have captured some of these Germans coming through. ... So, now, the rest of us got up out of our holes and we saw, "Oh, boy," and the Germans were going, very, very nervous, they were [Mr. Clark points at his watch], pointing at the watch, pointing at the watch. ... The only thing that meant was, we figured, "There's going to be a big artillery barrage." That's why those Germans wanted to get out of this area and get in as far as they could into the American positions, so that they would be like the enemies within you and scattered all around you. Then, they can open up, but artillery then was [coming], but, boy, I remember, I had a watch and I can remember almost, like, seven o'clock or eight, I think it was something like [that that the barrage began]. Well, it was on the hour, anyway, whether it was seven or [eight], because this was winter now, and we know, here, it gets dark in the morning ... when I got out and get the paper.

SH: Sunrise is at seven-fifteen at this point.

FC: Yes. So, that's when everything hit the fan, and they had captured about seven or eight Krauts. A couple of them ... had to be dragged away, and, now, the Buck Sergeant is over at the Lieutenant's foxhole and they're making reports to battalion, what happened here, and so on, and we had a gathering then, "How are we going to [proceed]? What are we going to do now?" waiting for instructions. The Lieutenant and the Sergeant said, "Well," they said, "we've got about six or eight Krauts and we're going to march them back," and, of course, then, he says, "And I tell you, men," he said, "these prisoners are going to go back; no shortcuts." He was

giving them explicit knowledge that there was not going to be any summary justice being done, because some guys [GIs] were survivors of where they had lost their good friends that they knew, ... but the Sergeant was very explicit in that. He was taking them back to battalion, to turn these guys over, these Krauts. ... When that artillery came in, I was glad that I was still in the foxhole, because the German prisoners were jumping into the latrines. [laughter] They were jumping into the latrines, ... to get away from the flat surface, and, yes, I remember that. Now, all day, things were, oh, so confusing. They were the only Germans we saw coming through our section, because it was all trees and so close together, more like these chairs here, yes. There was just a little bit of space that you could walk through, ... but there was no armor coming through, because they couldn't come through. It was just infantry that came through. Now, they may have come in from somebody on our flanks, and then, [infiltrating] way, way up, leaving room, possibly, that another [unit can] ... come in from elsewhere into our area, and they then made a turn and came back up. Who knows? but it was just a confusing day, that all we did was reorganize and defend and form a line of defense, because there was endless numbers of armed Germans coming up a road. ... I remember them saying that the troops, the German troops, were quite a mixture of men, from young men, boys, almost, to foreign troops, other than German, intermingled with some German soldiers. ... So, they retreated when the artillery barrage settled down, and we got up and put plenty of fire on them, and then, those Germans retreated and were going to take another path on their forward advance. So, the rest of the day, it was easy for us. We had very, very little to do. It was try to reorganize, and then, as night came on, we took that same position that we did when we saw the first mixture of ... young Germans and older men, from [other countries?], that couldn't understand any language. They were sort of just cannon fodder, and so, we were in a defensive line where these men were stopped and we re-assumed that same defensive position in the evening, in darkness, heavily wooded, and then, we got splattered with rockets again. ... Then, after the rocket attacks, why, I don't know what happened. I wasn't with them anymore. I got hit in the shoulder and in the leg.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Let us go ahead then. You were just telling us about the barrage, the rocket attack, and how you were hit. Please, restate that.

FC: Yes. The *nebelwerfers* came out, those German rockets, and they just saturated the area and there were so many tree bursts all around. I was wearing an overcoat and a field jacket underneath the overcoat. My pack was on my back, on top of the overcoat on the outside, and I had my shovel in the pack and I had a lot of protection. Good thing I did have all that on my shoulder and back, [laughter] because I was lying down in a prone position, up as close to that tree base as I could, and I then had to get away from there after I got hit. ...

SH: Where were you hit?

FC: I was hit in the shoulder and in the left leg, and so, now, I had to crawl away from there, because I was going to take a route down to the battalion aid station and I had to [get there]. Of course, ... with the snow on the ground, it was pretty easy, because it was slippery. I kept my rifle with me and I got over to an intersection on the road, which was nearby, and I was questioning some GIs there who had halted me. I said, "Where is the battalion aid station?"

Now, mind you, I'm crawling this [way], and with my rifle, and I'm pulling myself up and dragging on my belly, and so, they directed me, and ... good thing I kept the rifle, too. That's why I kept it. I needed it to help me propel myself. ... When I got to the battalion aid station, it seemed like it took me a good half an hour to get there or more, very lengthy, and, when I got there, I didn't even recognize [it]. There was no signs out, this or that, naturally. About all I could tell was from the vehicles that were outside. There were jeeps with litters on [them] and some red cross vehicles that weren't ambulances, but there was a red cross, like an intermediate between a jeep and the ambulance. ... Of course, it was brightly illuminated when they opened up the door and they dragged me in. ... I can remember the guy grabbing a hold of the rifle and he said, "Oh, God," he said, "don't ever bring people in here with a rifle," because, [when] they pulled me in, I had the rifle, because all around us were the Krauts. They didn't want them to then think, "Hey, they're not doing anything according to the Geneva Convention. We're free game," this and that. So, they hauled me in and started to work on me. ... So, I remember, I was laying on the floor and the guy next to me had his arm off. I thought, "Well, at least I kept mine, I was able to get here." ... So, then, they evacuated us and got us into the village. I don't remember the name of the village. Of course, there's so many little, small towns, you know, that all had local names, that don't even get on the map sites. ... I remember when they were hauling us in and had to say, "Be careful now. Keep your hands in, because these walls are saturated with glass particles, from explosions and all, and they're narrow and you'll get further inflictions of glass cuts," and so on, and so forth. So, that's about all I remembered on that.

SH: Was it a hospital or was it in a building?

FC: That was in, like, ... it had to be like a small office, no, maybe not a small office building, but ... it was ground level, almost, ... but the hallway, that I can remember, and the stairway they had. There was a stairway in this building that they were transporting us into that appeared to be lengthy. I guess it was maybe an old, like, Victorian style house or so, but there I was. Now, that was the night of the 16th of December, and then, I think a couple of nights later, ... Bastogne was sealed off and, when I was in Bastogne, I was sewed up and put in a cast. ...

SH: Was that where the building was where they first had you?

FC: No, this was in ...

SH: They moved you from that little building.

FC: They removed me from that little collection building that we were in.

SH: They took you to Bastogne.

FC: Pushed us into this hospital in Bastogne, and then, the next night, I guess it was probably ... maybe the 18th, they put me in an ambulance and they're going to take me and another patient further back into France--turned out it was, I believe, Paris, or, that next morning, I could see, far out, the Eiffel Tower. [laughter] ... Oh, yes, in the ambulance, going further west from where we were towards Paris--was it towards Paris? Yes, that's right, it had to be towards Paris. Now, this is night. ... They were evacuating me out of that hospital in Bastogne and, lo and behold, as

we're heading in that direction, towards Paris, we're on this road and we see ahead, because I hear the driver of the ambulance, ... there are two guys in the ambulance, the driver and another assistant, they commented about a stream of vehicles coming in with their headlights on, in the night, where, in the past, they would come in with just the dim, painted-over lights. ... There, these are guys coming in [using] just like high beams, and there's so many of them that we had to pull over to the side of the road and give way, because they were hogging the road, and so, I asked the driver. ... Oh, he speculated, "Oh," he said, "it's another outfit coming in." So, I said, "Find out who they are." So, he rolled the window down and asked the guy in the vehicle there, lead vehicle, he said, "What outfit?" and the guy remarked, "101st. This is a gravy train. We don't have to jump." I remember his words like they were yesterday, said, "A gravy train--we don't have to jump." So, we had to sit there and wait until that column of [the] 101st Airborne coming in [passed]. They indicated that they had come in from Lyons, L-Y-O-N, or something like that, Lyons, and where they were on R&R, or not R&R, but they were on rest, anyway. They were on rest, giving them time for recovery before they're going to jump again, and so, there they were. They were going into Bastogne before it was sealed off. So, then, from there, they took us over; now, I don't know whether it was Antwerp or where it was. I think it had to be around Antwerp, because, for them to move, they had to use ... where there's a good port, because still, in France, most of the ports were busy receiving cargoes from, I guess, ships bringing in ammo and fuel and stuff like that, inward, and shipping out had to be from another area. ... German POWs moved us onboard a transport ship. I don't know whether it was a red cross [hospital] ship or not, but they got us over into England, and then, put us on a train to go north. ... I'll never forget, [laughter] I was terribly embarrassed on that British ambulance vessel. They had British nurses and they were dressed almost like a nun would [be dressed] and, in the center of the car, which was designed for--what they were actually using it for, God knows. I guess, they had been using that car many, many times over for other patients. There was a big trough that ran the whole end down, and that was, I guess, ... "unused beer," or what used to be beer, and so on, flowing. [laughter]

SH: Used beer.

FC: Used beer, yes, that's right, used beer, and that came down. ... Of course, now, with being on that thing, I had need for a pan of some sort, you know, [laughter] and this is what embarrassed me. The British nurse brought me a pan and that pan was shaped like a wedge, and I mean a wedge, typical of ... if you had a truck tire and you wanted to keep that truck from rolling backwards, you put this wedge underneath it. That's the slant of it, and so on, the clumsiness of it, ... and then, not only that, but after the service was received, there was no follow up, "paper trail," but there was a cover over it. So, I reflected, oh, gosh, you know, from jokes as a kid, and so on, and so forth, that, you know, rich people don't use paper, they used linens. Well, so, I used the linen. Oh, was I reprimanded, oh. I think I was lucky that she didn't push my head in it, but, then, we were on that train. [laughter]

SH: You knew right away she was not a sister.

FC: That's right.

SH: A nun.

FC: That's right.

SH: They do call them sisters, though.

FC: Yes, ... because she had [a nurse's cap], very, very funny, the shape of her head, as I remember, I think, almost reminded me of the logo ... or the design that the telephone company uses. You know that? Now, that's supposed to be a paper airplane, yes. Well, that's what [it looked like]. The hat was quite vertical and all that, but, anyway, smarty-aleck, yes. ... Well, anyway, it took me up to Scotland, and I didn't know I was in Scotland, but I got there. ... When I woke up, who was in the bed next to me but Malcolm Forbes?

SH: Really?

FC: And from *Forbes Magazine*, and I was with Malcolm then from that date up until November 1st. No, that was from December to ...

SH: Was it almost a year?

FC: Yes, and then, they said to us that ...

SH: Do you know where in Scotland you were in the hospital?

FC: Yes, right up in Firth of Clyde. They put us on the [SS] *Ile de France*, along with a group of British war brides that had young children, babies, in the hospital section of the ship, and there was just a big folding curtain that separated us from them. [Editor's Note: The *Ile de France* was a French passenger liner built after World War I. With the fall of France in 1940, the British took possession of the ship and utilized it as a troopship.]

SH: Wow, really?

FC: We were harmless, we were harmless. [laughter]

SH: What time of year were they sending you back? Was this after the war?

FC: January.

SH: January.

FC: January, yes, January. ...

SH: Were the personnel tending to you British or American?

FC: Oh, the Americans. ... We were in our American hospital up there in Scotland and waiting for the *Ile de France* to come in. ... Well, actually, when we got there, I had a choice to either fly home or come home by boat. So, Malcolm Forbes said to me, "Frank," he said, "I'm going to

go by boat," he said. "Well," I said, "if I don't get stuck with the car fare, I'll go with you." [laughter] So, we came back and landed in New York then. ...

SH: What were Mr. Forbes' injuries?

FC: ... He was a staff sergeant commanding the water-cooled machine-gun and he didn't hear the challenge, "Halt," on that cold winter night when he was checking his machine-gun positions. ... He wasn't quick enough, because he didn't hear the command, with the wind blowing and all. They mowed him down. [Editor's Note: Publishing giant Malcolm Forbes served in a heavy machine-gun unit in the 334th Infantry Regiment, 84th Infantry Division, and was wounded during the Battle of Aachen.]

SH: Friendly-fire.

FC: Cut him across the hips. So, he wore a brace for the rest of his life, and they cut him down, and we got into New York. They took us over the George Washington Bridge to an insane asylum, taken over [by the military]. A certain section was taken over by the military to receive patients. ...

SH: Was this on the Jersey side or New York side?

FC: This was on the New York side, or, excuse me, on the New Jersey side, but across the border, back into New York again, that section of New York.

SH: Near Palisades, that area?

FC: That's right, and Malcolm was living in Englewood, [New Jersey], where his mother and father and his wife were, in Englewood, and, of course, I think it was, yes, [that] he was married at that time, yes. [Editor's Note: Malcolm Forbes was married in 1946.] ... His father [Bertie Charles Forbes] came over to see him that night, because, somehow, his father knew that Malcolm was coming. His father was the publisher of *Forbes Magazine*, and I guess he got wind of it. Anyway, he came over the night that we were there and he went back home and Malcolm said to him, "Now, look, Dad," he said, "I want you to bring me my checkbook," and he said, "I want to play the market." Can you imagine that? [laughter] He wanted to buy some stock. ... Imagine that, I mean, traveling all ... [those] miles in a boat, you know, and, now, he's thinking of making money. [laughter] It's inbred. He's a Scotchman, but that morning, his father didn't come back over, because we were shipped out quicker than anticipated and we left Jersey City. Well, let's see, I guess we were taken, and ... I have no recollection of the ambulance ride down from that insane asylum hospital to the railroad in Jersey City. I have no recollection of that. Anyway, we're on the New Jersey Central Railroad, that came right through Phillipsburg, Clinton, Lebanon, all the way to Jersey City. ... So, as we're somewhere approaching Cranford, which is part of the [train route], that's where I lived, and my parents. I lived with my parents ... before I went in the service. As we're traveling through Cranford or so, Malcolm had bought the *New York Times* from someone at the railroad station. He had somebody buy it. So, he's reading the stock market page and I'm reading the sports page. ... I'll never forget his words--he said, "Doggone it," he said, "I could have made four hundred dollars." I said, "Malcolm, how could

you have earned four hundred dollars?" He said, "The stock I wanted to buy and couldn't went up four hundred dollars, earned four hundred dollars." Now, there's a guy that knows how to make money, like Bloomberg [Michael Bloomberg, current Mayor of New York City, one of the wealthiest persons in the United States], you know, or, who knows? like the Governor, [Jon Corzine]. [laughter] ... So, anyway, we get out to a hospital taken over by the VA [Veterans Administration] in Butler, Pennsylvania, just north of Pittsburgh. ... Malcolm and I are in the same room and people that I'd never met before are coming in to see him, as a courtesy to his father. ... Well, one of them was Edward Stettinius, who was the Secretary of State under Harry Truman. He came in. He was on his way back to New York and he had other stops, I guess, in-between. ... He was in this Pittsburgh area and he made up his mind, he was going to see Malcolm Forbes, because he got word that Bruce [Bertie] Forbes' son was wounded, is in this hospital. So, he came in, and I'm in the same room with him. He was the Secretary of State. He had just concluded some agreement with Mexico and he was very proud of being successful in it. [Editor's Note: Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr., in office from December 1944 to June 1945, led the US delegation at the Inter-American Conference on the Problems of War and Peace in Mexico City in March 1945, which resulted in the Act of Chapultepec.] So, that's okay, Edward Stettinius, and then, a few weeks later, Roy Rogers comes in, with his horse, Trigger, with four rubber boots and a diaper on. [Editor's Note: Roy Rogers was a singer and actor of the cowboy genre who often appeared with his horse, Trigger.] [laughter]

SH: You are kidding.

FC: That's right, absolutely. Roy Rogers arrived on the scene because he's going to entertain the troops on stage in the hospital and, as he got wind of Malcolm Forbes being there, he came up to the room, come up the elevator and ... right into the room, ... because we weren't going to be able to be down where they were going to have the horse go through this thing. So, he had the horse do it in the room, [laughter] and he [Roy Rogers] said to Trigger something so that all he [Trigger] did was [stomp] his foot. He did, like, once or twice. He asked him a question that would fit with, [Mr. Clark imitates a hoof stomping], "One." Then, he asked him another question, and that required two, and the horse went, "Two," [Mr. Clark imitates a hoof stomping], but, anyway, that's how that horse was trained, ... yes, amazing, yes. I can still see those rubber boots on [Trigger] and Edward Stettinius. ... Oh, yes, yes--so, now, it's time to get home, [for the] first time. The president of [the] Pennsylvania Railroad arranges with Malcolm Forbes that he will have a roomette on the Pullman to New York City. [Editor's Note: Martin W. Clement was president of the Pennsylvania Railroad from 1935 to 1948. A roomette is a sleeping compartment in a railroad passenger car constructed by the Pullman Company, beginning in 1937.] So, Malcolm said, "Frank," he said, "there's room for you in that roomette," that he said, "Come on with me, ride down with me," and he [Clement] sent a car, a station wagon, up to the hospital to pick up Malcolm Forbes and me and [the railroad] took us into Penn Station [in New York City]. ... There, in Penn Station, was his mother and father and the butler/chauffer, and I don't think the wife was there. I don't think his wife was there. ... So, after I said good-bye to Malcolm, I got to, I think it was the Port Authority. Yes, that's right, it was the Port Authority. I got a bus home, because it was easier to get a bus ride to Cranford than it was to take the train. So, I hobbled off with crutches and Malcolm had a limousine ride going back. [laughter] It was just the opposite. Rank has its privileges, you know, he being a staff sergeant. So, we ended it and got back the same way; we did that twice. ... You would never

know, though, that he [Malcolm Forbes] was of wealth. He was such a nice person, very nice, yes. I encountered him afterwards, after the war. I was married then and had--well, I'll tell you when it was. ... Let's see, Joan, Frank, John, Jimmy, Theresa, Theresa was the fifth child. I had to make up for being overseas, [laughter] and Theresa was born in 1957 and she was two years old, and I couldn't take Theresa into the playground park in the Englewood area. ... Palisades Park was the name of that park, Palisades Park. [Editor's Note: Palisades Park was an amusement park in New Jersey, which operated from 1931 to 1971.] ... So, she had to stay home with her mother, because her mother was expecting again. [laughter] ... Yes, so, as I'm going into the amusement park, and I just picked out that Saturday--hey, it's the day all the kids don't have runny noses--we all go in that day and he [Malcolm Forbes], likewise, the same way [went to the park that Saturday]. ... We met at the entrance and exit of the Palisades Amusement Park, on a Saturday. ... He lived in Englewood, so, he didn't have far to go, because he's right on the Palisades, and I'm, like, twenty-five miles, ... yes, easily twenty-five to thirty miles, that I had to travel--oh, more than that--to get there. So, for us to meet as he's coming out and I'm going in [was good fortune], and I had parked the car and all this and that. ... He introduced me to his mother, again, and his wife was with him this time, and he gave me the tickets that he had [not] used up for his two boys, [Christopher and Steve Forbes] I think, because he got a business call ... requiring his immediate attention and he could not spend it in the park. ... It was more urgent. So, he gave them [the tickets] to me, never forgot, and here I am, right at the thing where the tickets are coming in and out of the window. ... So, naturally, of course, we enjoyed the visit and all. So, I saw him then, and then, when he was running for Governor, I didn't contact him, but I should have. ... That was my own fault. I did not contact him, but I was too busy earning a living. ... By that time, gee whiz, I had six or seven children, and more on the way yet. [laughter] So, I didn't get involved in his political [career]. He was beat by Senator Troast for the Governor position. [Editor's Note: Malcolm Forbes ran for Governor of New Jersey in 1957 as a Republican and was defeated by Democrat Robert B. Meyner. Four years earlier, he had been beaten in the Republican primary by Paul L. Troast, Chairman of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority.] ... Yes, so, I didn't get involved with it ... or else I would have known what stocks to buy. So, then, later on, the last time I saw him, he was being inducted into the ... New Jersey Aviation Hall of Fame in ...

SH: Teterboro? [Editor's Note: Malcolm Forbes was inducted into the New Jersey Aviation Hall of Fame in 1985.]

FC: No, he was being inducted in a clubhouse of a golf course up in Bergen County [in Northern New Jersey], right along the Hudson [River], up there. I forget the name of the place, but I know I had to get on the Palisades Parkway to get up to it, probably just outside of Englewood or that. He was being inducted into that for his ballooning exploits. ... You know, he had the balloons that went over and the Chinese gave him a hard time, because I think his balloon blew a little bit into their air space and all. ... [Editor's Note: Malcolm Forbes was known for using his interest in hot air ballooning as a way of building international goodwill while popularizing the sport in other nations, including China in the early 1980s. He also engaged in an exploration of China by motorcycle and balloon, the subject of the film *The Yin and the Yankee* (1982), which led him into a temporary predicament with the Chinese authorities.] He had just been operated on for a hernia. So, when [this event took place], I was invited by the staff of the ... magazine [*Forbes Magazine*], at Malcolm's request, to attend the dinner, and so, I cut my day of working in half

and drove over to ... that restaurant on the golf course and I met him. ... I always liked whiskey sours made with Canadian Club. So, here was a chance to have some free Canadian Club, and so, I was sitting there at the bar, waiting, and I'm watching all the people that are coming in to attend that dinner and they're trying to make a big fuss over him. ... Then, I couldn't get up to get over to see him, because there's too many [people] around him. So, I poured myself another one and I saw that, as we were getting very, very close to sitting down at the tables, I went over and I put my hand out. "Oh," he said, "if it isn't Private Clark," and I said, "You've got that right, Malcolm." I said, "Thanks for the invite, through your staff," and I said, "How are you feeling?" and he said, "Oh," he said, "I was just operated on for a hernia on Monday," and this is the following Wednesday. ... He felt pretty good, enough to go out and attend a dinner. ... I had a drink in my hand when I went over to see him and somebody saw that this guy can go over and talk to this guy, Malcolm Forbes, and who is he? Is he some corporate giant or what? [laughter] ... Somebody crowded around him and bumped [into me] and I spilled the drink on him, right on to his jacket, pants. ... He [Malcolm Forbes] said, "Oh," he said, "Frank, you're still clumsy," [laughter] because, you know, when you're bedmates, side by side, ... you sometimes spill a lot of food off your plate and glass off your hospital attention things. So, I pardoned myself and we exchanged greetings and I had a comfortable night. Now, as we're leaving the place and heading home, ... I had to go underneath the George Washington Bridge, [connecting New York and New Jersey]. Malcolm had told me previously that he had to go into New York [City]. He's going to stay there overnight, and he had an apartment in the morning. So, as I'm crossing underneath the George Washington Bridge, I'm thinking, "Gee, I wonder what Malcolm's going to do with that suit? Is he going to get it dry cleaned or is he going to throw it away?" and I'm thinking, "Gee, I wouldn't mind taking that to the dry cleaners," [laughter] but there he was, still working. Now, on top of that, you know, you talk about life being this way and that way and the world being small. ... Now, that was around 1959 or early 1960 that this dinner was given. [Editor's Note: Mr. Clark may be confusing his meeting with Malcolm Forbes at Palisades Park in the late 1950s or early 1960s and his meeting at the golf course clubhouse event from the mid-1980s.] ... Now, about, say, it's ten or eleven years after that, I'm on a plane going out to Miles Laboratories, the makers of Alka-Seltzer, and Alka-Seltzer has a tablet that you drop in water and it fizzes and it gets rid of the headache, I guess, they say. ... Well, they [Miles Laboratories] wanted to get something that was more impervious to moisture than what they were presently using. ... I said okay to [the] Miles Laboratory people. I said, "I will come out and I will show you something that I am selling to the Navy, and it is so good as a moisture barrier that this could be a candidate for you," and I said, "The Navy uses this to contain a sonobuoy," S-O-N-O-B-U-O-Y, sonobuoy. "The Navy uses this to hold a sonobuoy." A sonobuoy is about maybe two-and-a-half feet [long] and big around as this [microphone] base here [six inches], and it detects submarines. [Editor's Note: A sonobuoy uses sound waves to detect objects in the ocean.] A seaplane will fly about where a submarine is anticipated, expected to be, maybe. ... They will drop three of them into the ocean, after they take the bag off, and immediately, when those things hit the ocean, they start to broadcast a radio signal. By triangulation then, the position of that submarine that's [anticipated] would be found. Those batteries [in the sonobuoy] are so perfectly dry that no moisture ever gets into them. Therefore, when they go in that ocean ready, they're going to last a long time; they're not half used up. So, that's what I offered to Alka-Seltzer. I'm on the plane and I meet a man that I used to work with in New York City. He's going to Alka-Seltzer, too, and I had a chance then to go over a lot of old things with this man, (Andy Crawford?), who's on the plane with me now. Turns out, when he was a boy, growing up, he

used to play with the Forbes' kids in Englewood. (Andy Crawford?) was born and raised in Englewood. So, double-barrel small [world] there--he was going [to] the same damn place I'm going to and he knew Malcolm Forbes and I knew (Andy Crawford?) from working in New York, small world, small world. [laughter]

SH: Do you think that the medical attention that you got in the military was good?

FC: Yes, yes, excellent, excellent. [For] the days that we were out in [the] recovery hospital in Long Island Sound, the German POWs would transport us out on to the sandy beaches, and that's the first time I ever saw a porpoise. [Editor's Note: The Long Island Sound is an estuary located in the Atlantic Ocean running from Connecticut to Long Island, New York.]

SH: What was it like to have a German POW now taking care of you?

FC: Yes, I'll tell you, they were so [good]. Well, naturally, they were good, you know, but they were the trustees, you know, well screened, you know. I guess any countless number of them, though, could have just as well have been forced labor people, [non-Germans conscripted into the German military], but, yes, hey, ... those guys were living like a king, you know, where, instead of being harshly treated and working in a factory, or this or that, working at a summer resort was great, yes.

SH: What do you remember about the death of Franklin Roosevelt and how others responded to his passing?

FC: Yes, that's right. ... Oh, yes, yes, that's right, I was overseas then, and then, Truman was the successor. [Editor's Note: President Franklin D. Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945.] ...

SH: How did people around you react when you heard of FDR's passing?

FC: No, I would say that, really, it was [not noted]. Oh, well, of course, ... he [FDR] was certainly a great guy and did this and that, ... but, yes, on my level and where I was and what I was doing and involved in, it was just, "Well, gee, it's too bad it happened," you know. I mean, I couldn't pull a handkerchief out, you know, for tears. ... It wasn't political or non-political, it was, well, you know, generally--well, at least I did--I accepted things as they came, figured I can't fight it and do this or that, but it was like losing somebody that was very good.

SH: Did you have confidence in Truman as Commander-in-Chief?

FC: I think I did, because, now, that was in ...

SH: 1945.

FC: ... Yes, 1945. You know, in 1945, I was driving in a car someplace and it was [in] a traffic circle. ... I got [to] driving in the traffic circle and I sort of kissed the fender of another car, because I still had a cast on and, ... in this car, you had to use a clutch to shift gears. I

remember, it was the Plymouth coupe, [laughter] and I'm in the traffic circle and I fender-bendered a little bit, and [that was] when I heard the radio news that FDR had died, yes, yes.

SH: You were still in England.

FC: No, I was in a traffic circle in New Jersey.

SH: Were you?

FC: Yes, that's right. I don't know whether it was at Newark Airport or where it was. ...

SH: You were in the States when the war ended in Europe.

FC: Yes, that's right. I was in the States, yes. ... While Truman became President and I was working, and this had to be--oh, I don't think I could [recall]. I'm cloudy on the years, but, anyway, I'm in the subway in New York City and Harry Truman is in the subway in New York City. ... To my great surprise, then, there were, like, three or four men together in this group of men, one of which was Harry Truman. Now, can you imagine that today, in New York City, in a subway, having three guys protecting Harry Truman? My God, ... hey, they'd probably have twenty cops, with all the electronics, this and that, you know, [laughter] and I can remember that he was preparing to enter a subway car with his [security team]. At least I think there were three other men there with him, and I'm ready to plow in right after [them] and, I remember, I was limited to how close I could get. ... I remarked and said, "Give 'em hell, Harry."

SH: Did you really? [laughter]

FC: That's right. ... Was I working? I don't think I was working, yet. No, I couldn't have been working, no, and I said, "Give 'em hell, Harry," ... yes, and he saw that I was a veteran. ... I remember, too, that he [Truman] had said, "Give 'em hell," because the newspapers had given an unfair opinion of his daughter's position as a pianist and he let them know, [laughter] but I was able to get--well, how close was I? I'd say I was about as close to him as the chair over there, and these other three guys there. [Editor's Note: Margaret Truman used her musical talent to help her father in the 1948 Presidential Campaign, where the term "Give 'em hell, Harry" was coined.]

SH: Six, eight feet.

FC: Now, you know, and him [Truman] taking a subway. Do you think Obama would go in the subway? That's how peaceful America was at that time, you know. There was none of this or that.

SH: Where were you when you heard that the bombs had been dropped in Japan? Do you remember both bombs being dropped or only one?

FC: Well, yes.

SM: Were you still in the hospital?

FC: Yes. I don't remember so much excitement. ... I heard people, you know, jumping up in the streets and this and that and ringing church bells and all. ...

SH: That was when the war ended.

FC: That's right, yes. ...

SH: It was September when the treaty was signed. [Editor's Note: The peace treaty with the Japanese was signed on September 2, 1945, although V-J Day was declared on August 14th in the United States.]

FC: Yes, that's right, because the Japanese bombs went off in August, was it?

SH: July and August.

FC: July and August, and the other one was, what? ... March or April. [Editor's Note: The atomic raids were carried out against Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. Victory in Europe Day, V-E Day, was declared on May 8, 1945.]

SH: April, May, yes.

FC: March or April or May, yes. ... Now, [on] one of my trips back from that veterans' hospital in Butler, Pennsylvania, I came back one time where ... I was unable to take advantage of the Pennsylvania Railroad's station wagon. I came back with a carload of others, one of whom was a young girl that was in the WACs, [the] Women's Army Corps. ... The way they worked it, you drove so many miles, until you got tired, and then, the next person drove, then, the next person. The car never got cool, and so, finally, we did arrive in Cranford and I was let out, ... but on the way there, we're talking about everything, everything, everything. This girl was a Women's Army Corps [servicewoman] and she was an orderly in the hospital out there, and I remember, we were discussing--I didn't know anything about Communism in 1945. As a young person, [Communism] didn't disturb my feathers in any way, but, in that car, I remember there was a conversation going on about politics. ... This young girl, she mentioned that her father was a Communist and she went on to say that, yes, her father had a business in New York City and the business went bankrupt and he [her father] became a Communist. ... I'm thinking, "Gee, here's a man that's in business, and then, he becomes a Communist." Yes, he had gone bankrupt. So, while he was not a Communist, he wanted his own business. Then, after he went Chapter 11, [filed for bankruptcy], now, he wanted to be a Communist and share your profits. [laughter] I often remember that, ... but, jeez, I remember that very, very well. Of course, when you're in the car driving and this and that, you sometimes get woozy, but she's not [boring]. [laughter] ...

SH: You were a captive audience, too.

FC: Yes, that's right.

SM: What was your most vivid memory of the war?

FC: My most vivid--gee, I would say the chaos of the Hurtgen Forest, the chaos there, where the weather was so cold and the area was so dangerous, and, plus, the foolishness of facing the same thing every day in the Hurtgen Forest. You couldn't measure anything in this, because all trees look alike, [laughter] but getting adjusted to that kind of life, where [after] everything that you were trained to do and expected to do, you could still never dream that it was that devastating, where you see nothing but damage, damage, damage, destruction. Yes, I think that was [the most vivid]. Of course, that was the first great, tremendous shock that was blasting for more than just a couple of brief minutes. ... Yes, that was the biggest surprise, that it could be that bad, yes.

SH: Is there anything else you would like to add? I want to thank you very much for talking with us again today. Is there anything that we forgot to ask or that you would like to put on the record before we end today?

FC: Well, I'll just say that it [World War II] was an experience that not many people get a chance to experience, the hardship, that old men dictate that young men are going to do it, fight their battles. Of course, in this case, we didn't initiate it. Yes, we didn't initiate it. It had to be done. I'm just grateful that I've had the longevity that was not made available to a lot of other men. Yes, I'm grateful, and the military took good care of me.

SH: We thank you for your service and for sharing your story with us.

SM: Thank you very much.

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

Reviewed by Jesse Braddell 12/1/10
Reviewed by Sydney Rhodes 12/1/10
Reviewed by Jonathan Conlin 12/1/10
Reviewed by Allison Bittner 12/1/10
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/22/11
Reviewed by Frank N. Clark 6/21/2014