

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THEODORE K. ROBINSON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

G. KURT PIEHLER

and

LINDA LASKO

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TRANSCRIPT BY

JASON RILEY

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Theodore K. Robinson in Rockaway, New Jersey, on August 16, 1994, with Kurt Piehler and ...

Linda Lasko: Linda Lasko.

KP: You said your father had a pre-Depression disaster.

Theodore Robinson: Yes, my father was quite a [guy], ... I wrote up quite a bit about him, and his business failed, and a good deal of the money that he borrowed was ... from within the family, thank God, but there was a lot of debt outside. ... It was just hard to grab a living, you know. We went down on the farm. These houses were up here. At that time, this northern part of New Jersey was an extremely depressed area. I guess, during the Civil War, they had a population of five or six thousand and, by the time 1940 rolled around, it had gone down to less than half of that.

KP: So, your father's business was in this area.

TR: Yes. He had a sand business up in Succasunna.

KP: Who were his major clients?

TR: Oh, I don't know, steel companies, one thing or another. It was shipped out by rail, and I was a very young child at the time, ... but, I went to college. Fortunately, I went to high school in Princeton. West Windsor Township sent their high school students to Princeton, so, I got a good secondary education, but we all lived pretty close to the farms. There wasn't much else, and I grew up with no social graces at all, and I go into that in quite a bit of detail in the book, so, we needn't dwell on that anymore, but I got through Rutgers somehow. [Editor's Note: Mr. Robinson is referring to his unpublished, semi-autobiographical novel, *Mark of the Arrows*.] The first year, we just scraped through. I worked over at the college farm, shoveling manure. [That is] the only thing I know. The second year, I got a tuition loan. The third year, third and fourth years, I got a full scholarship, from something known as the (Treballé?) Fund. Dean Metzger sort of got it for me.

KP: What did you think of Dean Metzger?

TR: Well, I thought he was a pretty decent guy. ... He was an old fashioned man. I'm grateful to him for what he did for me. A lot of students didn't like him, but he was all right. ... He was a kindly old soul. We had this compulsory chapel and it was a weird combination of piety and, "Rah, rah, rah," you know, a strange combination. ...

KP: People have commented on his prayers, that he emphasized it quite a bit.

TR: Yes, yes, yes. ... Then, Harvey Harman, the coach, got me to tutor football players who were getting low grades in economics and I did very well at that, became pretty close friends with them and I got them all through. Then, ... the last year, I became undergraduate assistant in the

Economics Department, Professor [Eugene E.] Agger. ... Again, there was nothing for a social life. I never went to any dances or any affairs or anything. I never had a date. [laughter] ... Mary, if you don't want to hear this ...

Mary Robinson: I'd better go. [laughter]

TR: You'd better go, ... but, I got to be quite a man on campus in the academic circles, nevertheless. I used to grade papers. I think I had about five or six different economics courses and, when students wrote silly stuff in their paper, I wrote very sharp, caustic comments on them. I remember Dr. [J. Wilner] Sundelson said the students would be disappointed if they didn't get a ... paper back from me saying, "This page stinks," you know. ... So, I got through pretty, fairly well, but, even in 1939, with the Depression on, I think we were just beginning to climb out, but the Selective Service Act was passed. [Editor's Note: The Selective Service Act of 1940, passed in September 1940, required all twenty-one to thirty-five-year-old males to register for the draft, beginning that October.] I hadn't taken Advanced ROTC. I had to cut corners somewhere, so I was going to cut corners buying that book. Anyway, [the] course, it was only a credit-and-a-half instead of three credits, so I said, "What the hell? I'll go." There wasn't going to be any war anyway. You know, we were going to stay neutral. Participation in another war was unthinkable for us.

KP: There are two things that I was struck by in your novel, but also in a lot of the interviews I've done so far. One was how really grinding the Depression was.

TR: Lots of times, I went several days that I ate nothing and I had this old Ford, I used to commute back and forth.

KP: From West Windsor, the farm in West Windsor?

TR: Yes, until the farmhouse burned down, and, even then, there was an old wagon out and I'd stay there, with my brother, until it got cold. Then, I'd stay with Leon during the cold months, but I had this old Model-A Ford, had two different ones. Of course, the radiator leaked and I had to know the locations of every stream along the way because I had to keep a can of water there and stop at every stream to fill up the radiator and go on, you know. Yes, it was grinding, absolute grinding. Nobody these days has any concept of what it was like. I don't know whether you saw it on PBS, they run that *Great Depression* series several times. In 1937, Roosevelt decided to cut back on various things and the Depression became almost as bad as it was in '31, '32. It was just horrible. If I hadn't had the ability to teach as I did, tutor these guys, if I hadn't had that economics assistantship, I'd have never gotten through, but, as it is, I got through with [that]. ...

KP: How do you think your college years would have been different if there hadn't been a depression?

TR: Well, I think I'd have had some social life. I'd have probably got married some time in my life. I always thought very keenly. My mother had been quite a person, you know. ... She

graduated Cornell University, Class of 1907. She taught in the normal school, and then, she taught in the Brooklyn Training School for Teachers. It was Maxwell [Teachers Training] College back then. It's long gone, I guess. She had quite a career. Then, she married father. Father's great trouble was that he'd had a terrible affliction. He had had smallpox and tetanus within about five years of each other and it just wrecked his nerves, really. Well, anyway, I got through college and I looked around. The job situation was impossible and, soon, the word "draft status" came up. When they drew numbers, I drew a low number. So, I volunteered and I went in the very first week of Selective Service.

KP: Now, you were drafted from West Windsor.

TR: Yes, I was, the very first week of Selective Service. I was eventually assigned to the 518th Military Police Battalion on Governor's Island in New York. Now, that was a lucky thing. I wasn't very good as a--the military police battalion was mostly a drill outfit for the benefit of parades for General Drum, General Hugh A. Drum, who was Commander of First Army, and all the troops there, but I didn't do very well at that, and, after eight months there, I was still a private, didn't even make PFC. Ralph Campbell, who'd been Director of Placement at Rutgers, came on duty in the First Army Headquarters in the adjacent general section. So, I went to see him and he got me transferred to the Army Headquarters in the finance section. I'd say quartermaster, but it was the finance section. Of course, I went all through the First Army maneuvers, got good and sick down there, as I described. Now, General Drum was the chief of staff to General [John J.] Pershing [in the First World War] and he was building up this enormous headquarters with the idea that he was going to lead the troops to Europe, but he did very poorly down in maneuvers. He had this idea of a tank destroyers outfit. You know, you could always knock out tanks, because tanks would be limited to roads if they blocked the passes, rivers and so forth, and all they had to do was get these mobile tank destroyers and come up there and whack the hell out of them. Well, the concept failed miserably on maneuvers. George Patton came in, roared into his headquarters and took him prisoner and stopped the whole maneuver. So, General [George] Marshall marked him as one of the ones that was going to go. So, he had this enormous headquarters in anticipation of going to Europe. They told him he wasn't going to go anywhere. He'd get rid of his headquarters and took the troops away from him, too, all the divisions, but he got a great big allocation for Officer Candidate School for the whole army. The army was gone. He kept the allocations, sent everybody who'd gone to an officer candidate screening board to OCS and I got into that. Now, I got through the screening board. I got to be a sergeant there, but, of course, it was a clerical job. I got up in front of this screening board and here were these tough old majors and lieutenant colonels and they said, "Well, you don't show anything in your Army service that indicates you have any leadership ability, so, what have you got?" Well, I had a letter from Harvey Harman and Harvey Harman described what I'd done for these football players, how I got their trust, improved their grades and got them to pass. I'd taken a lot of them on and he'd only paid me for a few and I'd taken a lot of extra on, and how I'd done this wonderful job and they all liked me so much and I was such a leader. That's what got me through the screening board. I wouldn't have gotten through without that letter from Harvey Harman. That's a lead pipe cinch. So, anyway, I had this big quota and I went to Quartermaster Officer Candidate School, Camp Lee, [Virginia]. I got through.

KP: In the novel, you had a hard time in the Great Depression. In the novel, one of the points you make is how many of the recruits you came across were in ill health and how illiterate.

TR: Oh, dreadful, dreadful, dreadful, dreadful. At one time, the Army was discharging more people than they were taking in. Not only were they physically unfit, but they were psychological cases. I went for one month when I was at the replacement training center in Fort Lee in this motor training course. I was attached to a company and I saw a whole lot of them come in. Gosh, some of them had broken thumbs, couldn't walk, some of them had hernias, some were deaf and some were half blind and you'd see them out there huddling around in the parade field. It was dreadful. Then, I went down to 30th Division. It had been broken down to a cadre. The division had come in when they federalized the National Guard. They simply broke it down and started all over again. They got rid of the division commander, who was National Guard. Of course, they reorganized from a square division to a triangular division. That is to say, he used to have four regiments of infantry and the triangular division had three regiments of infantry. The quartermasters had been a regiment at one time--they broke it way down into a company. They took away from the quartermaster the function of motor maintenance and transferred that to ordnance.

KP: So, at any rate, the Army took this nationalized National Guard unit and really didn't turn it into a regular Army division in any way.

TR: Yes, but most of the division staff and most of the battalion commanders were National Guard. They were the best there were, too.

KP: So, in other words, your experience was that the National Guard really performed well.

TR: Well, the officers in our division were National Guard people. At the end of the war, Colonel S. L. A. Marshall wrote a letter to [Major] General [Leland S.] Hobbs, who was commanding general, saying that General Eisenhower had asked the Historical Division of the ETO [European Theater of Operations] to write [evaluations on] all the infantry divisions in the theater. They did and they rated the 30th Infantry Division as the number one division in the ETO. The battalion commanders were all National Guard. They were able people. The division staff was National Guard. My boss, the division quartermaster, was National Guard. There were people who'd been successful in their lives and they weren't hidebound by a lot of silly traditions. Yet, they were good military men, in the good Southern tradition, descendants of the Army of Northern Virginia, if you will, but they were good, humane people. Colonel Frankland, G-4 [division logistics officer], for example, I described him in great detail, Colonel [Thomas P.] Van Noppen, my boss, the division quartermaster--I was brought up without a father and they were a father to me if anybody ever was. They taught me how to operate, how to do things, how to get along with people. Instead of bringing somebody in and balling them out, Colonel Frankland would point out, "Well, now, I wouldn't do it this way if I were you. If you do it this way, [such-and-such a thing] is going to happen. If you say it this way, [such-and-such] is going to happen. Now, this is what I'd do if I were you..." He taught you. Colonel Van Noppen did [it] the same way. They knew how to operate; the same thing as the battalion commanders. They were the very best of what was left of the National Guard. Now, of course, when the division came in the

federal service, they had a lot of "eight-balls" in it. The first division quartermaster, for example, couldn't read a map. He was disposed of. Of course, the commanding general of the division was likewise disposed of. ... When I got there, General Hobbs was there.

KP: Now, was General Hobbs regular Army?

TR: Yes, he was, West Point, Class of 1912 [1915]. He was the class of General [Omar] Bradley and General [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. He had a very able assistant division commander, General Harrison, General William K. Harrison, the man who negotiated the truce at Panmunjom [ending the Korean War in 1953], eventually, a very able man, and he was responsible for the training. He was very religious and he practiced it, too. He wasn't afraid of anything, right up at the front lines. Well, anyway, I was posted to the division and I was the last surplus. They were authorized an over strength of fifty percent, second lieutenants, and I was the last one to come in as a surplus second lieutenant. They formed this special training unit to try to see what they could do with all these "eight-balls," physically handicapped and illiterates, that came in. They formed the special training unit and they had people who were school teachers, and so forth, come in and try to teach these people, and so on. It was under the overall command of one of the battalion commanders of the 120th Infantry, Hugh Mainord, who'd been chief of police in Jackson, Mississippi. He was quite a man, he really was, but I was supply officer. My job was to get everything that could possibly be gotten.

KP: Before leaving this, you mentioned you were part of the special training unit for the people who were illiterate.

TR: Yes, I was assigned to the quartermaster company and placed on special duty.

KP: You mentioned that a lot of them couldn't even make it even with the special training.

TR: That's right. We discarded eighty percent of them.

KP: But the twenty percent that did make it, how important was this, you think, to their lives?

TR: I think it was quite important. One guy who made it, a little Jewish guy, he was a tailor. I guess he sort of made it because Colonel [Hammond] Birks, of the 120th Infantry, was a great, big man and he tailored his stuff, but, to get ahead of my story a bit, we got down to the Battle of the Bulge. [Editor's Note: The Germans launched the Ardennes Offensive, later known as the Battle of the Bulge, on December 16, 1944.] They didn't have any footwear or anything. This little guy devised something called booties. You take spare, ... old blankets, and he made little boots of them and the soldiers could put them in their galoshes. It saved an awful lot of--Colonel Van Noppen saw it and he had a salvage repair unit make a whole lot of them, and it saved a whole lot of frostbite and trench foot and so on. He made it. Some of them made it. Some of them got discharged later on. By and large, I don't know whether the effort that was put into it was worthwhile or not, but, at any rate, the effort was made.

KP: You were teaching people how to read and write.

TR: No, I was supply officer. I didn't teach anybody. My job was to get them the supplies--run two mess halls, get duck boards to put on [the ground], and so forth, because it was all sandy, get all kinds of supplies. I needed more of everything, get ammunition for them to go on the firing range with. I'd go around and I had to beg it from all the various units, and so forth. At the same time, I did my duty as supply officer over at the quartermaster company and got their supplies all straightened out. They were a mess. We had to bust the supply sergeant over there, who didn't do any work, and I had to train a new one, a German-Jewish guy with the name of (Eiser?). He did a bang-up job, wonderful as supply sergeant. So, I sort of ran both things at once.

KP: You had a unit that was a National Guard unit from the South, but you also had a large number of people ...

TR: Oh, they came in from all over the country.

KP: How did that mix go?

TR: Oh, it went very well, went very well.

KP: There wasn't any tension between, for example ...

TR: No, none whatsoever, none whatsoever. Fact, they were--it was the best working team you ever saw in your life. That's why the 30th Division was the best division.

KP: Why do you think it worked so well? Other units with that mix you had would have tension between, say, Southern Christians and New York Jews, and you would have had others. Why do you think your unit was able to mix so well?

TR: I don't know. They were soldiers. They knew what the job was and the officers were all leaders of their community. Now, they [Southerners] had very strong feelings about black people. Colonel Van Noppen did, but, on the other hand, I think they had the ability to, when we were finally situated, to work along with them better than anyone else, but, anyway, they were first grade. Everybody worked along very well. Everybody helped everybody out. At the same time, anybody who was a shirker, who didn't do his job, or wouldn't do his job, out he went. He got reclassified, he got sent out, but anybody who was trying hard, they worked with him and helped him. Colonel Van Noppen came from Madison, North Carolina. He had an insurance business there. Bob Denny had been in the textile business; he was the assistant quartermaster.

KP: The reason for my line of questioning is that several people I've interviewed were with National Guard units. I'll give you one or two stories as examples. One was attached to a Pennsylvania National Guard unit, federalized, and what struck him was that they had four or five latrines for the different grades of officers. He remembered, at one point, he was being strafed, so, he ran. He had to go into a latrine. He went into the officers' latrine that he wasn't supposed to go into and he was yelled at. After a few months, that stuff went out the window.

Another individual said that he once told an officer, "Why don't you discipline him?" and he said, "I can't, because he's my employer when I go back to the community."

TR: Well, I never ran into any of that, never, never, never.

MR: Well, I can remember, in the South Pacific headquarters, those separate latrines.

TR: Well, you always had officers' and enlisted men's facilities.

KP: But you didn't then break it down into different grades of officers.

TR: No, no, no. Gosh, if we got out to field, we all used the same one. So, no, I found them very easy to work with. They were very good to me and good to everybody else. We had people from all over the country, everywhere, division quartermasters, officers. Colonel Van Noppen came from North Carolina, Major Denny came from South Carolina, (Herthel?), two other quartermaster officers, came from Wisconsin, company commander came from Ohio, and so on. The only trouble I had with the junior officers, the officers in the company, was, I came in as the last second lieutenant and I went up to the division quartermaster's office and occupied the captain's slot. These poor other guys, they had no chance for promotion. They had truck platoons and that was it, period. That did make for some hard feelings. The only person who didn't feel so bad about it was our officer, (Bernie Bayliss?). I call him Vernon Brown there. He actually got wounded; he didn't get killed.

KP: How important do you think training was in making your unit successful?

TR: Training?

KP: The training you had in the States.

TR: Oh, important, oh, important. You started off with the individual training in the mobilization training program. As I described in the book, periodically, soldiers would be sent up to headquarters and given a test to see how well they were doing. There were frequent inspections. At the end of the mobilization training, the corps came in and looked over all the outfits to see how the training was, what outfit did well and what didn't. Everybody did very well, with the exception of the ordnance company. The company commander got relieved. It was very sad.

KP: Now, where did he end up going?

TR: He got some post, camp station job.

KP: And this was really viewed as the end of his career in the Army.

TR: Well, it was regarded with disgrace, anyway. When he knew he was going to be relieved, for example, he just stayed in his quarters and wept and cooks would bring him in food, and



things of that sort. Then, of course, we went to small unit training, out in the field, and then, we went up to Tennessee and we did larger unit problems. Of course, the staff would go out in the field, too. There'd be a problem. Finally, with the army maneuvers, the Second Army was out in the field all the time and there would be a problem. Several problems had to do with river crossings, for example. At the end of the problem, there'd be a critique, which General Fredendall, the [Second] Army commander, would conduct. All officers were required to attend and several division commanders got relieved, right there in the maneuvers. I remember one division, the 98th Division, was poor, terrible. I don't believe it ever saw combat, really, but it was terrible.

KP: What made it so terrible?

TR: Poor leadership. What makes an outfit is the caliber of leadership of the senior officers. The enlisted men and junior officers, they all came from the same pot, everywhere. It was the senior officers who make the outfit. They provide the leadership and the training to those under them. As I said, the ones we had were superior.

KP: Did you know this at the time, that they were as good as you have reflected on?

TR: Oh, at the maneuvers, that showed up in maneuvers, the Second Army maneuvers. I mean, they would maneuver around, engulf the so-called enemy and destroy them just like that. They really were superior. The artillery, when they went to the firing tests, got some of the highest scores ever made in the Army. So, at the end of maneuvers, we were told we'd go to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, for about two or three months, and then, go overseas, which we did.

KP: Before going overseas, you hadn't been able to travel much during the Great Depression, but, in the Army, you said you did quite a bit of travelling. What did you think of the different parts of the country that you saw while you were a soldier?

TR: Well, no, not much travelling, really, just the extent you travel in the Army. I went home a couple of times.

KP: But you had to purchase supplies in the South at one point.

TR: Yes, training aids, and so forth. There's all sorts of training aids and I had to arrange to get them. Nashville was quite a center and Indianapolis was, too. So, I was able to get what training aids were required, all the lumber required for sand tables, a lot of things for all sorts of demonstrations, and so on. That was part of my job. A big job I had was when we moved out of Camp Blanding. I had to organize the rail movement. I had to teach the people how to load their stuff on flatcars, and so on. Then, I had to make up what is known as the consist of each train, how many people would be on it, how many passengers would be required, how many baggage cars and how many flatbed cars for the trucks, so [that] the vehicles could be driven up.

KP: You had a very difficult job. How much of this did you learn by doing it?

TR: I learned it all. I'd never been on a troop train in my life.

KP: So, how did you figure out what to do?

TR: Colonel Van Noppen and Colonel Frankland were very helpful. We had the best movement out of Camp Blanding that people said had ever been done. They moved out about three or four other divisions before us, and we did the best one. When they were loading up, I had to be around all hours of the day and night, because, when equipment came in, they'd notify the train commanders where their equipment was, how to get to it and at what time, and so on. I worked on the plan for quite a long while. Colonel Van Noppen and Colonel Frankland looked it over. I had to get a lot of poop. A lot of the units we had weren't TO-ed, equipped according to the table of organizations. They were short a lot of equipment and there was a lot of experimental equipment they sent around and a lot of other equipment they used for substitutions. So, we had to find what everybody had and how it would be loaded, and so on. That sort of made my name. General Hobbs was around to see every train go out. I remember, he gave me quite a commendation when the last train went out. Then, we moved out of Atterbury. This time, we didn't have to have any flatcars or anything, because we just turned in all our equipment. We would be completely equipped when we got on the other side. All [we] carried was our personal arms, personal baggage and things of that sort. It took quite a few trains to get us out, from Atterbury to the port of embarkation.

KP: Now, when you went to a port of embarkation, just before leaving, I've talked to individuals and they said that the number of desertions goes up. There's a large number who don't--well, not a large number, but a goodly number--that don't want to go.

TR: Well, there were some, I guess. I didn't hear of very many.

KP: What about when your unit went on leave? Did you have any problems, for example, on weekends when soldiers had leave? You mentioned at several places in the novel that your unit would sometimes have weekends off in-between maneuvers and training.

TR: No, I didn't know of any special problems--usual problems that you have with a whole bunch of soldiers. One thing, General Hobbs, he felt very strict about venereal disease. One time, he had an order out that any company commander that had a case of venereal disease was confined to the company area until they were completely eliminated. Well, General [Lloyd] Fredendall heard about that and he countermanded the order. That was when we were on maneuvers, but any officer who got venereal disease had a personal interview with General Hobbs himself. What a horrible interview that was.

KP: Did you know of any officers who ...

TR: Yes, I knew of one case. What was his name? ... (John Jerry Slade?). (John Jerry Slade?) met a gal in Nashville and he became quite enamored of her and they decided they were going to get married. So, they went to get a license. It was a weekend or something; they couldn't get anything. So, they decided they'd shack up anyway, in a hotel. She infected him with a terrible

dose of gonorrhea. He was scared to death. He knew what would happen--he'd have that terrible interview with General Hobbs. He went to every quack possible to try to get himself cured. [laughter] (Slade?) used to like to tease General Hobbs. He had a report prepared by the medical section. A lieutenant by the name of (Angel?), in the division surgeon's office, used to prepare it. Well, (Slade?) used to kid him about it, call it the "drip report." Finally, Slade couldn't hold back anymore and he had to go to the medics. He got in the hospital and (Angel?) said to him, "Who's dripping now?" (Slade?), of course, had the interview with the general and he got sent out. I don't know what became of him.

KP: You mentioned that, at one point, your colonel, drank quite a bit.

TR: Colonel Van Noppen, once in a while, did. He had a wife and children, and his wife seemed to have some trouble, when she was alone. I don't know what the nature of it was. She'd get him upset and he would drink. When he drank, he got very belligerent. You could always tell when he was going to get that way, because he'd start addressing people as "chief," you know. Soon as I'd hear him say the word "chief," why, I'd go somewhere else. I'd go down to the company and help them censor mail or whatever, just not to stay around there. (Herthel?), on the other hand, would argue with him. Eventually, that was (Herthel's?) undoing. Otherwise, he was very good. Colonel Van Noppen got on me once and, the next day, he apologized to me. He said, "I shouldn't have done that and it'll never happen again."

KP: Did you notice the others drinking?

TR: Oh, yes, they were quite a high drinking lot when they were off duty. I never knew anybody to drink on duty. That would not have been tolerated. General Hobbs was a very strict disciplinarian. He permitted no nonsense.

KP: What about cigarette smoking? Did that go up in the unit over the course of the war?

TR: Yes, we used to give cigarettes out. We used to issue them out to the troops, free, especially to the infantry, the combat troops. Of course, in maneuvers, in-between problems, there'd be a PX [post exchange] set up that had them; yes, no trouble on cigarettes. As I said, the combat troops, we gave them to them free, a regular cigarette issue. Well, anyway, from the port of embarkation, we went to England. We went in a convoy. I sort of lost my religion then. I'm quite a church-goer now. I'm Episcopalian, but the way some of those chaplains behaved--I'll never forget this Methodist chaplain, onboard ship. He was preaching this *great* sermon about how he knew the good Lord was watching over us. He didn't get it. He *knew* that we were taken care of. He was supposed to be the chaplain of the 120th Infantry. What do you suppose he did? He threw his gut in combat. He went right back to the rear echelon and stayed there. We had a division chaplain that almost got court-martialed. They captured a German CP [command post] and there was a lot of money there and he ...

KP: So, you had this one chaplain who tried to steal money from a German command post.

TR: And there was good reason to believe that we got to Aachen and he'd stolen our treasury there--wish I could prove it.

KP: What denomination was he?

TR: I forgot. ...

KP: He was a Protestant, though.

TR: Yes, he was Unitarian, I think. Let me think what he was; ... I don't know what he was.

KP: But you said, on the other hand, Roman Catholic chaplains ...

TR: Yes, Father (Carrol?), some others, they would stay with their men under fire, I'll say that for them. We had the special troops' chaplain. ... Despite General Hobbs, who gave very strict orders about looting, he had a lot of time on his hands and he went all around and he looted things. I remember, he looted a beautiful Communion set out of a church, said, "Well, if I didn't take it, somebody else would." A lot of chaplains didn't behave right.

KP: So, in many ways, your unit's success cannot be really traced to the chaplain.

TR: No, no, but I'll say a lot for Father (Carrol?) and the others who stayed up there.

KP: What about the rabbis?

TR: I don't recall any rabbis off-hand. There were some down in the units, but I don't believe I knew them. We landed in England, anyway, and were assigned to the XIX Corps. They always told us, as soon as we got there, they'd have all our equipment ready for us and everything. God Almighty, we had to go *all* over England and Scotland to pick up things, trucks, and so forth. Colonel Van Noppen would go to the main depot that was supposed to be supporting us and take their requisitions in for stuff. They'd say, "Well, we haven't got this," and so forth. Then, you'd have to go up to OCQM, the Office of the Chief Quartermaster, and they'd extract these things--all these depots, all over the United Kingdom. So, it took months and months and months. Just at the very end did we get fully equipped. So, there weren't things there for us at all. Everything was everywhere, all over the place.

KP: And what did you think of England?

TR: There were very strict orders on traveling, because the railroads were all jammed up. By and large, the British were very unfriendly toward us, but, my God, the place was just jammed with American troops, all over the place, just all over the place. Some people took it harder than others. I remember our ordnance officer took it pretty hard.

KP: Why did he take it so hard?

TR: Well, he had a real urge and wanted to get a couple of eggs. In came our big shipment of vehicles packed in great, big wooden crates. We got them all unpacked and there was a lot of wood there. These farmers wanted the wood and he gave it to them. He said, "All right, now, how about a couple of eggs?" "No." He was furious. He was absolutely furious. Of course, the British girls were red hot after the GIs. That was something, but, by and large, we were pretty restricted as to travel.

KP: So, did you ever make it to London?

TR: Yes, they finally stationed us at a place called Great Missenden, near Chiswick. That was within the seventeen-mile limit. So, I got into London a couple of times, but, you know, the convoys would run over a dog or a cat and the British would make a great big to-do about it. All the kids were always coming around wanting gum, and so forth, which the GIs would give them. They were pretty generous with them. I remember, though, one time at the bakery, when we went to draw bread, the kids got very pestiferous. So, finally, one of the GIs got the idea of giving them some Feen-A-Mint, [a brand of laxative gum]. So, he passed them out the Feen-A-Mint for gum. [laughter] So, it quieted that thing down a bit, but, by and large, the British did the best they could. Let's face it, Americans just were all over the place. We used to say that when we got off the island that it would rise six feet. They were just all over the place.

KP: Now, you did mention in your novel that, on your way to the invasion, people did greet you.

TR: Yes, they would. I remember, they'd come out and say, "Have some tea," and so forth. Of course, we couldn't do it. We'd stop for a moment, you know, if there was a jam up ahead. Then, we'd say, "No thank you," and then, on we'd go. The invasion was on.

KP: Did you ever go to any pubs while you were stationed there?

TR: No, because I'm a non-drinker. I'm a teetotaler and I told you that I never developed the social. It got to be a big joke in the division, too, because I didn't go out with nurses or anything. Old Sconyers, Major [William C.] Sconyers, who was assistant G-4, used to make a big joke out of it. He used to call me up and say, "Is this the headquarters of the home destroyer battalion? I want to speak with the chief home wrecker." It all went back to my lack of, really, social development. I developed my operating skills very well. I never developed my social skills though, never.

KP: While in England, did your unit do any additional training?

TR: Oh, yes, all over the place. We went to artillery ranges; all kinds of training, everywhere. We went to firing ranges in the infantry. There was special antiaircraft training. Our quartermaster company was armed with fifty-caliber machine guns. They had to go to a special range so that they could practice firing antiaircraft fifty-caliber machine guns, which were mounted on trucks and rigs that could swing the gun around--trained all the time, everywhere. very intensive, all the time. I had to help arrange trains for that, too. They'd take them by rail, various different places, even up into Scotland, and so on, various different ranges, any place

where there could be some open ground for training. I guess it went on all the time. There wasn't any stopping. The only thing that sort of slowed us down was the fact that, drawing the arms, we didn't have the trucks to carry them around. I remember Colonel [Harold E.] Hassenfelt, the G-3 [division operations and plans], had a great big training schedule to arrange and Colonel Frankland says, "I've got to calm this guy down, because we just don't have the stuff to take these people to all these various places." He went to General Hobbs about it. So, anyway, the day came, and we had to prepare the trucks for wading. We did it in stages. The last stage, you had to cover over the carburetors, and so forth, and the closer you got to the invasion date, the more stages you put on. So, when we got around to the carburetors, we knew it was going to come. I arranged to draw a lot of grease and lubricants to take along with us, had to get that from the British.

KP: Although infantrymen really do the fighting, it wasn't always just the infantrymen who would see any action. When you were preparing for war in England, what was the expectation that you would see combat or any type of combat. Did you expect to see some?

TR: Oh, we'd expect to see ...

KP: I mean you as part of the quartermaster unit.

TR: Yes. Now, the Colonel decided that we could best perform our mission while being right up with the firing batteries of the artillery, so that the infantry trains, which were further back, would come up, draw their supplies and rations from us and go on up and distribute it to the troops on the line. Staying behind the rear echelon, way back there, wasn't being of service to the troops. The wonder of it was that there weren't more of us injured than there were. I think several people did get wounded. The shrapnel, it's raining around us all the time, you know. One of the uglier tasks that we had was the receiving of the dead. We were responsible to see to it that they were evacuated to the cemetery and that, prior to going back, they were properly identified, as to who they were. If they didn't have their dog tags on, some were blown to pieces, we had to get somebody to come out on the line and identify them, say, "I knew this guy," or, "I saw him get killed," and so on. We didn't want to send back any unidentified. For that purpose, we had attached to us a Graves Registration platoon. Now, the trouble was, they were corps troops. Every time you changed the corps, you get a new Graves Registration platoon. Now, we were with XIX Corps most of the time, but, sometimes, we got attached to a corps that couldn't support us. So, we had to run our own Graves Registration and I was the Graves Registration officer.

KP: Before leaving Graves Registration, in my first book, that I'm just finishing up, I noted that the Army always went to great effort, at least in the First and Second World Wars, to always mark graves.

TR: That's correct.

KP: There was widespread sentiment after both World War I and World War II that the graves should remain where they are, in Europe. What did most soldiers think of that?

TR: Well, I don't want to go into this at all, but, after the war, I got on to the detail to pick up the dead at a specific area. About sixty percent of the families wanted the dead returned. So, when you see the cemeteries in Europe, it's only forty percent of those that were killed. Now, [when] we got over there, I should tell you, the trip to the port was quite uncomfortable. They gave orders that the tops of all vehicles would be down. It rained pitchforks and hammer handles, so, we got wet. We got to the port and were sealed in and we sailed out of Plymouth. Finally, we got word to go to the port. One by one, they swung our trucks aboard and put them down in the holds, and so forth. They split the units all up. Half our quartermaster company was on one ship, half of them were on another ship--same thing with headquarters, same thing with ordnance. We got over on an old Liberty ship, sailed all night, and, in the morning, we got off at the beach, got off at Omaha Beach. This was D+7. It took all day to unload the ship and get us on these alligators [LCVPs] and, by the time they got us all unloaded and we climbed down these rope ladders, it was dusk and the Jerries [Germans] would start coming over, you know. There was a lot of ack-ack [antiaircraft fire], and so forth, some real fireworks, but they put us in a holding area and, in the morning, we found out where the rest of the division was and joined them.

KP: You went to Omaha Beach several days after the battle. How much of the, sort of, destruction of battle was there?

TR: There wasn't too much, but right afterwards came up this terrible storm. As I said, half of us were on one set of ships and half of us were on another. The other half was on the ship that stayed out in the sea for two damn weeks. That storm came in and it smashed everything on that beach. This is just almost as bad as D-Day, took the mulberries [artificial harbors installed just off the invasion beaches], if they didn't smash them to pieces, and, God, was it lucky that we got a lot of ammunition off-loaded there. It was lucky that we had the Air Force around. Hitler was so convinced, still, that the big thing was going to come off Calais. The *panzers* didn't come after us. They did come out. I guess the Air Force gave a pretty hard job. So, we held part of the line while other divisions took Cherbourg. Then, we started to expand the beachhead, and that was hedgerow by hedgerow by hedgerow. Those hedgerows were terrible things.

KP: You saw enemy action fairly early when you landed. Even before you were landing, in fact, you had encountered antiaircraft.

TR: Oh, yes. They went all over the place.

KP: Soon after you were landing, you would face artillery assaults and other action. What was the experience like, your initial reaction to people trying to kill you?

TR: Well, everybody was pretty much on edge. When we got to our area, the division headquarters was over in the next field. What we'd do, we'd bring the trucks all around the edges of the field, against the hedgerows, and pull down the camouflage curtains. Of course, the Germans were infiltrating and everybody was on edge. There was this poor soldier, he was sleeping under his net, beside his truck, on this canvas cot. In the middle of the night, he got tipped over and he woke up and he saw some form there. He grabbed his rifle and he shot it--he

shot a cow. Problem was burying this cow, and the ground was hard as anything. For two days, he tried to dig a hole for that cow and the cow was stinking more and more. So, I got the idea of getting a couple blocks of TNT and blow a hole in there. So, we got the TNT and blew a hole and got it--blew dirt all over the CP, and, God, the General got all upset about it. They came running over to see what happened and the Colonel gave me a reprimand for that because they thought a shell had landed nearby. The Germans would come over and ack-ack went up all over the place, these antiaircraft shells. Big, jagged pieces of metal were flying all over the place, sharp edges. We'd hear them coming down, cutting the trees, cutting the branches off. The fighting was just about a half-mile up there and you could the German burp guns [MP40 machine guns] go, "Brrrp, brrrp, brrrp, brrrp, brrrp," all the time. Finally, when we got all the division at (Bourke?), took Cherbourg and we decided to make a big push across the Vire River, they brought a lot of artillery to do that, had a whole lot of artillery attached, big barrage. The infantry got across, went down those hedgerows all the way until they got to St. Lo, just above St. Lo. We sieged the high ground around St. Lo, but it went month after month. In the meantime, old Montgomery [British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery] was farting around at the other end of the area, in the south. He didn't take his D-Day objective, Caen, and he made several half-hearted attacks and nothing happened. Course, that was the direct line to Paris, that way, and the hedgerows died out around his area there, good tank country, but, at Le Mans, they knocked out his tanks. So, finally, General Bradley decided we'd have to break out somehow and put on Operation COBRA. I guess you've heard about that. [Editor's Note: The 30th Infantry Division took part in Operation: COBRA over July 25 to July 31, 1944, with the goal of breaking out of the Normandy hedgerow country at St. Lo.] Briefly, they'd bring up all the heavy bombers, everything, and lay down this carpet of bombs in a narrow area and obliterate everything there. They were doing it along a road right up from St. Lo to Periers. General Bradley wanted them to bomb parallel to the road. The Air Force didn't want to do that. They wanted to go at right angles to the road, because they said that they wanted to turn around quickly, so that they'd be less exposed to antiaircraft. Trouble was, first day, after a couple bomb loads, they dumped right on our infantry.

KP: On your division?

TR: The same regiment, the 120th Regiment, on the same battalion. They did it two days in a row. So, they had to take the battalion out and substitute the reserves of the 117th. Finally, the attack went over and what we did, we expanded the thing on the left side and the Fourth Division went on the right side. Two armored divisions went through, and then, Patton and the whole Third Army came right through there. Then, the big drive through Europe started. British didn't do a goddamn thing. So, we went chasing the Germans like everything. We motorized and went down about thirty miles and they put us in an area around a village called Mortain. The idea was that we'd hold there, keep the corridor open. Hitler got a bright idea--what he'd do is smash through there and break through the corridor and stop Patton. So, he got all the armor he could and he struck us. Several battalions were overrun. Colonel Frankland's brother, Robert Frankland, was the battalion commander of the 117th. A German tank came right in and put his gun right at his CP and he came out of the CP and met a German and he shot him with his pistol. One battalion was overrun, but the main side of the hill, Hill 362, they held them. The Germans attacked and attacked and attacked and tried to break them, but they couldn't break them. They



couldn't break through. While they spent all their time doing it, Patton, in the meantime, made the end run. He was coming right around and he was going to catch them, catch them around Falaise with the whole army, only the British wouldn't move fast enough. The British had a problem--half of their vehicles had broken pistons. You'd see a British convoy going along and one truck would be hauling another, every other truck the factory made. ... They caught the whole [German] Seventh Army in that gap there. They were wrecked, absolutely smashed to pieces, and, if the British and the Canadians had pushed down from the north and we'd had them, we'd have shut that gap and bagged the whole lot of them. As it was, we killed a hell of a lot. Patton got so mad, you know, and Montgomery wouldn't permit him to redraw the line, so [that] he could cross it and go after them. Patton got so mad, he says, "Let me get across that line and I'll drive the British into the sea for another Dunkirk," but, by God, we could have had the whole damn Seventh Army. As it was, a lot of them got out, and they were good to fight another day, but, after that, then, the chase came. We started after them. We got almost to Paris, and then, the Germans were running so fast, we couldn't catch up to them. I mean, they were absolutely panic-stricken. You'd see abandoned equipment all over. The Germans had a lot of horses drawing stuff.

KP: Did that surprise you?

TR: Yes, that did. They had horse-drawn artillery, horse-drawn supply trucks. The GIs would catch up to them, you know, and they'd take a bazooka and shoot the horse right in the belly, blow this horse right up. Oh, you'd see these horses all over the place, with their bellies blown wide open.

KP: You had encountered some Italian prisoners of war when you were in the States.

TR: Oh, well, yes, when we were in the States. When we were in Camp Atterbury, they did all the work around there.

KP: But you hadn't really encountered any Germans until you were actually ...

TR: No, no, there weren't any Germans around. They kept them in cages.

KP: When did you encounter your first German POWs?

TR: Oh, it was our job. When the infantry trucks went back, right in the early stages of the thing, when we crossed the Vire River, ... our infantry ration trucks would go back to draw rations. We'd go to the POW cage, take all the German prisoners that they had there to take them back to the Army cage, to be evacuated. There wasn't a day passed when we were in action, combat, that we didn't take back several truckloads of prisoners, believe me. I've never bought this thing that the Germans were these super, great soldiers, and so forth. Once they saw the jig was up, why, they quit.

KP: Was that also surprising?

TR: Yes, sort of, in a way, but the Germans were in a panic. They were completely disorganized and, if Monty had closed that goddamn gap, we'd have had that whole Seventh Army and there wouldn't have been any of them that got out. They all got out to fight another day in other places.

KP: At the time, did you realize how important the closing of this gap was?

TR: No, although we came up there. ... I learned about it later, yes. Being a staff officer, I heard about these things more. We'd go up to the G-3 and I'd learn more about it. I'd often go back with Colonel Van Noppen to corps. The corps quartermaster would tell us quite a lot, but we knew the British weren't moving there, but, anyway, we got near Paris and, by God, we were out of gas. They formed a task force to go chase the Germans. I mean, the whole division couldn't chase them, because we didn't have the supplies to chase them with. So, they formed a task force and I think I can give you the consist of it--roughly a couple of battalions, a regiment, some extra cavalry, some extra engineers, some extra artillery, and all motorized under General Harrison. We went chasing them. We chased them all the way up into Belgium and the rest of the division came after. They sent me back to get the gasoline. When I got the gasoline, I was to follow the division. We sat in that gas dump for three damn days and there wasn't one drop of gas came in.

KP: What had happened, in your judgment, to the convoy?

TR: Well, I'd heard--I could guess what happened--because I'd gone up to corps with Col Van Noppen for a couple of days. Colonel [James E.] Boush, the quartermaster, told him they were going to give all the supplies to that goddamn Montgomery, who hadn't done a damn thing. He was to make one great, big drive. He was to get all our gas and all our airlift after he goofed it off. He put on that goddamn Operation MARKET-GARDEN. Why Eisenhower permitted it, I'll never know. I don't know. You've been to Holland? If you can imagine that being called tank country, with all these fields surrounded by ditches of water and the roads filled up, but he got three airborne divisions. He got a lot of gas and he got the airlift. He put on this Operation MARKET-GARDEN. They dropped paratroopers. I don't know whether you've ever seen *The Bridge Too Far*, but you know what he did--to think that he could have done that thing on one road, one road, mind you. Of course, they got slaughtered. Krauts got away. He got the City of Antwerp and milled around, brewing the tea, and he never opened the entrance to Antwerp. ... So, the port was just as effective as closed. God, we needed that port. Everything was coming in off the beach. All the gasoline and everything else was coming in off the beach. In addition to that, Communication Zone Headquarters decided to go with whatever transportation was left and move themselves into Paris. North of us, we got up to the Siegfried Line before the Germans had time to organize, found the thing empty, nobody there, vacant. So, we got to the Belgian border, we stopped chasing the Germans.

KP: Was this from lack of gas?

TR: Lack of gasoline, lack of everything else. We were living on K-rations. The Germans kept running. Field Marshal [Walter] Model got them organized. I'd go back every day, a hundred miles or so, get gasoline. We'd left one regiment behind. We pooled all our trucks and brought

that up. Then, the infantry marched across Belgium. At the end of the day, the rest of the troops motorized up to move up that far. The Krauts had gone. The German 15th Army got away. Field Marshal Model got everything organized, got all the panic-stricken Germans organized around Nijmegen. He organized them around there. You saw in that *Bridge Too Far*, he thought that Patton would get the job of attacking, not Montgomery. Therefore, he reorganized these troops right around there in the area that Montgomery attacked. A few advanced elements that got up to the Siegfried Line earlier found it vacant. There were no troops there, but, by the time we got there--we got some ammunition--the Germans got troops to the Siegfried Line and Montgomery had all the supplies. He got an awful beating at Nijmegen and all the places in-between. He did take Nijmegen. There, he stopped. The Germans were now organized and they were in the Siegfried Line. We spent the whole goddamn fall trying to smash through [the] Siegfried Line. We did, we broke through several places, and we got to this damn Roer River. We came to the realization that the goddang Roer River was dominated to the south by the Schwammenauel Dams--you've heard of them--and all the Krauts had to do was open the sluice gates to the Schwammenauel Dam and make that Roer River a raging flood. So, if we got any troops across, we'd never get them reinforced. To the south of us, Eighth Division and the Second Division spent all winter in that horrible Hurtgen Forest. They got nowhere, awful lot of heavy casualties, some of the worst fighting there was. We weren't in that one, thank God. We got in the Roer River and we also helped the First Division capture Aachen and penetrated the Siegfried Line, blew up the fortifications.

KP: Your unit also took part in the Battle of the Bulge.

TR: Yes, I'm getting to that, and the idea was that if we could bust that Schwammenauel Dam and get across, Monty was going to have another big run. He was going to get the [British] Ninth Army, which we were in then, and he was going to run for it and Eisenhower agreed. The idea was to put the Roer out of business. So, when they couldn't see the Schwammenauel Dam, they brought the RAF up with a bunch of blockbusters to try to smash the dam and they couldn't smash the dam. In the meantime, they brought up a lot of brand-new divisions, 106th, 104th, a whole bunch of them. They thought that the Ardennes area was a good, quiet area for them, to break them in. Hitler got the cockeyed idea that he could smash through there and go all the way to Liege. By that time, we were stocking up. We got gasoline and they were stocking up gasoline and ammunition all over the place. The First Army had their headquarters below us in Spa, in Belgium. They were getting ready for the big push. They had ammunition all over and they had a great, big gasoline dump in Spa. They had about ten million gallons of it. Not only did they have gasoline there, but on the road, all the way forward on either side of the road, they had jerry-cans, filled with gasoline, all the way down the road, for miles, getting ready for the big push. The Germans had an idea that they could break through and grab that gas and go all the way to Liege and split the Army off and maybe get a better piece. I don't know why they did it, some cockeyed idea Hitler had, anyway. It would've never worked. Finally, one day, they attacked. They attacked in that area there. They sent for us to come down. We were above Aachen and they sent for us to come down. We came down. We went to the area around Francorchamps, east of Spa. They attacked around there. The Germans had two spearheads. The first one was under "Sepp" Dietrich, an old buddy of Hitler's, and they had the First SS, big, dark, Adolf Hitler Division, spearheading the thing. [Editor's Note: The First SS Division

*Leibstandarte* SS Adolf Hitler was Hitler's personal bodyguard unit.] Just before Christmas, he got half of them across the Saar River, the river in there, and our engineers went and blew the bridges behind there. The 119th and the 120th Infantry went and attacked. The long and short of it was, they destroyed the First SS Division. By Christmas, they pulled out and they left all their tanks there. They just flailed. They were the cream of the cream. They were a murderous gang. They went through killing babies and they shot those medics, a whole bunch of American medics. They just lined them up and shot them. We brought them to our Graves Registration point afterwards. They had their helmets on with red crosses and everything.

KP: Now, was this part of the Malmedy Massacre?

TR: Yes. [Editor's Note: Soldiers of the First *Panzer* SS Division summarily executed eighty-four American prisoners of war on December 17, 1944, near the Belgian village of Malmedy.]

KP: Was your unit the one that dealt with that?

TR: We uncovered the bodies.

KP: You were one of the people that uncovered the bodies.

TR: Our troops were, when they retook the thing. All right, Patton was pushing from the south. We busted the Krauts in the north. Second Army went around and hit them in the point. The German Second *Panzer*, hit them at the point and wrecked them there. The Germans had no gas. They never got any of that gas that was up there in Spa. The Army worked like hell to get it out of there. They never got anywhere near it. We had them in the sack--along comes this goddamn Montgomery, the son of a bitch, and he gets control of First Army on the basis that Bradley couldn't communicate with him. Bradley was shocked as hell. Instead of continuing to push, Montgomery said, "I'm going to tidy up the battlefield." He took a whole lot of divisions out of the line, drew the line back, sent them around. The reserve had to sit tight from the 3rd of January to the 13th while he tidied the battle line up. The Krauts, in the meantime, Patton was whacking the hell out of them from the south. What was that airborne, that made the fight?

KP: The 101st Airborne.

TR: Yes, that crossroads town. Sometimes I forget the ...

KP: Bastogne.

TR: Bastogne, Bastogne, okay. We sat there doing nothing. The Krauts laid all kinds of mine fields, booby traps and everything else. They got all our fields of fire in, got the whole thing surveyed, got everything ready. So, when we attacked, God Almighty, on the 13th of January, the initial troops, a lot of them were blown to pieces. They brought them in in three boxes to the Graves Registration point--three boxes, one body, I remember. They couldn't see a damn thing. Overhead were these damn "buzz bombs." The Germans were firing the buzz bombs to beat the [band]. ... They'd go over every few minutes. They were directed toward Liege and Antwerp--a

more weird sound than you ever heard in your life. [Editor's Note: German V-1 and V-2 rockets were used as terror weapons to target England. When launching points in France were rendered inoperable, these rockets were used against strategic targets in Belgium, primarily Antwerp.]

KP: So, you heard, you experienced, the V-attacks.

TR: Oh, yes, they would fly overhead. It would echo all over the mountain and there were these fogbanks--just evil was everywhere.

KP: Going back just a little to the Battle of the Bulge, how much confusion was present in your own unit when the German breakthroughs came?

TR: None. We were north of them. We weren't attacked. I had to meet six truck companies at a crossroads and get them assigned. Guides came up to take them wherever to go. The Germans were doing a lot of bombing around there. Truck companies suddenly came in from every direction at the crossroads there. They came in from every direction. They were scared to death, because the *Luftwaffe* was being active. There was antiaircraft all over the place. These guys were scared to death, so, I had to chase after some of them, stop them and get them assigned, and so forth. We motorized and I went down to the Bulge area, went down through Spa, down through Francorchamps and down to Malmedy to pick up positions around there.

KP: How soon were you at Malmedy after the massacre?

TR: Oh, I don't know, several days, I guess, but, of course, they didn't get these bodies out for quite some time, I remember, had a special team come down from army when they heard about it, with our Graves Registration people. I remember, they got them out and I was looking out the window with concern from the spot where we were and I saw. ... We used to get bread in these big sacks and I said, "God, they must be drawing a lot of bread at the bakery," and then, I looked and, gosh, I could see one of these helmets through the end of the sack. They just had them stacked up in the truck, because the bodies were frozen stiff.

KP: Some theorize that one of the reasons the massacre took place at Malmedy is that Hitler wanted to create such a condition where it would be difficult for a German soldier to surrender. What was the attitude after word of the massacre spread among the Americans, your unit? What was the attitude towards taking German prisoners of war?

TR: Well, course, a lot of the infantry, they didn't know about it, but we took a lot of them. I can't tell you that it made much of any difference. Of course, our troops were pretty hard on Germans as a rule anyway. I know, at the end of the war, when we occupied Germany, I know there were some Germans who didn't want to get out of a house fast enough, so, we shot them all. Everybody laughed about it, "What the hell?" We'd seen so much rottenness by that time, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Oh, I was telling you about the atmosphere of that place. Geez, it was awful and it got cold. It got down below zero and the troops didn't have adequate clothing. They had the GI overcoat and there was no shoe packs. There were no parkas. The Germans had parkas and things like that. Their [the GIs'] overcoats were brown, so, they'd go across the field

and they were a target, "Bam." I went around every town we were in, any place where there were any sheets or anything, I went and seized them, requisitioned them.

KP: And how'd that go over with ...

TR: Well, I knew a little French and I would explain what was going on and they'd be very cooperative. Whatever sheets and so forth would be available in stores or anywhere, I got. I'd go all sorts of places. Anyway, they'd cut a hole in the sheet in the head and the sides. At least it'd be some kind of camouflage. Of course, when Colonel Van Noppen would call the army quartermaster and say, "Look, we've got to have these things. Will you at least let me send trucks back into the port and I'll go back and get them?" the Army quartermaster would say, "No use, they aren't there. We haven't got them."

KP: Why was the Army, in a sense, so screwed up?

TR: General Bradley explained it in his book. He was limited to the beaches and he gave priority to ammunition and gasoline. I don't know. It was a rather bum decision, because it wouldn't take up that much, but, anyway, he said he made that decision. So, as soon as that infantryman got wounded, he went into shock and died. God, the weather got down to below zero. It snowed every night. The engineers made up packets of half a block of TNT and issued them to each of the men, so [that] they could blow themselves a foxhole. Things were horrible.

KP: In the novel, you several times make the point about how hard life was for infantrymen in your unit. How much contact would you have with the infantry?

TR: Oh, I knew a lot of battalion commanders. As I said, they kept us right ...

KP: You were very close to it.

TR: Yes, the Colonel kept us right near the firing batteries of artillery. Well, he did one thing. We were in Spa. They had a big bathhouse there, mineral baths, and so forth, and Colonel says, "You go down and seize that place. We'll bring some Army bath units up and clothing exchange units up, and so forth. We'll take care of the people." So, I went down there and went to the director and he said, "No." He said I had to pay like everybody else. So, I took out my forty-five and says, "Look, this is a combat zone. The only law around here is the Commanding General's and that comes out of the point of a gun. You either help us operate this damn thing or I'll throw you out in the street." So, we made the movement. Back people, they didn't get enough to eat, so, we gave them one meal a day. We bought them an Army fumigation bath unit, with some shower heads, and they added onto it. We brought the troops off the line. God, were they ever grateful.

KP: They must have really been filthy.

TR: Filthy is not a word for it. I mean, they were just caked with dirt. Their clothes were caked with dirt.

KP: And you would get their clothes cleaned.

TR: We would take their clothes and give them a new set of clothes, a clothing exchange.

KP: And they were discarded because they were so ...

TR: Well, you'd take the clothes back to an Army unit and wash them. No, they didn't discard them. They salvaged them, put them back in the fumigation stock and they'd do some other place. Anyway, for several weeks, we took troops off the line and did that.

KP: What else helped a private on the line get through the battle? How well supplied was he?

TR: The clothing was a miserable failure that year, because you'd get plenty of the old GI stuff, but that wasn't what they needed. They needed Arctic clothes. It was way below zero, snowed every night.

KP: What about food?

TR: Well, up on the line, the troops ate "Ks," [K rations]. They wouldn't eat anything else. We couldn't have a fire or anything. Once they got off the line, we got them a regular field ration. Even food was a bit hard to get. Colonel got the army quartermaster to give us extra coffee and things of that sort. We had a lot of C rations, too. They were rations that came in a box, canned stuff, and so forth. You'd heat them up. K rations were horrible, consisted of a can of cheese and some hard crackers and that was about it. Once in a while, there'd be a fruit bar there and maybe one or two cigarettes in there. That was strictly meant for on-the-line use, where you couldn't prepare any food or anything, but, by and large, whenever they could, they got hot food up to them.

KP: What about medical care?

TR: Well, that was good. That was very good. They saved an awful lot of lives, compared to what there was in World War I. I think about over eighty percent of the wounded were able to survive, because they took them back to the aid station and they'd give them some plasma there and evacuate them as quickly as possible to the clearing station, which was the division level. They'd give them as much treatment as they could there and, from there, they sent them back to an evacuation hospital. It was pretty quick. Of course, they didn't have helicopters in those days, but there was lots of plasma. They gave plasma right away.

KP: Now, your unit, your particular outfit had casualties.

TR: Not many. There were only two or three, mostly by spent shrapnel. That was damn lucky, because I know other division quartermaster units weren't so fortunate.

KP: In your division. What happened to other division units?

TR: Oh, some of the other division units, I don't know, I heard they had had casualties, but the infantry had enormous casualties. You lasted on the front lines about one or two weeks at the most.

KP: Was there any resentment from those on the front line to the other people in the division?

TR: No, I don't think so. The others didn't have it easy. The engineers had it hard. Recon troops had it hard. It wasn't easy for the division artillery, either. We certainly were on no picnic ourselves.

KP: So, you were close enough so that you weren't viewed as being part of the rear.

TR: No, we definitely stayed away from the rear. The rear echelon ...

KP: Who was the rear echelon?

TR: Most of the generals, all the personnel records, casualty reports. All the casualty records were kept back there.

KP: And the chaplains, it sounds like.

TR: And some of the chaplains, yes, some of them stayed back there.

KP: And then medical?

TR: Oh, medical was pretty close. The aid station was just right in back of the front line. The clearing station was right near us and right where the firing batteries of the artillery were, too. The evacuation hospital, of course, that was run by army. They were down the road a piece and there they had the operating rooms and all the heavy medical facilities. Clearing station, they did the most they could for them--stopped the bleeding, gave them morphine, and so forth, and got them back to the evacuation hospital as quickly as they possibly could. They had ambulances there to take them back; if they died, send them to the Graves Registration collection point.

KP: How difficult was it being in Graves Registration?

TR: Well, it was pretty rough.

KP: What did you think doing it? Did your attitudes change?

TR: It was a job to do. I don't know whether you read the book on the Graves Registration thing at Mortain. Did you?

KP: I remember I read one section in terms of the bodies being bloated.



TR: Well, at Mortain, you go back a bit. We went under VII Corps and Colonel Van Noppen said to me, "Go up to the corps quartermaster and see what you do about Graves Registration. XIX Corps is taking theirs away." So, I went up and I saw the assistant corps quartermaster and he says, "A corps is only supposed to support three divisions and we've got six attached to us now. You're going to be in a quiet section. Nothing's going to happen to you. You're just going to hold that thing open there. You're not going to have any casualties. So, the most I can do for you is give you a sergeant and two men and a vehicle. That's all I can do. That's all you get." I said, "Well, that's famous last words, that we aren't going to need any support." So, I went back with them. Of course, we got hit hard. When the counterattack got under way, we took the ground and there were a lot of bodies there. They brought them back in and the first thing you know, I had 102 piled up in that field there. The weather was hot and they all stank. So, I said to that sergeant, "We got something to chase these flies away with?" We got a sprayer. So, I got the sprayer and I went down the line, spraying them, and I chased the flies. So, finally, I came around to the other end of the line and there was somebody there. I sprayed his face and the flies all flew out of his eye sockets. Holy cow, I recognize the guy, a friend of mine, in the engineers, (Marv Tristad?), 105th Engineers. You know, I just got sick. I came sort of staggering back and Colonel Van Noppen saw me and he said, "Robinson," he says, "remember, you're an officer and a soldier. You've got to take it. That's what you're here for." I said, "Well, I got a hundred and some bodies. We'll get the detail. We'll have to evacuate them to the cemetery, because we're going to move soon." So, we got volunteers for detail. Some of the other company officers volunteered. We got three trucks. We put them on stretchers, lifted them up and flopped them into the trucks, "Bam," piled them up, high. We filled three trucks with these stinking bodies.

KP: They weren't wrapped or anything at this point.

TR: Nope, and sent them back to the cemetery. It's just tough to go back a bit.

KP: Yes. What about German bodies? You mentioned them in the novel.

TR: They sent them back, too, ... and the German cemetery in France, La Cambe, is where the whole Army cemetery was during combat. They moved the Army cemetery down. ... The big American cemetery you see now is just behind Omaha Beach. They moved it there. The Germans still have a cemetery at La Cambe.

KP: So, when you would have German bodies, where would you send the bodies, to that cemetery?

TR: Back to the cemetery. They had German POWs digging graves. They put the bodies in a mattress cover and dumped them in, trying to make sure that you had the dog tags. They buried them up and put a wooden cross, stuck one dog tag on the man and one nailed to the wooden cross. Every now and then, a chaplain would come to the cemetery and say a prayer or something. The beautiful cemetery and everything had to wait until after the war. Where was I? Let's go back; now, the attack finally got underway, down [at] the Bulge. From the 3rd to the 13th of January, we sat there while that goddamned Montgomery just had us sitting there. Patton was attacking the south, we were sitting in the north. We'd smashed the First SS Division. All

we had to do, if we kept right on attacking, we'd have bagged the whole lot of them. He let them get away. Finally, the cloudy weather cleared. When the cloudy weather cleared, the Air Force went at them in great shape. We pushed on down and we got almost to St. Vith and we were pitched out by another outfit. We were almost to St. Vith and we run out of troops. They had all been killed or wounded. Oddly enough, the American Army had held St. Vith and Montgomery had them pull back from there to straighten out the line, if you can imagine such a thing as that. Anyway, so, then, we were sent back to Ninth Army and the weather broke. It got warm and the snow melted and we all went back to above Aachen. (Herthel?) came back from the depot with a full complement of Arctic clothes--geez, shoe packs, parkas--and the weather had broken. Spring was here. So, we went up north of Aachen and, again, ran into the problem of that Roer River. Then, we sat and knocked around that area for several days until the Germans finally blew the sluice gates. We had a flood and we waited until the flood went down. Then, we moved up. We jumped across the Roer River. We were in the Ninth Army under General [William] Simpson. Now, General Simpson never got credit. He was probably as able a general as Patton was. It was because, in such a limited time, he never made the headlines. ... He wasn't the flamboyant type that Patton was. He was quite a character, though. He was Ninth Army Commander and he had one of the ablest staffs. He'd been division commander at one time, just before General Hobbs was. A lot of 30th Division people were on Ninth Army staff. Anyway, once we got across that Roer River, we just rocked across that North German Plain. We got to the Rhine. Right off the bat, General Simpson wanted to throw a bridge across and jump over it. There weren't any Krauts there for that day. By that time, Stalin had started his great big push to the east and whatever troops the Germans had left over from the Bulge, they had sent east, but, no, Montgomery wouldn't have that. No, he's going to have another big set battle. So, there we were; we just sat along the Rhine there for two weeks. We went back and practiced a great big river crossing. Montgomery brought up the Navy and all kinds of landing craft and had the chemical warfare people put a great big smokescreen all along the area for miles and miles for a couple weeks. He had ammunition and supplies stockpiled all over the place and, about two or three weeks later, we came up and crossed it, crossed the Rhine, with the biggest artillery barrage ever. There weren't any Krauts there at all, holy Moses. We did have a fight with 116th *Panzers* and destroyed them. Then, we just motorized and went hell-bent for Berlin. Some other corps went around and attacked the Roer. First Army attacked the Roer from the south. We were part of the XIX Corps and we just kept going and, God Almighty, what we uncovered, never saw anything like it. The minute we got in there, the roads, the fields, just came alive with people who had been made slaves for the Germans. They wanted to get home--French, Belgians, Norwegians, everything anybody could think of. They just started walking, period, women and children. G-2 [division intelligence] had told us that there would probably be such a situation, so, Colonel Van Noppen stocked a lot of extra rations. Civil Affairs officer comes to us and says, "Gee, can you spare me ten thousand rations now?" and so on, but I never saw anything like it. The roads and the fields were crammed. I remember, we got to the middle of Germany and we occupied a baron's house in a town. In the center of town was a monument, had some steps to it. I walked up the monument and we looked around. You could see the whole area, all around. The roads, the fields, everything was just like an ant [hill]--it was just crawling with people everywhere, not just the roads, but the fields, just like ants, crawling over everything. Right in front of me, there was a French woman. She had what we used to call an "express wagon." You

pull them around. She had it piled high with stuff and she had a little kid sitting on top of it. The thing tipped over and the kid started to bawl.

KP: As your division is going through Germany at this time, when you encountered civilian people, were you, for example, searching for escaping Nazis?

TR: Well, that all came later. At the time, we were going as fast as we could, chasing them. The whole Nazi machine kept operating right up to the minute we got there and stopped it. You wouldn't believe it, but they did. For example, we were tearing up a road and there were some SS up ahead of us with a bunch of prisoners. Every mile, they'd shoot one and throw it on the side of the road. Finally, I think the recon caught up with them and shot the Nazis, stopped them, but I'll never forget. We were stopped one time for a break and here comes this wagon down the road with a German (WAC?) and some German soldiers on. They were trying to disguise themselves and they had this wagon drawn by horse. We were feeling malevolent towards the Germans--we freed a lot of our own people, who were starving to death. We stopped the wagon and we had this character called "Fingers" Flanagan. I don't know why they called him "Fingers," but, anyway, I remember him unhitching the horses and driving the horses into the field and overturning the wagon. God, there was a whole lot of German money in there. The German money flew all over the road. We thought it was worthless, you know. We just let it fly all over the field there. I remember one sergeant, Sergeant (Cooke?), picked up a whole lot of it and put it in his pocket. A couple of days later, we were told the money was good and Sergeant (Cooke?) says, "Wait a minute, Major, look at me, I'm rich." Here, this money flew off. We tipped the wagon into a ditch and drove the horses away, chased those people off, and then, the word came to go on and on we went.

KP: So, you didn't know whether that wagon ...

TR: We hadn't any idea what it was, you know. We thought German currency was worthless.

KP: While you were on this drive through Germany, how much other contact did you have with the German population?

TR: Well, we'd go into their houses and we'd light the house and we'd say, "*Raus*. Out," and out they'd go. If they didn't get out fast enough, we'd kick them out.

LL: You didn't know if they were Nazis or not.

TR: Oh, we didn't give a damn. They were Germans, they were Krauts and out they went. Every man, woman, child, whatever, out they went. Goddamn it, they invite this into their country and made us fight all the way in. If we got into the country, we were going to be at least comfortable there. No German was going to be comfortable when we were uncomfortable, I'll tell you that. So, anyway, we kept going and, finally, we got to the Elbe River and, there, we stopped. Colonel (Herthel?) had not been getting along very well. Major Denny got to become quartermaster of the 106th Division. So, he left and Colonel talked to me, down some time at breakfast, and said, "Now, I've got to decide who's going to be quartermaster," and he says, "If

(Herthel?) weren't so senior to you, there's no doubt in my mind who it would be. It'd be you." I said, "Well, I think, Colonel, you're making the right choice in (Herthel?), because, if you choose me now, I'm a junior and it would cause a lot of bad feeling among everybody, the other officers, and so on." The Colonel says, "Well, I could get rid of them, too," but he chose (Herthel?) as assistant quartermaster, but, I don't know, something happened and he got (Herthel?) transferred. So, while we were at the baron's house there, I came back from that thing feeling so rotten and the Colonel said, "They're cutting orders and you're the assistant division quartermaster and the promotion is going in for you. You're about to get the promotion to major." So, I got the promotion. Now, Colonel says, "Go back to army and see if they can get the supply points moved up, because we're going to jump across that river and we're going to have to go back too far for supplies." So, I went to see the army quartermaster and I said, "We're going to be going pretty soon." He says, "Major, just don't worry about it. You aren't going anywhere. You aren't going anywhere." Sure enough, we got the word. So, then, we had a whole lot of displaced persons there. So, we spread out to about ten miles wide along the Elbe River and thirty miles back to the Harz Mountains. Every unit had a municipality to govern. We began to collect these displaced persons. We pooled all the division trucks in certain areas and I controlled the pool. When they had a sufficient bunch, Civil Affairs had arranged transportation out of the area and I had them collected and brought up to a collecting point. I think, at that time, they got some sort of German railway running, somehow or other, and we began evacuating. For two weeks, we evacuated, and then, the Russians came up. The Russians were uncooperative as hell. They would take Western displaced persons and, without any warning or so forth, they'd push maybe twenty or thirty thousand across the Elbe River at one time on us. We had a hell of a time to collect the Russian POWs. There were a lot of them, too, lot of Russian POWs, and they didn't want to go back. We had to get them concentrated and under control, because they were going around smashing everything in sight, destroying food stocks or whatever. We had to locate all the food stocks. God, the Germans had all kinds of food that we hadn't. They covered a great big warehouse. They had frozen foods there of every type, kind and description.

KP: Did it surprise you how much they sort of stockpiled?

TR: Oh, my, did it ever. They had everything--meat, frozen fruits, the wines. They got it from all over there. Of course, we used that stuff to feed the displaced persons, the best we could. In about three weeks, we got all the Westerners evacuated and on their way home. Then, we got word that we had to give the area up that we had to the Russians. So, we went south to stay for a month, just north of Nuremberg. We had a good time there. Course, the word was, who was going to go to the Far East and who isn't? They had to decide how they were going to do that. V-E Day [May 8, 1945] came. It came and went, but we didn't pay much attention to it, because we were so busy evacuating these people. Nobody hardly noticed it, there was so much going on.

KP: In terms of evacuating people, did you get to know any of these people you were evacuating?

TR: No.

KP: You were mainly just in charge of the motor pool.

TR: No, there were just masses of them, just hordes of them.

KP: In terms of the Russians who you were sending back, were men from your division sent to guard them?

TR: Yes. We had to guard them. We had to concentrate them in any place where they could be concentrated and they had to be guarded. Otherwise, they'd go out and smash everything. Well, the Westerners did that, too. We had to get them, too. It was hard to stop. We were sort of sympathetic toward them. The Germans say, "Oh, gosh, these people have been so good to them. I don't understand it." Get out of here. Well, we ran across; ... did you ever read Herman Wouk's, what was that book he wrote about World War II? ...

KP: *War and Remembrance*?

TR: *War and Remembrance*.

KP: No, I haven't read it.

TR: Well, the heroine there, they finally locate her dead in this train being sent to a concentration camp and the Americans overrun it. That actually occurred; we overran that train.

KP: Your unit, your division?

TR: Yes. I remember Major (Rock?), assistant division surgeon, came to help them. They were in terrible shape. Of course, you know, the Germans had little concentration camps all over the place. You know, they had these, the [major camps like Dachau], and so forth--they were feeders to those things. They'd take these people and work the hell out of them and, when they couldn't work anymore, they'd load them on these trains and take them down to [the main camp] and kill them. Every factory and everything had sheds behind them there, where they kept people, slave labor, and so on.

KP: Did you expect to find this when you got into Germany?

TR: Yes, we sort of did. You couldn't imagine it the way it was.

KP: So, you expected the Germans to use some ...

TR: You couldn't imagine, you couldn't imagine what it actually was. G-2 had told us that the situation was there, but you couldn't imagine the horror of the whole thing.

KP: Now, this really surprised you, how bad the Germans were.

TR: It didn't surprise me, but the extent of it shocked me. They were capable of it; I knew they were capable of it. We had some taste of it between the Roer and the Rhine. When we really got into Germany is when we really saw.

MR: I don't think, even yet, people know how pervasive it was.

TR: Yes. I was up to see Colonel Frankland and ... he and Colonel [Alfred J.] Treherne, the division surgeon, were together with some of these people. This one man was all beat up. His eye was puss-filled and he was trying to explain to Colonel Frankland and Colonel Treherne where he'd come from and what the problem was, and so forth. Colonel Frankland looks at me and says, "See me later. I'm tied up now." The people looked horrible. They were all beat up and scabby all over their faces, eyes shut--that one guy's had been gouged out. He was trying to explain to them. ...

KP: What had happened to him?

TR: I don't know what had happened to him. I didn't stay. Colonel Frankland and Colonel Treherne were busy trying to find out, but, [on my] return to this German baron's house and ... watching those people over there, something that happened at Rutgers struck me very forcibly, way back--the so-called pacifist march in support of the Oxford Pledge. They organized this great protest, you know. The Oxford Pledge, you know, it started out, "Under no circumstances would they fight for their country." So, they had this great, big demonstration and it went all around. [Editor's Note: The "Oxford Pledge" was a pacifist declaration emanating from the Oxford Union in February 1933.]

KP: What year was that?

TR: That was 1937, as I recall, '37, '38.

KP: Do you remember The Veterans of Future Wars?

TR: Yes, yes, all those things, the Veterans of Future Wars, all those things.

KP: You didn't join either one.

TR: No, no. I was one of those who believed in "Fortress America," you know, that was my [belief]. ...

KP: You thought we could be neutral and isolationist.

TR: Right, right, but, anyway, I saw all those people there and I thought, "My God, what a terrible sin we've all committed." I got sick and tired. I had to go to bed. I said, "My God, these pacifists, and so forth, were just as guilty as Hitler, because Hitler couldn't have gotten along without these people."

KP: What did you think of ...

TR: You know, Hitler--you read General [Franz] Halder's diaries anyway--Hitler calls these generals sad and says, "My, these Western powers are degenerate and I'm going to start this war up a damn sight quicker than I planned. You all get ready for it right away." Gosh, you know, the Germans' General Staff, they were ready to throw Hitler out at the Munich thing and it's only because Hitler carried ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: Your views towards American foreign policy changed because of the war.

TR: Yes, yes, "Never can allow this sort of thing to happen again."

KP: And you had thought of making the military a career.

TR: I thought about it. I almost did. I applied for two integrations, two sets of integrations. They pick a lot of people in the first one. By the time they got around to the second one, they decided they had too many people in my age group and they'd all retire at the same time. So, they were, "Pffft," I was out of it. I should have applied for the first. I thought, "I'm getting ahead of myself a bit;" used to have a neighbor right next-door who was a veteran of World War I and he was a lawyer. He used to tell me of the non-West Pointers that got integrated into the Army after World War I. When the Army slender-ed down, every time one of those non-West Pointers looked cross-eyed, they court-martialed him. Since he was already a Reserve officer, these people would come to him to conduct their defense. It wasn't until (Oshinsky?) started really raising hell in the United Nations that I realized that the Army would be a good career. So, I applied for the second integration--too late, but I stayed in the Reserve. I'm drawing retired pay and I am eligible for burial in Arlington Cemetery. I retired a full colonel, but we're getting ahead of ourselves. We had this idyllic month in Germany. Oh, the Colonel and I went fishing and ...

MR: Where were you?

TR: In Southern Germany, in Bavaria, around Hof. We're waiting to hear what they're going to do before V-J Day and who's going to Asia and who isn't. I remember, the ordnance company had a baron's castle and it had all the servants there. They had [the] Colonel and me over to dinner. They had the servants waiting on us and they had this wonderful fresh fish. Christ, they get fresh fish. He says, "Well, when it's about time for the fish to be cooked, we just take a couple of blocks of TNT and throw them in the fish pond and set it off and get all the fish we want." Then, they decided what they were going to do. They were going to send the 30th Division to the Far East, but everybody had points assigned to them. What they were going to do, they paired us with another division that'd just come over and all these divisions that came over late came over late because they weren't up to snuff with the others. They exchanged us, job for job, with the personnel of that division and General Hobbs was horrified. Colonel Van Noppen went to a staff meeting and he came back and he said, "Now, General Hobbs says that

any 30th Division man who stays with him can head the section," or whatever, "and he'll see to it that he gets a promotion." He says, "Now, you've got a chance to be division quartermaster. Do you want it?" and I said no. I thought that enough's enough and I had to go back and start my career, and so on. Nobody ever thought that the Army would be a career. ... In American history, in the past, you know, the Army went down to nothing after every war.

KP: You were very much concerned, I remember reading your novel, both you thought the Army would shrink and also that ...

TR: Oh, yes, I was worried to death about that, too. There was a repression effort. After World War I, Harry Truman, for example, got wiped out. Well, anyway, they gave us two days to make up our minds. The whole swap took place in two days. Most of us went over, Colonel Frankland, ... but a lot of the guys would stay behind and we felt terrible about it. I remember, I was crying like a baby when I left. Colonel Van Noppen was going a separate way, because he had very high points. ... Of all things, they brought in a West Pointer to be division quartermaster. I never met him. So, I got over to this other outfit and, boy, was it a sad bunch of "sad sacks." Colonel Frankland said we had to throw out all of their old procedures. Colonel Van Noppen and I got over there. Lucky, the phone was open; he was still back there. We had a long phone conversation. I guess it went on for an hour. So, there we were. I had a division quartermaster who was an absolute alcoholic. He was dead drunk all the time. So, in effect, I was division quartermaster over there. I ran the thing. This guy was absolutely stewed. They had a general who wasn't very smart. Patton said he was one of the worst generals he ever saw; had a chief of staff who was dumb as hell. He had an idea that we would all get rid of our 30th Division patches and put on their patches, 76th Division. Well, a lot of us refused to do it. We had a battalion commander, name was (McDowell?) and he was a character if there ever was one. He was brave as hell. Anyway, he comes to some sort of meeting and he had his 30th Division patch on. The old chief of staff comes up to him and says, "Colonel, let's take this patch off right away. We'll use my pen knife and cut it off." (McDowell?) gets out a great big knife and he says, "You take that off and I'm going to cut your liver and gizzard right out."

KP: Did your division ever have any reunions?

TR: Oh, yes, I'll tell you more about that. So, bit by bit, we trickled back to the States. General Hobbs's discipline was gone and everybody felt like it was all over and, God Almighty, they used to have these parties with all the *frauleins* there. Everybody got drunker than a skunk. Colonel Frankland and I wouldn't go anywhere near them, just absolute bacchanalian rot. War was over and tension was gone, General Hobbs was gone, General Harrison was gone, but, before we left, we agreed to form a division association and meet, and we did. ... We met every year for a long time. We still do. The last time I went was last year. I used to go regularly, you know. Colonel Van Noppen would be there, Colonel Frankland, Colonel Treherne, (Jim Dozier?), Sergeant (Bailey?), Colonel (Forbes?), Colonel (Griffen?), (Jake Dandgridge?), (Madrivier?). ...

KP: What happened to most people after the war?



TR: Well, they all did fairly well, but they're all dead. I'm the last field grade officer left. I'm the last division staff officer. They're all gone. The unit commanders, the battalion commanders, are all gone. Colonel (Caddy?) is gone. He was just a few years older than me, 120th Infantry. I remember down in the Bulge, we ran into him down there and I said, "Colonel, what the hell you going to do about these Krauts?" He said, "I'm fixing to go down there and kick the shit out of them." They're all gone. I have one good friend left. He's a very close friend of mine. I told you that when I came in, I was the last "shavetail" [newly commissioned second lieutenant] to come in and I got the promotion and that didn't sit well among the others, believe me, except (Bernie Bayliss?). He understood. He used to say to me, "You've got to go out and get yourself a gal, get some social work. If you don't do it, that old rusty lobe you got's going to back up and choke you to death." So, he always stayed a good friend of mine. He lived out in Oklahoma. I kept in touch with him. I met him about every reunion. I worked for the Air Force. We started to computerize. We worked on the big computer they had out at Tinker Air Force Base, managing aircraft engines, and I used to visit him there. So, I kept close touch with him. He was a big athletic fellow, boxing, coach of all the athletic teams, but he got cancer, cancer of the lung, cancer of the liver, cancer of the brain. So, I went to the last 30th Division reunion down at Nashville, last September. He and Lois were there. I should go get those pictures. ... So, it was quite emotional when I left him. ... He died two months ago--cancer of the brain, cancer of the liver, everywhere. Who were the guys that were there at the reunion? infantry replacements--I didn't know them. The only other person that I knew was Layton Tyner, who had been in the 117th Infantry. He had been General [Walton] Walker's aide when Walker was killed in Korea. He was with him when he was killed. That's all, nobody else. I won't go to any more. I don't understand. How could all those guys that were all generals [in the] service, ... how I'm the last one left. There it is. I got some pictures here that were taken during the war. These were the quartermaster officers there. There's Colonel Van Noppen and there I am. That's Major Denny. That's (Herthel?) and that's (Bethel?). There's (Bayliss?) right there. That's Lieutenant (Chism?), Lieutenant (Schwager?), Lieutenant (Cohen?). When we were in Germany, a team came from OCQM and they took pictures of our various operations there. They were sort of chaotic and not much to explain with them. There are the enlisted men in the division quartermaster section.

KP: Were any of these men regular Army?

TR: No. There's me, shortly after I was promoted to major in Germany. That's (Herthel?), Captain (Herthel?). These are just pictures of how we operated. There's ration breakdown. It's all operated out of the back of a truck, any place you could set up. I don't know what they're issuing out there, some books, sugar or something. There's some bodies being brought in. They wanted to get a picture of some bodies, so, we let them take some pictures. The bodies are more covered up than usual. There's two bodies being brought in.

KP: Those are American.

TR: Yes, they're American; more ration stuff. I got a Bronze Star and there's the General pinning it on me. You know, it's all field stuff, nothing but rough stuff. We knew how the troops were suffering and it was our mission to turn the drive across Northern France. I spent two months just going back with convoys of gasoline, getting allocations from corps, and I'd go

back and get it and bring it back up. They'd have another convoy lined up waiting for me and Colonel Frankland would indicate what the allocations were to the units. The Sergeant would divide it up. A great opportunity was a lost one.

KP: Do you have regrets about not staying in the military?

TR: Yes. I had five years just sort of wandering around.

KP: Did it surprise you that there wasn't a depression afterwards?

TR: Yes, although all of us came out of the Army at the same time, looking for jobs. I didn't have any idea in the world what the hell I could do, civilian-wise. I'd gone right from college into the Army. It was a long period of wandering around. I also regard that as somewhat of a lost period, somehow or other. I stayed in the Army awhile, thinking I would get this position, but I didn't get it. So, out I went and I had one of the most miserable assignments there ever was, returning the World War II dead. We had a lot of civilian labor, carried off out of the gutters and streets of Honolulu.

KP: And they were sent to different islands to retrieve the bodies.

TR: [No answer].

KP: When did you finally leave the islands?

TR: 1948, 1949, I think.

KP: Just shy of the Korean War.

MR: Oh, you left before that, because you were at Columbia before that. You came out and you went to Chicago with me in '47. It was '47 when you came out there, because I was in England in '48.

TR: Well, maybe. I went to Columbia and got a master's degree.

MR: Because you came out and spent that one summer at the University of Chicago and that was '47, because I left in December of '47 to go to London.

TR: Well, maybe it was, I don't know. Anyway, it was a period of fruitless wandering. I felt bad. I always felt, too, that when they cut everybody down, General Hobbs got disturbed about it. He wrote a letter to the Adjutant General about it. Colonel Van Noppen got him to do it. He also got his Congressman, who was then head of the Military Affairs Committee, to write a letter, but it did no good. Then, too, I felt, "Gosh, I let General Hobbs down at the time when he needed 30th Division people the most, right at the end of the war. Everybody ran off. I ran off, too, left him with those 'eight-balls' from the 76th Division; Jesus, what a bunch." You know, he got out of the Army about 1950 and he was in the Valley Forge Military Hospital, where there

were psychiatric cases. He went to pieces. He had a stroke. Last time I saw him was at the Chicago reunion; pathetic.

KP: You had a very successful career. How much do you think your experiences in the military were a result of that?

TR: A good deal, taught me how to operate, how to deal with people. Colonel Frankland taught me that, Colonel Frankland and Colonel Van Noppen. As a kid, my natural inclination was to be very dogmatic and hard-boiled and bawl everybody out. He taught me how to do things in an efficient way. You know, there's an efficient way of doing things. That's the differentiation between a good National Guard and a Reserve officer and a West Pointer. The very best West Pointers get to be generals, and so forth, but the lot of them are jerks, in my opinion, because they're not flexible enough. Colonel Frankland and Colonel Van Noppen were flexible; the battalion commanders, they were all flexible people.

KP: So, you found that the West Pointers, in your contact, were very rigid.

TR: Yes, a lot of them weren't as able, either.

KP: Had you been called up in the Reserves for Korea?

TR: Almost, they called me up. They sent me in for physical examination, and then, they dropped it. I never joined a Reserve unit, but I did go to school. I went to the USAR [US Army Reserve] schools, you know. So, I got my points in and I had a good record. So, I got all the way to full colonel, went through command general staff training. About half of the officers who started in it dropped out or they flunked them out.

KP: You mention in your novel, at one point towards the end, one of the points that you expressed was a sense of teamwork and camaraderie and you saw that coming out. Did you see that coming in hindsight or at the time?

TR: I really saw it happen at the time, because everybody was an MOS, put it here and put it there. Unit cohesion and morale were gone, even in Korea. That certainly was a problem in Vietnam.

KP: So, you could see at the end of the war that the unit cohesion, which in your unit was very strong, was eroding. Did that influence your decision not to stay in the Army, this breakdown of unit cohesion?

TR: No. When I didn't get the appointment to the regular Army, I was not going to stay in as a non-regular. I could have stayed in as a non-regular, you know, but what the hell kind of assignment would you get? You'd get all these, what you'd call shitty assignments, and I wasn't going to take that for a minute. Furthermore, if there was any downgrading, and so forth, they'd downgrade you to enlisted status. That was out--either I was a regular or I wasn't. There's no in-between.

KP: You ended up working for the Air Force, you mentioned. What were your responsibilities?

TR: Well, first, I was an aircraft engine manager, managing the supply and distribution of aircraft engines. Every so often, an aircraft engine is pulled and a new one put in. The other one was sent and repaired. So, I was aircraft engine manager for all aircraft engines and I also managed the provision of special tools and testing equipment. I had to work very closely with maintenance and people like that, and so on. Then, they computerized that and they tried to compute spare parts requirements by computer. The first thing you learned was that unless you had a good system, a good system where your procedures work, your computer was worthless because you're getting nothing but a bunch of garbage out, and that's what we got. So, I got into systems work that way. I went out to California to stay for two years, worked with North American Aviation for two years. I didn't like it out there. I came back and the Internal Revenue [Service] were looking for some computer analysts and I went to work for Internal Revenue and stayed with them until I retired. I designed the master file of all taxpayers, up in Martinsburg, [West Virginia]. The file I designed is still being used.

KP: Had you thought of going into private enterprise again or did you like working for the IRS?

TR: Well, I was getting older then and one of the things I found out is that if you're out, you can get a good, high salary in industry, but, if they don't have a good retirement plan, you're sunk. I already had a lot of Civil Service time in and my Army time counted towards Civil Service time. So, I was getting older then and I stayed in Civil Service. I contributed to the retirement fund and the government contributed to the retirement fund. I kept up my Reserve thing, so that I'm pretty comfortable right now, very comfortable. Now, a lot of younger people are saying these days, "Oh, God, these old people, they're hogging it all," but, my God, what I went through in that Depression, nobody could imagine that. I sacrificed an awful lot. Any girl that I was ever interested in didn't like me--I just couldn't do it, I couldn't cut it. So, there you are.

KP: You painted a very unromantic view of the Great Depression years and World War II in many ways. Why do you think so many people of your generation romanticized it? In one of the interviews I conducted, one of the things he argued was that the Great Depression was better times because we all pulled together.

TR: Where in the hell was he?

KP: Yes, I've wondered why some ...

TR: Well, I went to Princeton High School. A lot of the kids there, their fathers were on the faculty and had a good salary. Anybody who had a salary during the Depression, boy, he had it made, because living was dirt cheap. Cost of living was about a tenth of what it is now. Mary had her way of coping with things. Mary just felt sick all the time and wouldn't go to school.

MR: Oh, stop it, Ted. That's not true.

TR: That's true. So, you know, she had a way of sort of withdrawing from things like that, which I didn't. So, there it is.

KP: Is there anything I forgot to ask that's not in the novel?

TR: I can't think of anything.

KP: I should ask, what prompted you to write the novel?

TR: Oh, I got turned down by a gal. I was a graduate student at Columbia University, fifty years ago, near fifty years ago, when I started to write it. I wrote the first chapter. Then, I let it sit. For I guess twenty-five years, I did nothing with it. I ran across it and the paper I had written on had all started turning yellow. So, I retired at that time and went up to my mountain house, which I still have down in the Shenandoah Valley, and I spent all summer working on it. I couldn't sell it, not the type of thing you can sell. So, it's got no dirt in it--people aren't getting in and out of bed all the time. This is what sells these days, people getting in and out of bed or a bunch of lesbians having affairs or doing it in all kinds of different ways and getting caught--none of that in there. What I tried to do, I tried to paint a picture of life as it was lived at that time and I tried to show how the Army was trained to go into combat and how it went in, what made good outfits and what didn't. I was fortunate--I got into a good outfit. Now, all of the officers there, they hated black people, like thunder. Colonel Van Noppen said that if they tried to get integration, "We'll have to kill some of these people." Colonel Frankland, he was very tolerant about it.

KP: And the Army would, very shortly, integrate.

TR: Yes.

MR: I remember how they isolated poor (?). He was a Quaker.

TR: Yes, he was Quaker. He ... was all for integration, he was all for Civil Rights, and so forth. He worked for Colonel Treherne, who was the division surgeon, who came from ... Alabama, but I think they've gotten over it in the South and I think those people ... probably had better relations down there than they have in a lot of the Northern cities. I don't know. That was their problem, but that didn't come up with us. Towards the rest of us, they were ...

KP: But, you did have a Quaker in the Medical Corps.

TR: Yes.

MR: Did he stay in the whole time?

TR: He went through the war. Colonel Treherne actually shook loose and promoted him to captain, but he and Colonel Treherne didn't get along very well at all, but we were there to fight the Germans.

KP: Have you ever been back to Germany?

TR: Yes, not very long. I went to Munich and I went to Cologne. Aachen, I was surprised that they restored Aachen, God Almighty.

KP: You were surprised at how much the Germans had rebuilt.

TR: Oh, my, yes. I never thought they could ever rebuild Aachen. God Almighty, I remember the whole sky was lit up for a week with Aachen burning. There wasn't a place that had a roof on it. I only stayed in it for a little while after the Bulge, but everything was just smashed to pieces. Nuremberg, same way--every railroad bridge was knocked down. Every large city was wrecked. The smaller towns were in pretty good shape. That's where we would find places to stay when we got in there--Magdeburg, smashed to pieces.

KP: At one point, did you feel any resentment towards Germans?

TR: I don't like Germans. I just can't stomach them. I could never get over it, never. I just can't do it.

KP: What do you make of your Rutgers years? How do you look back on your years in college and your years in the Army?

TR: Well, there's a good deal of sentiment. We were foolish. I hate to see, sometimes, these students doing the same goddamned thing. I realize the Vietnam War was a mess and all that sort of thing, weird way to fight a war and they certainly didn't use diplomacy enough. That China card should have been played years before it was. You certainly don't fight a war and take the same ground over and over and over and over again and kill people in the same places. You either strike at the enemy objective and eliminate it and ruin his ability to conduct the war or you don't fight, that's all. ... If we weren't prepared to go to Hanoi, we shouldn't have gone in there, or we should have done what General [James] Gavin said--set up hedge-hogs along their various lines of communication and, if we couldn't go to Hanoi, then, we should have kept them from taking the place over, but we shouldn't have gone around body counting and fighting this thing over and over again. That's cock-eyed crazy. What military doctrine is that? but the poor soldiers who had to do it, to have them come home and after all they went through--that was horrible.

KP: But, at the time, you supported America's involvement in the war.

TR: No, I thought it was a bad idea. I thought we ought to have done what General Gavin said. I thought we ought to have played that China card, but I certainly wasn't for it. ... You know, they say we lost the war, and really we didn't, in a way, because while we kept the Communists tied down in Vietnam, the Malaysians and so forth, they prospered. They overcame the thing and Communism didn't spread there. The Chinese got some sense into their head. They realized they'd have the Russians there. The Vietnamese were stupid--they could have had a deal with Lyndon Johnson at any time. God, he was crazy to deal with them. I'm not sorry for the

Vietnamese either, because they could have had peace at any time. Do you remember that old movie, a long time ago, called *The Mouse That Roared* [(1959)]? Anybody that ever lost a war to the United States got really compensated for it. Now, if the Vietnamese were to come out, God Almighty, they'd have been rich as hell now if they dealt with Johnson. What's done is done.

KP: You had mentioned earlier, in the beginning, this used to be your family's home and that your family lived in Rockaway.

TR: We lived on a farm in West Windsor, but, when the house burned down, Mother came back up here.

KP: And you mentioned that this area really did have hard times.

TR: Oh, my God. Where's that clipping, Mary? go get that. This area used to be a heavy iron mining area. It was a heavy industrial area.

KP: Boonton, Rockaway, Denville.

TR: But, the population from 1900 went down, down, down, down, down. The industry all went out. The textile mills shut down. There got to be more houses up here than there were people. Now, the lower part of this county is rich as hell and the lower part of the county wouldn't let the state relief or anything else come in here and help these people. They'd starve to death, almost. Mother couldn't get any rent, couldn't get anything. She couldn't pay her taxes.

MR: Actually, this area was hurt most by two things--one, the large steel operations in Pennsylvania and then, the agglomeration of the textile industry in the South.

TR: Now, Mary owns about half of this block here. My sister, Sara, had a bunch of houses up in the upper part of town. It was all part of what Mother had. On paper, supposedly, we had a lot of stuff. Actually, the stuff was worthless in the Depression.

MR: Well, I'll tell you, we had fourteen families living in the houses and, in effect, my mother was their protector, was their advocate. ... I remember going with her. We finally got into the middle years of the Depression, after the WPA [Works Progress Administration] was started, and Orange County wouldn't bring WPA in. They had put some lead money up, and then, they were reimbursed for it. ... So, she got him to help people move out of this area, in the areas where they would [receive] other funds.

TR: Yes, right away, they got the WPA, ... funded the Picatinny Arsenal.

MR: Yes, and it was very late in the game, very late in the game. So, we had all these [programs], ... was in education. She kept in touch with Congressmen, she wrote Mrs. Roosevelt, and carried on. ...

KP: You were a very solid Republican county.

TR: Yes, we're the only Democrats up here.

MR: Oh, no, we aren't anymore. We've got some neighbors now.

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

Reviewed by Bojan Stefanovic 2/20/2001

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 3/1/2001

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/27/2012

Reviewed by Sara R. Baker 4/2/2012