RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WERNER CARL STURM

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mr. Werner Carl Sturm on March 1, 1996 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and …

Ken Gilliland: Ken Gilliland.

KP: I guess I'd like to begin by asking you about your father, who sounded like a fascinating man.

Werner Sturm: Yes. [He was a] very interesting individual. Very interesting. He was, as I say, he was in World War I for three years, came pretty close to getting shot, I think, on the last day of the war, but he escaped. He managed to get behind a post, a masonry post, because one of the flyers, one of the enemy fliers, was still after him. He escaped. He had a good job in Germany, but they got hit with that dreadful inflation in 1923. He was very discouraged, and he had a brother who had come over to the United States and they were in contact. So, by the time they got finished, five brothers were in the United States, and four, the oldest, stayed in Germany. They were all very good in the textile industry. They had gone to night school and educated themselves, and they were all very skillful. My father was sort of a master mechanic on the large looms that produced carpets. He even had an invention, I guess, [he got] some royalties for a while. He was a very skillful man and he did quite well over here, but we had, as a result of World War I, we had a lot of illness in the family. My mother had tuberculosis, my older brother had tuberculosis, and they were both incurable. So, it was tough sledding for the family, and, eventually, my mother died, and a few years later my brother died. My father was probably the first vocal anti-Hitlerite that ever I can remember. He was always interested, of course, in German politics.

KP: Even when he came to the United States?

CS: Yes. Even when he came to the United States, he followed politics in Germany, also in the United States, he was always politically interested. He had read the book *Mein Kampf* and he was telling everybody that this fellow is dangerous and a bit of a lunatic.

KP: When did he first talk about that? How old were you?

CS: Oh, my goodness. I would say, I can remember hearing it around 1933?

K.P: Really, that early?

CS: When was *Mein Kampf* written and published?

KG: Around 1929?

KP: Yes. It was in the 1930s.

CS: He read it fairly early somehow. Got a hold of it, and he read it fairly early when it came available and he immediately reacted. He was fairly knowledgeable, and he was a Social

Democrat. I guess liberals are essentially, labor-oriented liberals, that's what they were, and he was quite vocal in his opposition against Hitler. He was anti-military because, I think, the Social Democrats were not any right-wing military group or anything. They were liberals.

KP: What else did your father say about the German Army?

CS: He disliked the German military. Well, he just did the best he could to get through the war. He thought World War I was total insanity. From what I've read, I'd have to agree. He just thought it was total insanity. He got drafted and he just tried to survive the war the best he could.

KP: Which front was he on?

CS: Pardon?

KP: Which front did he fight on?

CS: He was on the front against the French, essentially, French and English, that would be the Western Front. *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

KP: Did he ever go to see the movie or read the novel?

CS: Oh yes. He loved that movie.

KP: Really?

CS: Yes. Oh, yes. I saw that movie in the very early days, and I loved that movie, also.

KP: Did your father think that the movie was accurate?

CS: I don't remember him ever giving a critique of the movie, but he thought it was very good. He thought it was a very good movie. I don't know if he ever read the book, but he certainly did see the movie and he liked the movie very much.

KG: Did he ever talk about gas attacks?

CS: I can't remember him speaking of a gas attack. I can't remember that he ever did.

KG: But he had been attacked by aircraft before?

CS: He was attacked by aircraft. He was in a couple of sizeable battles and survived by good luck. He didn't talk really all that much about the war, either.

KG: Did he ever talk about the social unrest after the war?

CS: Well, he described, there was hunger, there was bad diet. There was, of course, unrest. He remembers that, and there was that terrible inflation, which was when he decided to leave Germany with his brothers, when he had the opportunity due to one of the older brothers who had already come here.

KP: Before or after the war?

CS: I think that uncle was a very shrewd man. He was in the German Navy and he thought he saw what was ahead and he got out and he emigrated to the United States. I think he came in via Canada. I don't really know his history that well, but I think he came in via Canada, got into the United States, and when he was over here, communicated with his brothers, and four of them left Germany to come to this country. My father was immediately employed in Philadelphia, which was a big textile center, and I think there were a lot of people from Germany, very skilled in textiles, who came there and they got good jobs. And we lived in a Philadelphia row-house. My father was a very ambitious man. He went to night school and learned English and he could read and write English quite well, and he could speak it. Of course, he had an accent the rest of his life. And then he got another job, he wanted to be in the country, so he got another job in Freehold, New Jersey, for what was then the Gulistan Rug Factory and he became their master mechanic on the big Jacquart looms. He could take a loom apart and put it back together and adjust everything and get it running. He was a very skillful man.

KP: So your father was self-educated but very well educated.

CS: Very ambitious, hard driving, went to night school every chance he got. He was an eighth-grade graduate. There wasn't any money. Nobody had any money. But he went to night school whenever he could. He worked in Chemnitz, which is near Dresden. He also was a journeyman in Vienna for a while, to learn more about his trade, probably, and they all did that. They traveled abroad to polish up their skills, and, I guess, they became quite skillful in their work and then they were in demand over here. And Philadelphia was quite a center, I guess, for textiles, and there were a lot of German people in Philadelphia. So that's where all five brothers were, in Philadelphia, for a while. All five of them.

KP: Was your father a freethinker when it came to religion?

CS: Yes, he was. He was definitely a freethinker. He wanted to be an artist as a young man, but his father couldn't help him, so he had to do whatever he could to make a living, and his father had a cottage industry in his home, small home in Saxony. They had a loom, and they had nine sons first and then two daughters, and I'm certain those nine sons kept that loom going pretty much twenty-four hours a day. It never stopped. So they were reasonably well off. They never starved. They have some of the most quaint stories that you ever want to hear. It was amazing. The house had a dirt floor, they slept in an unheated attic. For one period, they had six in one bed, three boys facing one way and three boys facing the other way. They were a fun-loving, mischievous, very healthy lot. It was quite amazing, and all of them very hard-driving, ambitious, because they wanted to better themselves. The grandfather was an interesting man, too. He raised canaries. Of course, they always had a garden, and then my father came over here

and had a garden all of his life. It was like part of your lifestyle to have a garden, to grow vegetables. He was even an organic gardener. He composted and they were advanced in many ways, I thought. Very interesting to me. He started a German singing society which is still very much in existence. It's called the Lakewood Maenerchor, and he started that after my mother died and he needed some social life and he loved to sing. Just like Wales, or many places in Europe, they just love to sing. And they preserved their old German folk songs. As far as classics, they didn't really have the education to really get into the deeper, more complicated classics, but they loved Strauss waltzes, loved operatic tunes, and they loved German folk music, and my father played the zither a little bit. Another one of the uncles played the zither quite well. My father played the piano a little bit, self-taught. They would have social evenings where they played musical instruments and [had] conversations. Of course, once the singing society started, that became the center of their social life. My brother and I called it their church, as well as their social club. It was a little bit like a church, [where] instead of a choir, they sang these old, sometimes very sentimental German songs. It was [a] very interesting lifestyle.

KP: Your mother died when you were very young.

CS: I was six years old when my mother died. She was a very conscientious, lovely woman, but she just never had a chance. During the war, I think tuberculosis ran a bit rampant in Germany, and she was a victim of that and my brother also contracted it during the war. He was born in 1914. He got incurably sick and I escaped it somehow. I was born in 1921 and I escaped it.

KP: After your mother died, who took over the household duties?

CS: Well, there was a very close relationship in my family because two brothers, my father and my Uncle Otto, married two sisters. So when my mother passed away, I went over to my Aunt Emma, who was my mother's sister and I lived there for several years and they helped raise me. Several years later, my father remarried and he built a nice home on ten acres of what's now Jackson, New Jersey, and, at that point in time, he was actually in debt, because he had spent all of his money trying to cure the tuberculosis. I remember, he started out in his new marriage, he must have been forty-two, forty-three, he was somewhat in debt. He managed to work his way out of that nicely and he had two more children, so I have a half-brother and a half-sister. We have a very close family relationship, still to this day. My father, unfortunately, smoked so he died of a stroke at age seventy-seven.

KP: You mentioned that there was a thriving German community in Freehold.

CS: Yes. There were a lot of German people and they often owned little tracts of land out in Jackson, what is now Jackson Township. There was one fella in Seaside Heights. There were several in Lakewood, and once he started the Maenerchor, which in a rude translation would be a men's chorus, they wanted to get together to sing and socialize. Of course, it attracted these people of German background from all around and that club grew and grew until it became a sizeable club. Then, during World War II, my father was very instrumental in keeping it going, and he was investigated by the FBI. He was a very staunch man. He answered their questions and he said, "Look, I've been an anti-Hitlerite before you even knew who Hitler was," and he

didn't take any nonsense, and he answered the questions in a very forthright way, and he managed to keep the club house going, and the club survived World War II.

KP: And so they continued to sing their German songs?

CS: I don't know how many of them actually met during the war. I don't know, I was gone, I was drafted.

KP: Did things pick up after the war?

CS: He kept it going, once the war was over, it picked up and it boomed, and it's still very active today.

KP: Your father was against the Nazis from the beginning?

CS: Very, very much so.

KP: There was a big *Bund* in New Jersey.

CS: Yes. Some of his friends were tolerant, shall we say, of Hitler. Uncomfortably so. Some of them were probably really quite sympathetic to Hitler, and the main reason for that I think was Hitler's economic success in Germany that had become an economic disaster after the war. And many of them came over to this country later, and they knew what the economic situation was, and they were very much aware that the Nazis had succeeded in rebuilding their economic system, and there were jobs available, and I think that caused some of them to feel differently about Hitler. They were also not as anti-military as my father, but he never changed his mind on that, at any time of his life.

KP: So your father was a staunch Social Democrat.

CS: He was absolutely a staunch Social Democrat. He had worked all through the Depression because he was working on an invention, and even though the Freehold Rug Mill was having difficulty, the owners kept him at work on his invention. We moved to cheaper quarters because he was a very cautious man, but we never suffered during the Depression. He didn't get rich. He was not a good investor; he was sometimes a bad investor. He would get involved with cronies and he got taken a few times by shady individuals with a good line from Germany. But it was never anything disastrous. We were always, from that time on, we were always quite comfortable.

KG: What type of work did the members of the German community do?

CS: They were mostly skilled craftsmen of one sort or another, carpenters, heating contractors, tradesmen. One fellow worked for Nescafé in Freehold. Several of them were homebuilders, small contractors building custom-built homes. Those were the types of individuals that they

generally were. They almost all had some kind of a trade that they had learned in Germany, which was invaluable over here.

KP: Your father became a Democrat here. What did he think of FDR?

CS: Oh, he was a staunch supporter of Franklin Roosevelt. That was the answer. We would listen to the "fireside chats," you know. And, you know, this was great, this was great stuff. He voted for Franklin Roosevelt. There was no doubt whatsoever who you voted for, and he always listened to all of his speeches.

KP: It sounds like he liked the New Deal as well.

CS: Oh, absolutely. Anything to help out this terrible depression.

KP: What was your father's attitude as FDR was bringing the country closer to war with Germany?

CS: His attitude was that it had to be done.

KP: Really?

CS: Oh, absolutely. He didn't have any doubt about it. It was very painful for him. It was very painful for him, because, I think, he had always hoped that they would get rid of Hitler. See, Hitler really only got thirty-three percent of the vote at any one time. And, of course, the German people voted for an old general. My father did not like that very much.

KP: Hindenburg.

CS: He didn't like that. He didn't care for that at all, then Hindenburg turned around and turned power over to the guy that only got thirty-three percent of the vote. And my father found all this appalling, you know. He really did, but he kept speaking out and lashing out against it, but he couldn't do anything about it, so.

KP: Did your father ever say anything about the Communist Party in Germany?

CS: He would have been completely turned [off] by any violence or force that they used. He was strictly a Social Democrat. I'm not even sure they were really what you would call "socialists." What they really believed in was social security. My father said that even under the Kaiser, they had a very good social security system. He was interested in medical plans, especially for old people, that was the kind of thing he was pushing. He was interested in decent working conditions and in decent hours for people. Because, for many years, he worked twelve hours a day, and he knew what that was like, that was tough, and they used to work Saturdays even, as I recall, or at least half a day on Saturday, and he wanted more time for himself. Outside of that, he didn't really go beyond that.

KP: How much German did you speak growing up?

CS: We spoke a Saxon dialect, which was a quaint German dialect. They tend to dislike the Prussians. They are, apparently, more of a homecraft, maybe, they're almost a little bit hillbillies, except, I think they have a lot of skill there, a little bit artistic, and they don't like getting drafted, and they don't like the military. They really don't. They don't want any part of that. They're just a whole different quarter of Germany that was forced into the German Federation. They didn't go willingly. They were forced in, they were conquered. So, they are a rather colorful people.

KP: It sounds like your father was very colorful.

CS: There was a little bit Bohemian, actually, I think, in a very nice way. Very industrious though.

KP: Did your father ever take up art? Did he ever paint?

CS: He painted. Oh, yes. Absolutely. I still have some paintings hanging on the wall. Oh, yes. He was quite skillful at oil painting. He was no genius, but he did nice work, yes.

KP: Did you realize, at the time of the Depression, how fortunate you were that you never had to worry about food on the table?

CS: Oh, I can't imagine a more ideal place to grow up. Oh, it was a beautiful town. Except there was always an undercurrent of worry among my friends, and it was a worry that the rug mill would shut down or slow down. That was a big worry at that time. I think, almost subconsciously, that kind of rubbed off on us. Also, I remember, even as a very young man, talking about the war we're gonna get into someday and we had an undercurrent of fear for that war. I remember my cousin and I discussing what it was gonna be like when we got into this war.

KP: What did you think it would be like?

CS: Oh, it wasn't as we imagined it would be.

KP: Really?

CS: No.

KP: How did you imagine it?

CS: Oh, well, we imagined that we would never survive it and that it'd be really quite awful, you know. But as it was, I really lucked out, actually, when you consider everything. For me, it was bad enough but it wasn't that bad.

KP: Really, you imagined it worse?

CS: I imagined it worse than it actually was, yes. There was always this cloud hanging over our heads at that time. I guess the ideas were quite prevalent during my youth.

KP: Did you read science fiction? Did you get it from H.G. Wells?

CS: I used to read a lot of H.G. Wells, yes. I actually waded through *The Science of Life* one time, pretty much, not all of it, but pretty much all of it. That's pretty weighty stuff. And my father was not interested in that.

KP: Really?

CS: No. He wasn't interested in H.G. Wells. That was foreign to him. But I'm sure his influence was there. No, I used to really like H.G. Wells and I read Eugene O' Neill, and I read, you know, a lot of plays and Ibsen and so forth, and that probably came from, when you have a European background, I was always exposed to decent music, what we call "old-fashioned, solid European music" and my father would listen to a symphonic concert once in a while, too, and that rubbed off on me. But, of course, his favorite was Johann Strauss. He remembers his days in Vienna with great warmth.

KP: So that's where he picked it up?

CS: Yes. He liked Vienna a lot.

KP: How did your father feel about education? Did he want you to go to college?

CS: He felt very strongly about it and he was very progressive. He encouraged me. I got into Rutgers and he bought me a car for fifty dollars. It was a 1930 Chevrolet, and I painted it red and black. I started a little bus route in Jackson and Freehold, and I got through college very nicely. He had a large second floor, by that time, in the house, so that lodging didn't cost much. Food was quite economical. We would go to the farms around Freehold and buy hundred pound bags of potatoes and that was what Europeans were accustomed to eating. This was a real staple in their diets; they ate potatoes. Once-in-a-while, whenever you could get it, meat, of course. Actually, they may have eaten too much meat. So, I got through Rutgers very painlessly. One day, I decided I wasn't gonna pay the activities fee, I think it was five dollars, because, it said in print you really don't have to pay this. I was looking to save money, whenever I could. So, I'll never forget, Dean Metzger called me in. He was a lovely gentleman.

KP: Almost every interview I get a story about Dean Metzger.

CS: Well, I think Dean Metzger spotted us a couple times pushing the Chevrolet down College Avenue to get it started, you know. A couple guys in the back, and me steering, and we'd get it started and off we'd go. So, I went in and he said, "Young man, I understand that you're not gonna pay the activities fee." And I said, "Well, it says in there that I really don't have to. I'm on a very tight budget. I don't really have much money, so I'd rather not pay it." So he said, "Bring

me this young man's scholarship record," I think it was, so they brought it in, and on the spot, he gave me a $150 scholarship, which was like from heaven. And he says, "Young man, will you now pay the five dollar activity fee?" And I said, "Yes, sir."

KP: How well were you prepared for Rutgers?

CS: I think what prepared me the most for Rutgers was the two or three vacations that I spent working in the rug mill, which I disliked. So, as a consequence of this, I became very ambitious to get the hell out of there, because a lot of my friends wound up there, practically for life and it was not my idea of the way to spend a lifetime. But my father encouraged me to try to get an education. I think the biggest deficiency I had was I never really took to algebra very well, and when I came to Rutgers, I ran into a good stiff algebra course. But, just by really digging in and working hard, in those days you could pass almost any course, because, compared to what I see my grandchildren being subjected to now, math-wise, our stuff was not that complicated. We had good teachers, and I just really dug in, you know, and I worked very hard and I got a B in algebra. So that was the biggest hurdle I had.

KP: Freehold gave you enough background to succeed in school?

CS: Freehold gave me, I think, a very nice attitude. We had some excellent teachers, in those days, in Freehold, and they had very nice traditions, and I think they prepared me adequately.

KG: Did you know that you wanted to be an engineer while you were in high school?

CS: I actually wanted, I think, to be an architect, but Rutgers didn't have architecture, so, fortunately, I took civil engineering, meaning all the while to enter into the structural end of architecture. Which was, I think, very fortunate, because I think that's where my talents lay anyway, so it worked out very well.

KP: Why did you choose Rutgers?

CS: I spent a year at the Trenton School of Industrial Arts, which was really a pretty good school, but, I think I realized that I was doing well there scholastically, and not so well in their shop work, and, a couple of the teachers there, I think, encouraged me to think about going to a university. I knew Rutgers was here. I knew I could reach it by commuting. I had also commuted to the Trenton School of Industrial Arts. So I applied to Rutgers and I was accepted and my father encouraged me to go and, I think, by that time, I wanted a university degree.

KP: Your father must have been very proud of having a son go to university.

CS: Yes. I think he was. I think the immigrants' sons went for engineering. My father admired engineers and engineering. He always felt that, in his own field, he would have liked a little more scientific knowledge to go with his own practical knowledge. So he was quite pleased that

I was gonna be an engineer. He was hoping I'd be a textile engineer. But, I did a small switch there, into civil engineering, but he was willing to go with that.

KP: When you went to Trenton School of Industrial Arts, did you commute?

CS: I commuted to Trenton.

KP: That's a pretty long trip.

CS: I lived there for a little while, lived in the YMCA for a while. But then I had a chance to commute, and there were three of us, again, and commuting was, as I say, very popular, I think, mostly for economic reasons in those days. There were a lot of commuters. It was all done because there was no cost for your quarters, food wasn't that expensive, and we all ganged together and carpooled. Actually, I had a little bus route going, and, incidentally, I had no special insurance. Unbelievable. I had a 1930 car. It had as many as four passengers, all the time. On Saturdays, I think I had as many as seven people in that car, and I would take them to Freehold. When we unloaded, it was like a comedy. It was just unbelievable. It was a totally different world then.

KG: Did they share the expenses with you for the commute or did you take that all on your own?

CS: What?

KG: Did you share the expenses for the commute?

CS: Yeah.

KP: Who did you commute with? Were they Rutgers students?

CS: Well, I picked up Harold Koenig, who's parents had a farm in Jackson. I picked up Harold every day. Incidentally, he went to Northwestern and he became a neurosurgeon. He was a brilliant guy. And then I picked up Larry Powers in Freehold. I picked him up everyday and I think we managed to get him late to his class everyday, just about, because he had the misfortune of having an early [class]. And I finally went in with him to see his physics professor and I apologized and said, "Look, I was doing my best to get Larry here, but there's always one guy late every day and it's not Larry." So, I'll never forget and that professor was very good about it. People were very human then. And we used to park right over here on College Avenue and eat lunch in the car. Oh, I had one guy that I will always remember until the day I die. His name was Kenneth Dupuis. His name is on the Class of '43 plaque outside of the RAC. He was working his way through college. He commuted with me. He put in a full shift at the Freehold Rug Mill to get money, a full shift, commuted here with me and took daytime [courses]. He had a business course. He couldn't have done it in an engineering course, but he was able to do it in a business course, and I used to go to the student union and wake him up. He'd be asleep on the couch there, stretched out, you know, and I'd wake him up when it was time to go home. He was a remarkable guy. In his senior year, he was a very charming guy, he got married, had a beautiful

girlfriend. They got married, and then, tragically, he was ROTC, he went into the Army. He was in a jeep, the jeep hit a mine, was instantly killed. That's the tragedy of Kenneth Dupuis.

KP: What happened to his wife?

CS: I don't know. I lost track of her. She was young, very attractive. I really didn't know her, personally.

KP: It sounds like you had quite a social life.

CS: Oh, we had the hottest bull sessions, in that car, on the campus. We argued and fought all the way there and all the way back.

KP: And you also spent some of that time at the Coop?

CS: Oh, I spent considerable time. Yes, I found out where Douglass was very, very fast. I had one lovely Douglass commuter with me and we were married in 1943.

KP: Your first wife went to Douglass?

CS: Yes. And then after we were out of college, we got married, because, when I got drafted, we missed each other so dreadfully that when we had the chance, we got married, which was unwise at that time, of course. Worked out very well after the war. Bought a little house in Roselle, we had two children, and then, in late 1955, she was stricken with spinal meningitis, a very rare disease, struck without warning, and she died in the hospital.

KP: What did you argue about in the car?

CS: Oh, my goodness, philosophy and politics, there were, of course, some conservatives. There was a group of liberals, including me. Just loved to argue. Arguing was "the staff of life" for us in those days.

KP: What are your recollections of all the Republicans who were on campus?

CS: I think many of the students were staunch Republicans. But with the Depression not that far away, we had some staunch Roosevelt supporters. I would guess, probably, the Republicans on campus were probably in the majority. That would be my guess.

KP: How did you and your classmates feel in the years just prior to the war?

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CS: Well, December 7th converted everybody I knew. I was anti-ROTC. I used to get demerits all the time for taking off my necktie in the hot weather, and I was just a real ROTC delinquent, you know, and most of it deliberately, actually. Probably my father's influence. I used to just

love to make as much trouble as I could without flunking the course. I just [barely got by]. All the same, I was scared to death of Mussolini, scared to death of Hitler and the Nazis, scared to death of the Japanese. When Pearl Harbor came, everyone was ready to enlist the next day, including me. You know, we were all ready to go.

KP: It sounds like you were an exception in the fact that you knew what was going on in the world.

CS: I think we had a foreboding of this war with the Nazis, partly my father's influence. I think when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia, we already had a foreboding of an eventual war. Why I had this, I'm not sure. Probably the influence of the Europeans, who were very politically savvy, I think, at that time, and, probably, I got a lot of that influence.

KP: Did you notice that a lot of native-born Americans were not as aware of what was going on?

CS: Well, I didn't think there was any great feeling among some of the Americans I knew about Hitler. Nothing like it was in our home, nothing compared to that. [They] were just not as aware of the Nazis.

KP: Yes, but even politics in general.

CS: Perhaps even politics in general. I think Europeans are just naturally politically inclined and get involved and I think Europeans just take more interest in politics, frankly.

KP: It sounds like your father really made an effort to stay informed.

CS: Yes. He was very interested in politics. And he was very interested in getting good working conditions and social security and old age benefits for people, which he pointed out that even Bismarck had, which is true, and I don't think anybody would mistake Bismarck for a liberal.

KG: You were a Phi Beta Kappa. You graduated Phi Beta Kappa?

CS: I just barely sneaked in, as I recall. Yes. I just got in under the wire. I think I was the last one of the class they let in.

KG: So that was a pretty big accomplishment for you.

CS: It was. Oh, yes. I'm still contributing to Phi Beta Kappa to this day.

KG: You were also involved in the engineering honor society?

CS: Tau Beta Pi, yes, that was even more meaningful. I took that very seriously.

KG: You were vice-president of that organization in 1942.

CS: You know, I don't remember that, so it must be so.

KP: We probably know this from your yearbooks.

CS: Okay. Well, I'm glad you told me that. I'll brag about that from now on.

KP: You listed Professor Mirgain as your favorite professor.

CS: Oh, he was terrific.

KP: What stands out about him?

CS: Well, he was very dedicated. He was tough. He had a great teaching technique. He would lecture a little bit, and then he would do a problem, then he would suddenly stop, and he'd call on you to work out the answer, or to give him the answer, and then he would continue. So he involved the class in the whole process and he was a good lecturer, and he was just a good teacher, a very good teacher. He also employed me once. I did some appraisal work for him. I used to go around, and, you know, appraise some of the value of some of the old buildings over here for the University. He taught me what to do. I also went to surveying camp with him up in Dover, and that was great fun. He was just a dedicated, terrific professor. And the other great professor was Johnson. He was a much older man. He was very good. He used to work all the engineering problems out to two decimal places. Now whether it was, 1982.12 or 3.12, he would work it out to two decimal places, which, of course, mathematically, is rather dubious, but, he was such a thorough teacher, and so likeable, that he made a lasting impression on me.

KG: Did you do any other part-time work while you were in college or during the summer?

CS: Well, as a result of Rutgers, I immediately escaped the Gulistan Rug Mill. I was hired by the Pennsylvania Railroad over on Suydam Avenue.

KP: Oh, yes, Suydam.

CS: And I worked for them every vacation after that. Outdoors; I had a marvelous job.

KP: What did you do?

CS: I did surveying. I did what we called "string lining" of the tracks. I did surveying of some of their drainage work, you know, to get water out of the right-of-way. It was just a terrific job and I had that, you know, every summer.

KP: So Professor Mirgain was teaching you surveying.

CS: Yes. Oh, yes.

KP: He taught you well enough that you could make a living in the summer.

CS: I could've made a living. Soon as the war was over, I never used it again after that. But I used it every summer, and I owed many a pleasant summer to that skill.

KP: How did you feel about having to attend mandatory chapel?

CS: Well, I groused a little bit, but, actually, I think I really enjoyed it, and I love the chapel, and I would complain and I'd always go there and be there on time, you know. I may have taken my allotted number of cuts, but I have very nice memories of that chapel and I've been back a couple of times, to attend concerts there.

KP: It's a beautiful building.

CS: Absolutely. And I used to enjoy Dean Metzger. So, I actually have fond memories of it.

KP: What else do you remember about ROTC?

CS: I don't think I ever understood ROTC, and I was about the least military-type individual, although I was a little more coordinated, and I used to do manual of arms and all that quite well. One of my friends would do the manual of arms and Larry Powers and I would watch him with great glee, because he would wind up with the rifle barrel in his hands and the stock on his shoulder, and how he managed to do this, I don't know to this day. A very intellectual sort of a person and, of course, Larry and I would be practically in hysterics, probably got a few more demerits. And I just never really understood, they were always teaching me the organization of a division, and, at that time, I don't even think I ever really grasped what a division was. I didn't care, I really didn't. How I ever got through the course, I don't know. I found out exactly what a division was, later on.

KP: What were some of the things that you learned while you were in ROTC?

CS: I never really became a garrison soldier. I was a rebel all the time. I was almost constantly in difficulty of one kind or another. I just rebelled constantly, it was my nature. But then, quite seriously though, once you find yourself on the front lines and artillery shells are coming in and mortar shells are coming in, my attitude changed very rapidly, and I took it quite seriously, and I wanted to survive, and help as many other people to survive. I was even anxious to help the enemy survive, if it became possible. I wanted very much to win that war, there was no question about it.

KP: You didn't have any ambivalence about the fact that we had to fight Hitler?

CS: None whatsoever. No. I got drafted, though. I really tried to get into the technical end of the war. I felt, I had been told, as a matter-of-fact, that my engineering training was valuable. I was technically inclined, I knew I wasn't a soldier, I mean, that was the last thing I ever was. So I tried to enlist. They were looking for weathermen. The Air Force needed weathermen. I had all

the qualifications, but I ran into unexpected, great difficulties in the fact that I had no citizenship papers of my own, and my father didn't want to put his in the mail, so I had no direct proof of my citizenship. I have now, believe me, I learned my lesson. So, I had all the other qualifications and they kept asking for evidence of citizenship and we kept mailing back affidavits. But while they were looking all that over, and I guess they were not impressed by any of this, I got drafted, so I went off. I got drafted into the infantry.

KP: Did you do a stint in the ASTP?

CS: Oh, I got very lucky, and I was lucky all through the war; I was just dumb lucky. I was in Camp Shelby and I was a very bad garrison soldier. I cursed. I had great difficulty saluting, I would forget to salute, or I would be surly. I liked target practice, you know. I liked anything I thought was worthwhile, where I might learn something. Everything else, I hated, just categorically hated, so, at that time, the 69th Division was starting new companies called a "cannon company," which was really a little artillery company to be placed at the disposal of the regimental commander to use in anyway he wished. Every company commander was required to send two or three of his “best” men to go into Cannon Company. So, of course, what some company commanders did was to send guys they most wanted to get rid of to Cannon Company. I always assumed I was one of these. So there we were and we trained and, of course, Cannon Company was made to order for me. I was a surveyor. There wasn't anything I couldn't do pointing a cannon, you know. Technically, I was very good for Cannon Company, and that finally started to pay off. I could almost, literally, hit a dime with a cannon shot because of my engineering training. So they put me in the right place. I went into ASTP, though, first. I left Camp Shelby. There were actually requests for college-trained people to apply, because they were looking for people to go into the Manhattan Project. I didn't realize that at the time. I just applied and I was selected. I went to Ole Miss for two months and we had a wonderful time there. It was just great, unbelievably grand. My wife joined me there for a month. We just had a terrific time. I thought the food was marvelous. We ate at the cafeteria and took some more courses. I was there in the autumn, then, to the University of Minnesota in the winter. I took one whole semester. Got very good grades, I think, and I got more engineering training. Then we got interviewed for the Manhattan Project, which we had no idea what this was, and I, along with many others in the ASTP were turned down, and were sent to the 44th Infantry Division in Salina, Kansas, and they were going overseas shortly. And because I had been in Cannon Company before, I guess they assigned me to Cannon Company again. I was, again, very lucky, and I went overseas with the 44th Infantry Division and the Cannon Company, 114th Regiment.

KP: Were you just waiting at Ole Miss for two months?

CS: Yes, I think I was just waiting at Ole Miss.

KP: What did you do?

CS: We took courses.

KP: You took courses?

CS: Engineering refresher courses, yes, and then when they sent us up to the University of Minnesota I got one whole semester in, full engineering. I got some good courses. It was a very good school. Of course, I wanted to succeed at whatever it was they were training us for, needless to say. Therefore, I got excellent grades.

KP: When did you later learn that you considered for the Manhattan Project?

CS: Only when they started to interview us and I had no idea what the Manhattan Project was. I had no idea whatsoever what it was.

KP: How did they describe it? Did they call it the Manhattan Project?

CS: They called it the Manhattan Project.

KP: But you had no idea what it involved?

CS: None whatsoever. I hadn't the faintest inkling of an idea of what was going on.

KP: When did you learn what the Manhattan Project was?

CS: One of my close friends was selected and he went to New Mexico and quite sometime later, I can't remember when, I got some correspondence from him. But I don't think I really had any idea of what it was until after the first atomic bomb went off. Then we knew what the Manhattan Project was. We knew it was some kind of secret project. We had no idea of what.

KG: What was your position within in Cannon Company?

CS: With the 114th Regiment, Cannon Company, we had a captain who was a picture of a soldier from New Jersey, actually, very handsome, and he and I just did not get along at all. We were from opposite ends of the totem pole. He was the quintessential garrison soldier. He kept me a private until a general order concerning my job promoted me to corporal. The captain resented this promotion but complied with it. I was called the instrument (transit) man.

KG: Was he from West Point?

CS: No.

KP: This was Captain Tankel?

CS: No, Captain Tankel was my good friend and sponsor. He was great. He succeeded to captain overseas.

KP: This is your first captain?

CS: Second captain.

KP: Your first captain before ASTP?

CS: No. He was the second captain overseas.

KP: Overseas?

CS: With the company I went overseas with. The first captain really disliked me. I didn't really dislike him. It was really nothing personal. He knew I was just not a good garrison soldier. Half of the time, I wasn't quite dressed right, and I didn't shine my shoes unless I was threatened with KP and all that, you know? I was just not his kind of soldier. I was surly. I was also the right age for the obstacle courses. I was an ex-track man and I was good in obstacle courses and I just loved to rub it in to any officer that was on the obstacle course whenever I could. This was my delight. So, he was really quite a nice man in his own way, but as far as wartime was concerned, he was a misfit. He had a terrible time with maps and here he was, in charge of a company. You can imagine, an officer who had a hard time reading maps, this guy really did. He got us lost once behind the German lines and it was a pretty terrifying experience. We got out of that okay, but it was by dumb luck.

KP: When did you realize you were behind German lines?

CS: Oh, we knew it. We took some prisoners and if we had run into an SS Division, I wouldn't be here, I'll tell you that right now. But we ran into the ordinary German division, and quite frankly, they were just interested in getting something to eat. You know, they were a pathetic lot by then. We got out of that all right. One day, the good captain managed to get the whole company on a hill where we were somehow visible to the German Army, and they still had a few shells left. Thank God, not too many, and they let us have it, you know. They were very good. They really zeroed in, you know, and the poor captain got very, very, badly wounded. I really felt bad about it, very seriously wounded. I think he lost both legs, actually, and we got a new captain, Captain Tankel, who was a fine, fine, wartime captain. Good, rough and ready Texan, very excellent at reading maps and reconnaissance. He was just a very good captain. He was also just what they call a "ninety-day wonder," but, he was an excellent officer. He knew I had surveying experience. He knew I'd be good technically, so he started to promote me and I was placed in charge of a platoon made to order for me. They tended to be a bunch of discontents, the whole platoon, and they had gone through about three sergeants and they were just a tough lot. There was a Missourian knife fighter, and there was an American Indian that would get terribly drunk, and he'd go on crying jags, and there was one of the toughest fist-fighters that you'd ever want to meet in your whole life in this platoon. They were just a tough bunch of guys.

KP: They seemed to be the misfits.

CS: I think they were not military types. I think it was a collection of guys unhappy with Army ways, actually.

KP: It sounds like the situation you had with Cannon Company is that it just became a place to send all the troublemakers.

CS: This may be partially so, but there were also some excellent soldiers. We had one fellow, a very nice corporal. I'll never forget him. We used to have to lift him up out of his cot in the morning and stood him up so we could get him out for reveille, because you couldn't wake this kid up. So we used to lift him out of his cot and stand him up and get him awake. This was the kind of platoon I had and, of course, I was the ideal leader for this group.

KG: So were relations with your platoon good?

CS: Oh, we had an excellent platoon. This was the right bunch of guys to be in the war with. They were good, tough guys, and they were smart, and we didn't have any chickenshit, but we took care of each other. You have to remember, in the infantry, it's the buddy system that keeps people efficient, because you want to stay alive and you want to protect each other and it's the companionship that works. See, that's what works on the front line.

KP: I want to go back a little to your time at Camp Shelby.

CS: Okay.

KP: You were sort of a reluctant soldier.

CS: Yes, absolutely. I wanted to get into the war. I had no illusions about that, but I disliked Army life and Army ways.

KP: But you also wanted to finish your college career first.

CS: I did finish my college career, you know, here, before I ever got drafted.

KP: Had you thought either of joining the Air Force or the Navy?

CS: I volunteered for the Air Force to be a weatherman. I also opted for the Navy, when I got drafted. I couldn't pass the green-blue color chart. Couldn't read the green-blue numbers to save my soul. I can tell blue and I can tell green, but they had these little dots, the little numbers. I could not pass, so they crossed me off for the Navy.

KP: Did they run any background checks on you?

CS: I don't know what they were thinking, I really don't know. I filled out all the papers. I think I had all the qualifications to be a weatherman. I had good recommendations from Rutgers. They just kept asking for more citizenship proof and we kept mailing in affidavits. I refused to use my father's citizenship paper. I was afraid it would get lost, you know? I wasn't gonna do it to him anyhow, besides, I didn't know what the consequences might be. You know, I thought I might get an acceptance one day. So, instead of that, I got a draft notice.

KP: You reported to Camp Shelby. Had you traveled to the South before the war?

CS: No, I had not. I had traveled once, as an eight year old, to Germany to visit my brother and my grandparents. That was the only traveling I had ever done. So, the South was a revelation to me.

KP: What did you think of the South?

CS: I was absolutely astonished at that time. I was a little naive, too. I sat on the bus one day and there was a seat next to me. There was a young African-American on the bus, so I said, "Why don't you sit down?" So he sat down. And the driver immediately pulled over the bus, ignored me because I was in uniform, and said, "Now get up out of that seat. You know you can't take that seat. And get where you belong on the back of the bus." I wasn't accustomed to any of these customs. I wouldn't believe this was actually happening, but it really did happen, and the young African-American got up and went to the back. I didn't say much of anything. I may have said, "What's going on?" And the driver said, "Well, they're supposed to sit in the back." I guess it wasn't that serious, but it was a disturbing experience. Saturday, while in ASTP, we'd go into town in Oxford, Mississippi, and, of course, the African-Americans, if you were walking down, and there were many of them in town, they'd get off the sidewalk. This was all quite amazing to me. I noticed in the cafeteria assembly line, some of the black people who were working there were quite discontented, sullen, I think is the word, and it was an unpleasant experience. As far as the town itself, I loved it. You know, I loved the university. I was in the Army with a lot of other Southern boys. The segregation was just sort of like taken for granted. I [don't] think many of us really thought about it very much.

KP: But did it differ from the North?

CS: Oh, there is no question about it.

KP: It sounds like you were shocked by some of their customs.

CS: I was shocked by coming face-to-face with some of the customs that I had probably heard about, you know? Heard about, but to actually see them is quite shocking.

KP: Could you talk about your experiences during basic training?

CS: Well, my first experience was Fort Dix.

KP: You'd actually reported to Fort Dix?

CS: Yes, but I think I really thought it was all a little ridiculous and I didn't really belong there. Of course, I spent the rest of my time in the United States trying to get suitable technical duty, which, in the infantry, doesn't get you to first base. I really didn't take it seriously, so I just became rather sullen, but I was so young that I really wasn't that unhappy. I was just rebellious,

that's all, and I had plenty of company. There were a couple guys that had volunteered in the infantry, and after they found out what it was like, they hated it as much as I did. So we used to tell each other, I probably used to tell them, "At least I got drafted, you volunteered," you know?

KP: So the guys who had volunteered, what did they expect and what were they so shocked that they found?

CS: Well, there was a one farmer, I'll never forget. He was just so unhappy. He had volunteered and he would've stayed out because he was a farmer, and it wasn't very long at all before he wished that he could've gone back to his farm, and, of course, he couldn't get out because they wouldn't let you out once they had you. You were in, that was it. So he and I would commiserate and complain and curse and tell jokes and just be as disagreeable as we could without getting court-martialed. That's about the way it was.

KG: Were there any other college graduates with you while you were in basic training? Did they give you a hard time for being a college graduate?

CS: In Camp Shelby, my best buddy was a six foot, six inch rebellious soldier who had gone through law school, and he was really quite a good soldier, actually. But he always took delight in the fact that they could never get a uniform that was long enough to fit him and this was his constant problem. His fatigues would come out of his leggings, and we just really had mischievous fun about this, and he and I formed a sort of mutual protection association, because in that company, there were a couple of guys that were pretty dangerous. I mean, in all seriousness, I think one guy, definitely, I think, was a psychopath.

KP: When you say dangerous, what do you mean?

CS: Well, I think he was a little off his [rocker]. I think he was abnormal.

KP: What did he do that made you think this?

CS: Well, he liked to go to town on Saturdays and beat up on the *Nisei* that were also stationed around camp and he told some pretty dreadful stories. I think he was a sadist, actually. He was a big, burly guy. I can guess how he got in the Cannon Company. He was a good guy to get rid of.

KP: How quickly were you put in Cannon Company?

CS: Pardon?

KP: How quickly were you put in the Cannon Company?

CS: About six weeks after basic training. I was one of the guys selected for Cannon Company, you know, this special company that was going to be formed.

KP: But how long had you been in basic?

CS: Oh, I had gone all the way through basic training.

KP: Oh, so you had finished basic training?

CS: I was in the battalion headquarter company at the time. I was a private at battalion headquarters and they were questioning me a little bit. I had a couple of officers that took an interest in me because they knew I had structural knowledge and they would ask me about pontoon bridges, and I would respond to that very readily. I was interested in that. I was hoping as a matter-of-fact, I was hoping for a transfer into the engineers. All through my career, I was trying to get into the engineers. I wanted to build bridges, and, you know, and do engineering projects. That's what I really wanted to do and I never succeeded in getting into the engineers. I would have been much happier with the engineers.

KP: Did you ever think that the Army was really screwed up?

CS: Well, I think one of the infantryman's favorite expressions was, "There's a right way, the wrong way, and the Army way," and that was the way we looked at it, rather philosophically.

KP: You mentioned that there were *Nisei* troops in training at Camp Shelby.

CS: Yes. There were, yes.

KP: What was the general attitude about these Japanese-Americans?

CS: I think the attitude, in general, was, the word went out that these guys were crack troops. That was the general attitude, you know. When they did drill, they were superb. They were superb soldiers and I think most of us recognized this, and there were stories about them. There were already stories about a *Nisei* division, I think in Italy or something, who distinguished themselves. So most of us really admired them. But there were a few crackpots around, you know, the types that just say, "Well, they're Japs," you know, "They're enemy." There was this much of a divergence of opinion.

KP: About the quality of the *Nisei*?

CS: Just the fact that they were of a Japanese background. There were some ignorant people in the infantry, you know, little education.

KP: Did you ever serve with anyone who wasn't literate?

CS: I would say that there were some, in the infantry, people that didn't know how to read, yes. And my friend, (Menzer?), who used to do a lot of clerical work, he was a natural for it, and he would come back. He would see many of the service records, and he knew a lot about the people, and their IQ, and he knew there were some very low IQs, and some very odd individuals. There was one individual that was really incredible. I think this guy definitely belonged in an

institution, because he went around saying he had been on Corregidor, had served under MacArthur, and everyone believed him. He was a handsome fellow, very snappy guy, and he would disappear for half a day at a time. He'd just go, just wander off, and on guard duty, I think, one night, he took a rifle butt and belted somebody in the head with it. This guy was really a strange guy. And I asked (Menzer?), "Get his service record. Was he really on Corregidor?" Well, (Menzer?) could find absolutely nothing that this guy had been overseas, and there was another guy that was trying to get out by sleepwalking and we'd wake up in the middle of the night and this guy would be clumping around the barracks, banging into [things]. But I doubt any of them ever got out. They probably all went overseas.

KG: Being part of the headquarters company for the battalion ...

CS: I started out in the battalion headquarters company, yes.

KG: Did you have to walk much or did you get to ride around in jeeps and things like that?

CS: Well, I think hikes were a part of all the infantryman's training, even Cannon Company. In Salina, Kansas, my wife was in town and we were told that if we didn't make the twenty-five mile hike, [we would get] no pass. They had put me in the wrong sized shoes. They had me in a pair of 10Ds, I remember, and my shoe size happens to be 11B, and I was in a pair of 10Ds. And hiking was my forte, except, on this hike, I got blisters on my feet. I walked the twenty-five miles, because I was the perfect age for it and wanted to be with my wife, it was no problem, except I had those damn blisters on the bottom of my feet. At the end of the twenty-five mile hike, they walked us in, there weren't that many of us left, and they walked us in formation for three miles back to the barracks. This was excellent training, you know? This is how you make a good soldier. Now, this kind of stuff, I responded to, you know, I thought this was okay. I didn't mind that at all. I thought that was good, and I made it back, and, of course, everybody got a pass, including the guys that didn't make the hike. That was okay, too. Just as long as I got my pass, I was happy. I hope you don't mind some quaint stories. You need a little humor in this thing. Overseas, we rode in trucks which pulled our cannons.

KP: No. It's interesting because some people romanticize certain parts of their military experiences, so it's actually very refreshing to get people who are not romanticizing.

CS: No, I'm not romanticizing. I'm also not gonna make it any worse and I'm gonna stay all the way through and I was very lucky and I was the perfect age to be in this kind of a situation.

KP: Was there anything that you particularly disliked about being in the Army?

CS: I always resented these huge formations when some general was visiting and I would look around and a lot of the older guys were collapsing and being carted away in ambulances because of heat exhaustion. I thought this was ridiculous and I was bored stiff. I was young and nothing bothered me. I was never on sick leave in two and a half years in the Army, either in garrison or in combat, incidentally. So I was very healthy. But there were people that were suffering, you know? I just hated all that. I hated being treated like an impersonal cog in a wheel. I hated the

contrast between the formality, all the great respect the officers demanded in garrison, and then when they got into combat, they all managed to hide their insignias as rapidly as possible, because they don't want to get shot and they wanted to be in the buddy system, too. I disliked the constant waiting, the wasted time and the boredom which is part of Army life.

KP: Even before you got into combat?

CS: Yes. Well, I just really didn't like military life. Later on, though, I learned a great deal of respect for certain military types, the men that had the ability and the courage to carry it all the way through. I gained a lot of respect for them. Especially the guys that were up on the front lines trying to lead soldiers, you know? Hey, this is tough. Very tough.

KP: You referred to one of your captains that acted like a puppet.

CS: Yes, our first captain overseas. He was a garrison soldier, very conscious of the government's equipment. He would worry about how much it was costing and how we weren't taking care of it, and when we got overseas, he would even worry if it got dirty, you know? He was really much concerned about this military equipment. Meanwhile, he'd read the map wrong and we'd wind up behind enemy lines. He was just a strange officer, you know? He really was. He was also very good at military formations. Superb looking guy, you know? Immaculately dressed and tall, handsome, quite athletic …

KP: The 44th was originally a National Guard unit.

CS: I guess so. See, I joined them very late in their service.

KP: Did you get a sense that it still had this National Guard element? Because it sounds like your captain was really schooled in the National Guard.

CS: That was a possibility, yes. That's a possibility that he was schooled in the National Guard. He probably loved it. The National Guard was not quite for me. I'm not the type.

KP: You had started with one division and then ended up where?

CS: I did the ASTP. I got out of the 69th Division.

KP: The 69th?

CS: In Camp Shelby. I started in the 69th and was transferred right to Ole Miss in the ASTP.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Werner Carl Sturm on March 1, 1996, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick with Kurt Piehler and ...

KG: Ken Gilliland.

KP: You were just in the midst of saying how you were transferred to ASTP at Ole Miss and you took refresher courses in engineering while waiting to hear on the Manhattan Project.

CS: Right. They actually wanted us to refresh our knowledge and help us to do so. They gave us engineering courses, they gave us math courses, refresher courses. They had a very fine physical training program, the best I had in all the time I was in the Army. Far Superior ...

KP: Really?

CS: … Far superior to anything I ever got in the infantry. As far as getting in good shape, it was very, very good. They had a football coach there. They had this one young man, who was a superb athlete, probably an officer of some kind, and he would lead the run everyday and he would go up and down the stadium steps, and we were supposed to try to keep up with him, which we did to the best of our ability, and he was terrific. We just got in very good shape, in addition to everything else we were doing. So this was a very upbeat time for me, because I enjoyed all this. This was great. I really loved it. There was no training in weapons, though. They just wanted us in good shape, and they wanted us to have our knowledge sharp. So, I guess, in case we were selected, you know, we would be useful.

KP: Where did your wife live at Ole Miss? How hard was it to find her a place to live?

CS: My wife was just a terrific person. She always managed to get a room in town, somehow, and she always managed to get a job. She was wonderful. She could do many things. She was very skillful. She could do clerical work and type a little bit. She was a good student at Douglass, and whenever I had time off, we were able to meet, and, of course, it was very nice. There were even some dances we could go to and there were concerts. We just had a very nice time whenever she could spare the time. She finally gave up one year of college, and graduated one year later, as a result of being able to spend some time with me and those were very happy days, you know, that we had together.

KP: How often did you write to each other when you were separated?

CS: She wrote often and I used to write a lot. I used to write, you know, I can't really remember, certainly, at least once a week. I used to like to sketch and I would make sketches, and I would send her sketches of some landscapes that I saw, so we had some nice communication. She sent me cookies to the front, and they got there, and they lasted about fifteen minutes. My buddies loved them.

KP: Did any of your letters survive?

CS: I don't think so. Maybe one or two somewhere. But they were all these ...

KP: V-mail.

CS: Speed letters.

KP: Yes, V-mail.

CS: No, I don't think any survived. I don't think so.

KP: You started out with one division, and then had this break, and went back to school.

CS: Marvelous break. Yes.

KP: Were there any differences between the divisions, in terms of leadership, in terms of the men you served with?

CS: Yes, to some degree. We had a first sergeant who was Hawaiian, and I thought he was a very good first sergeant, very amiable man, very competent, and we had a very good captain, and this I'm sure was probably done deliberately, because they probably were serious about getting a good cannon company together, and, of course, this is only my joke about each guy sending his three worst.

KG: You were platoon sergeant, right?

CS: I wound up a platoon sergeant, under combat conditions, yes.

KG: Did you have a platoon leader during that time?

CS: I had a lieutenant.

KG: And what did you think of him?

CS: He was a former first sergeant. He was very good, clerically, but he couldn't aim a cannon. I mean, the poor guy was just not suited for Cannon Company. Outside of that, he was okay. He was an Irishman, he was a good soldier, very patriotic, had been a very good first sergeant, but he just didn't have the technical ability to be in Cannon Company, and he got there quite late in his career. Up until that time, he had done the clerical work, for which he was well-suited, but everybody made allowances for that. He was a bit of a fabricator. I think he knew how the Army worked.

KG: He was a clerk?

CS: He knew how it worked. He would fabricate action that never took place. Now, I can testify to that because I was with him.

KP: So he would say that the company was involved in actions that it never was in?

CS: That's entirely possible, yes.

KP: So he would send these reports up?

CS: Yes. I think he would exaggerate some reports.

KP: Knowing that his superior wanted to read this?

CS: Yes. I think so. He may even have almost believed it himself. I looked at him a couple of times and I thought, "You're a strange individual." I think he wanted something dramatic to happen.

KP: You seemed to have run into a large number of memorable characters during your time in the Army.

CS: Well, there were some good stories, strange stories. Yes.

KP: You were sent to this new division in Kansas, which is a very different part of the country.

CS: Yes.

KP: How long were you in Kansas?

CS: Well, I wish I could remember some of this stuff. I think I was in Kansas a good part of the summer. Yes, I was in Kansas a good part of the summer of 1944, training, because we had heard word we were gonna go overseas. We didn't know where we were gonna go overseas. So they were finalizing our training. We slept out on the prairie. We did some marches. We did the twenty-five mile hike. We were getting ready to be sent overseas and then, in September of 1944, we got our traveling orders. My wife had come back to enter Douglass that September, because we knew this was gonna transpire, and the division went up to Boston to the port of embarkation, in Boston.

KG: Did you know if you were going to be sent to Europe or the Pacific?

CS: When we went to Boston, I think we knew we're gonna go to Europe. But before that, I don't remember knowing anything at all.

KG: Did you have a preference of where you'd rather go to?

CS: Well, I had some mixed feelings by that time about going to Europe. Although, here again, I was interested in getting rid of Hitler. I was serious about that. So I wasn't going to say anything, or do anything, on the other hand, I always wanted to see Europe all my life, so, the prospect of going there was not unattractive to me, you know, from that point of view, of just being in Europe. Also, we were already, by that time, listening to Gabriell Heatter, who was

promising us the end of the war before we ever could get into it. It didn't quite work out that way, but we already had high hopes in that direction by that time.

KP: How much of Europe did you get to see?

CS: We landed in Cherbourg in September of 1944. The St. Lo breakthrough had already taken place, the front line was already at Alsace-Lorraine by that time, and I remember spending two or three weeks playing touch football every day. That was great. We made one gross error. We had an excellent officer, who was a West Point cadet, whom we all respected, he was a good officer and he wanted to play touch football with us, so damned if he didn't get injured and we lost him. That's another true story. We lost him for a month or so. Then, when he came back, he had the good fortune of being assigned to our S-2. That's intelligence, right?

KG: Yes.

CS: He was an excellent officer, so, I guess, instead of putting him back in Cannon Company, he had an old football injury, actually, and this incident may have aggravated an old football injury, so when he came back, he went to S-2, and we lost one of our best officers, just at a time when we were gonna go up to the front lines. That's my recollection of that. So, I saw Normandy and the hedgerow country.

KP: Did you ever get to Paris?

CS: Yes. We went all the way to Austria. We thought we were gonna fight the last battle against Hitler, because we knifed right through Germany. We wound up in Austria, just outside of Hitler's Eagle's Nest. But, of course, there were no big battles there. I lucked out again. It was a quiet ending to this war. We had one nasty little incident and I'll never forget. I think the most frightened I ever was: I knew the war was almost over, and we got into this nasty little skirmish, as I wanted desperately to make the end of the war, and you could have gotten hurt that day.

KP: How close to the end of the war was this?

CS: It was about two or three days before the war ended and we ran into this group of crazy, young Hitler Youth that were camped there, and they wanted to resist and fight, and they did, and a couple of them got hurt very badly. It was a very unpleasant thing, and a few people did get hurt, and then, of course, the war ended shortly after that. And we were down in Austria. I don't know how it came about. There was a period there, when the war ended, when there was a complete let down of discipline, somehow, and I just remember taking off. And I climbed a mountain, and I went up, way up into the Alps, up to the rock line, and I had a wonderful hike. I was looking all around up there. I even met some people. I knew some German. They were all half-starving to death. Of course, a lot of them were. They were eating oatmeal; they were all eating oatmeal. And then I went back to camp. It wasn't too long after that we got our travel orders, because we were slated to come through the States. On the way back, I had twelve hours in Paris, which was great, and I had a visit to London, which was also great, because we went to

a neighborhood dance in a working-class section of London, and they were so euphoric and so warm-hearted and treated us so nicely. It was like a family dance, and it was just wonderful. They were so happy, they were so happy in London. I did all that on the way back, so that was nice.

KP: So you did get to see some of Europe?

CS: Yes. And, of course, the countryside. I lived in Alsace-Lorraine, outdoors.

KP: In one of the more unpleasant seasons in Europe.

CS: Yes. Well, you know, the only time I really suffered cold was in November, when it rained. That was cruel, that was tough. You would get wet and you'd be wet for days. But once the dry, cold, snowy season came, I never suffered. The first thing we did was discard our overcoats. We dressed in layers. I had about four layers on. There was one period of at least sixty days, sixty to ninety days, when we didn't take our clothes off at all, for sixty to ninety days. There was no way you could. We were on the front lines. I slept out on the guns every night. I liked sleeping outside. I had a foxhole and I'd sleep like a rock, unless there was a fire order and if there was a fire order, I would put my shoes on, jump up, and run out to the guns. The guns were right there. That's the way it was. So I got a nice view of parts of Europe, the Vosges Mountains, they were very beautiful, parts of Germany were very beautiful, lots of France. I got a leave once, and I went to Nancy. I got a leave, a four-day leave. That's a beautiful town, too. So I did get to see Europe a little bit.

KP: What kind of ship did you go over in?

CS: I went over on naval transport, via the North Sea. I remember, we were on a naval transport, like stacked, you know? I don't know if you ever saw a naval transport. There was about two feet of space, and we were layered. I don't remember how many layers. I remember, I think one of the soldiers over our stack got seasick, rather uncomfortable, but outside of that it was an uneventful visit. We got quite terrified because there was a U-boat attack on the convoy.

KP: And did any ships get sunk?

CS: No. I don't recall any ships being sunk. I remember hearing destroyers, escorts with their horns. They were probably signaling and they were, of course, protecting us. Thank God. It's cold up there. So we got through that okay. We landed in Cherbourg, the naval transport, and we climbed over the sides, went down the sides on one of those rope things, which I found quite interesting. I enjoyed that. We went down over one of these rope chains with our uniforms on and everything and, of course, there was no action. Cherbourg was very quiet at the time. Still, this is how we disembarked, and then we went up and we camped out. The first few nights of camping out were tough, surprisingly tough. But it only took three or four days, and then, you were really used to it, very accustomed to it. [I] had to get used to sleeping on the ground. It got very cold. Even in early October, I remember being quite cold for a couple nights, and then I was okay.

KG: Was your division organized by the time you got to France?

CS: Oh, I'm sure they were well-organized. Yes, I'm sure they were. They were in reserve, as far as I could see. They were on hold, I can't remember how long, two or three weeks we were in reserve. That was when we played all the touch football. And then, all of a sudden, we got our marching orders and we went on a very orderly convoy, all the way across France, and we relieved, what I believe what was 72nd Division, who were a very battered, worn out bunch of soldiers, who, I believe, had taken part in the St. Lo breakthrough and they really needed relief, badly.

KP: You could tell how battered they were when you saw them?

CS: We met a couple of stragglers. I remember the Bill Mauldin cartoons. That was my first exposure to a Bill Mauldin cartoon type of character and they definitely looked different. It wasn't too long after that that we looked that way, too, I'm sure.

KP: What did you think when you first saw these guys?

CS: I think apprehension became a part of our lives, you know, apprehension. At that point in time, we also realized that we were very lucky that the German resistance was breaking down, we were not attacked by air, we knew that almost immediately. We never suffered an air attack in Cherbourg at all. We didn't suffer an air attack of any consequence in the whole convoy. So we knew, you know, that they were not the threat. So mixed with the apprehension was a feeling that the war soon might be over. We were very lucky.

KP: Did you have any contact with French civilians at all in Cherbourg?

CS: There, I had, really, for some reason or other, we were camped in a field, and I had virtually no contact with the French. I don't even know to what extent they had returned, because I'm sure that may have been, and I'm sure that there had been considerable violence there, not long before we got there, and I don't even know how many civilians got back. I just remember the fields, the famous hedgerows, and I don't remember any civilian contact.

KG: Did you go through Caen?

CS: Pardon?

KG: St. Lo and Caen?

CS: Caen?

KG: Caen.

CS: I don't know whether we drove through St. Lo, we may have. Caen, I don't remember at all. I don't really remember exactly what our route was on that convoy, except that we wound up on the left flank of the 7th Army. And we became the left flank of the 7th Army until the end of the war, basically. The 3rd Armor Division, we used to see them and have contact with them, and they were on our immediate left flank. They were the spearhead group. They had armor. We were not heavily armored.

KG: What did people think of Patton?

CS: We were very enthusiastic about Patton. We wanted to end the war, and we would get *The Stars and Stripes* and we would look at the map and we would always cheer on Patton, who was always out in front. And that was the lay soldiers' view of Patton., We wanted to go home. Simple.

KP: Being in an artillery company, you're not necessarily on the front lines.

CS: Very lucky.

KP: Yes.

CS: Very, very lucky. Enormous differences. Even though I was a forward observer, and even though I walked into a minefield one night, when an officer came by us and said, "You, you, and you, volunteer." That's the way you volunteered. "You, you, and you, volunteer," so I "volunteered." We walked into a minefield. Pitch black. The guys had very beautifully removed all the mines. I didn't have any problems. I walked in, two of us picked up our wounded soldier, carried him out. I never knew who he was, don't know how badly he was wounded, or if he ever made it. But I was never in a foxhole on the wrong side of the first hill. I was always on the right side of the first hill or on top of the hill looking down. I did some forward observer work. I saw some of our artillery, not Cannon Company's, but some of our own artillery land, on one of our companies one day. I saw this happen, an appalling sight, but this happened. Nothing you can do about it. I was an extraordinary, lucky individual in that I just really managed to somehow escape any terrible violence. I just never encountered, I got shelled all the time, you know, and I got mortar fire, but I never got involved in any terrible violence. I could see the riflemen advance in lines, long lines once-in-a-while, but I never was an forward observer during a major assault, and it was by dumb luck. I was usually in the back taking care of the cannons. I was under small arms fire, maybe, one time, when I was in Stuttgart, and it was not very severe. And I know full well how lucky I was to be in Cannon Company.

KP: Did anyone in your company get seriously wounded or killed?

CS: Yes. Yes. We had ...

KP: You mentioned the captain who ...

CS: Well, the first captain was terribly wounded, yes, but he was in the same situation we all were in. He was just unlucky. Actually, he got up to run at the wrong time. He probably wanted to set up a company headquarters, or something and another round of shell came in and he was just dreadfully wounded. We had another lieutenant in Germany, he had been in the Army since 1941, very tragic case, and he was just standing under a tree with another sergeant, a dear friend of mine, and a shell came in. His leg was cut off. He was seriously wounded. They put him in an ambulance. They turned him away at the first medical reception center. Nobody knows exactly why, maybe they didn't think he was wounded badly enough, and on his way to the next station, he died. We had one very, very sad case. We were all sitting in our tents one night, a couple of us writing letters home, I was writing one letter home, and I was [a] very cautious individual. If I heard a shell come in, I'd flatten out. And I'd just casually flatten out and let it explode. Get back in and write my letter. The call came in, "Sergeant is hit, Sergeant is hit." I ran out, and here's my counterpart platoon sergeant, I think he was, fine fellow, very healthy young man. He was writing a letter home to his wife. He just had word about his son, who was about a year old, and a piece of shrapnel had just come in through the tent and went right through his head and out the other side, and he just died instantly. And we'll never know whether he just forgot to flatten out in time. That was a bad case, so we had some instances like that. We had a mortar shell land once, and it hit a group of three, and the guy that was furthest away was wounded. I think, out of a company of about 119, we had about nineteen casualties, something like that, whereas the rifle company, out of a company of 165, my recollection is that most of them had casualties of 165. Now, that doesn't mean that some of the guys didn't survive the war. It meant that their replacements also got hit. But you can imagine that difference you know? That was rough. They also had much more difficult living conditions. Since we were generally behind the first hill, we managed to get hot food sometimes.

KP: How often would you get hot food?

CS: We got hot food fairly regularly, because we had a great “mess sergeant” and there was a hill between us and the front line. We were in a good division. They held the line very well. We only had one incident, I can remember. I took a telephone call one night, pitch black night, and they reported a combat patrol had come through the front line and was headed our way. So, I remember holding my carbine a little bit tighter for a while, but, again, nothing happened. This is the story of my career. I was very lucky.

KP: Did you even come in contact with any Germans?

CS: Yes. We had some contact, you know, with the Germans. We'd lob shells at each other, back and forth, you know, whenever we could. We had a lot more shells than they did, believe me, and our shells went off, and our shells were like posit fuses, airbursts, they rained down on people. For the most part, their shells were ground burst that I experienced, much easier to guard against, because with a ground burst shell, you just flatten out. You let it go off and get up and walk away, very often. I think the worst weapon of theirs that I experienced was a mortar, because you couldn't always hear the mortar. It came in with a kind of whisper and would explode and it would, you know, spray with shrapnel. But we just had a much easier time with it than they did, and our infantry did.

KG: So you were always a little bit behind the infantry.

CS: Yes.

KG: Where were our mortars positioned?

CS: Our mortars were usually in front of us because we had a good range, as much as 6,000 yards is my recollection, and, I think, most of the time, we fired at a range of about 4,000 yards. That's a nice comfortable distance to be back. We were, as I, we were usually behind the first little hill, and Captain Tankel took good care of us, so, there was a little bit of high ground between us and the riflemen. It wasn't always the case. There was the time when the captain got hurt. We were in sight, we were in direct sight of the enemy. That may have been a mistake, I'm not sure. I wouldn't want to say. There were a couple of other incidents where I'm not sure, really, where we are, you know. Fairly violent artillery fire and then, in Stuttgart, there was some kind of crazy battle going on. I don't know who was resisting. It wasn't very orderly resistance. It probably was a group of young Germans that were acting up, I think is what it was.

KG: So did you actually ever use your cannons in a direct fire mode?

CS: We were supposed to know how. We were told we would have to do it, and we never had to do it. We were lucky. Our lines held, so nobody ever came at us. Now, if we had been in the Battle of the Bulge, we would have been in a situation where we would have to use direct fire and I'm sure cannon companies in the Battle of the Bulge didn't necessarily fair well, at all, but we were just in a good, solid infantry division that held the line for us.

KP: Did you ever get a hot shower when you were behind the lines?

CS: As I say, there was that one period, and I can't remember, it was probably about three months, we were on the line continuously. There was no hot shower, there was no bath. I shaved. I used to take my steel helmet and I would, very carefully, go to a puddle, and, very carefully, take the rainwater out, and I would go and shave and wash up as much as I could. Maybe take off my shirt if it wasn't too cold. I can't even remember that anymore, that's the amazing part. I know that they finally pulled us back a little bit, and they brought up a special truck, a shower truck, and all it was was a truck with hot showers, and they lined us all up and they marched us in one end, took all our clothes, and issued us all new clothes at the other end. We had a shower and went about our business. I'll never forget that. That was a very nice experience. But I will also tell you this, never ever did I have anything in the way of insects, or lice, or anything like that. Never experienced anything like that.

KG: Other soldiers had experienced that?

CS: I don't remember interviewing, or talking to any American soldiers, even infantry, even riflemen, whom I talked to occasionally, that ever experienced this in World War II. Whether it

existed, I don't know, but I never experienced it. As in World War I, my father used to tell me horror stories.

KP: Really?

CS: Oh, yes. They had body lice. And they had rats, they lived with rats all the time. We didn't have that. We didn't have that in World War II.

KP: What else did you notice was different from what you experienced to what your father experienced in World War I?

CS: He was never very much interested. This is probably the most I've ever talked about the war, and I'm trying to recollect, and it's kind of interesting, it's been so long, to just talk about it and unload it a little bit, you know? But my picture of World War II was that we were dispersed, were ordered to stay dispersed, far apart, stay apart, whenever there was any fire, you know, spread out. In World War I, I think, my picture of it is they were on top of each other in those damned trenches and the rats would get in there, and the lice got in there, and we didn't have any of that.

KP: Did you have any chaplains?

CS: Well, see, I never went to a chaplain. I never went to sick call. I never had anything wrong with me. I was not interested in formal religion, so I never really spoke to a chaplain the whole time I was in the Army.

KP: Did anyone in your unit ever go to services?

CS: I think some of the soldiers did when they had the opportunity, yes.

KG: What were the usual targets that you fired at?

CS: In the infantry, I carried a carbine, fifteen-round, automatic carbine, and I was very interested in learning how to use that, and I was a pretty good shot, and I also learned how to fire the M-9 rifle. The M-9. For a while, we just carried the Springfield rifle. That was in garrison. Then we were issued the M-9 rifle, and I learned how to fire that. That was a good rifle. I enjoyed target practice. I wanted to learn how to do it very well, but, there weren't that many target ranges, and you had to wait for days and days. That was one of the exasperating parts about training. You had to wait four days to get fifteen minutes of target practice, which I loved, you see, and that was one of the exasperating things about training that no one could do anything about. But it exasperated us.

KP: It sounds like your division did not have as many close calls as other divisions.

CS: Yes. I think you're reading that correctly. It was a good division. It had some very bad battles, tough battles. I was in the 114th Infantry Regiment. I don't remember the name of the

other two, but I would say we were a, the rifle companies had 100% casualties. We were on line, we were on line one time, I think 165 days, without any relief. That was considered a very long time. We were not in the most violent part of the front, we were not directly involved in the Battle of the Bulge, [but] we were indirectly involved. We had to move rapidly to our left after the Battle of the Bulge, [but] we were not in the Battle of the Bulge. I was extremely lucky in that the 114th was in reserve when we crossed the Rhine. I remember crossing the Rhine under a smoke screen in the convoy, and we crossed on a pontoon bridge. No violence. Nice way to cross the Rhine.

KP: You mentioned the attack on Stuttgart was very disorganized.

CS: There was a skirmish, I would call it.

KP: Did you do any other urban fighting where you had significant resistance?

CS: In Stuttgart, I was giving the fire orders to the company. I was a tech sergeant at that time, a platoon sergeant. It was my shift, I was taking the orders, I was calling them out, looking around, you know? Taking the orders, making sure the guns were all ready, and had received the order, and there we got some small arms fire. I remember hearing the bullets, seeing the little puffs of dirt. We didn't get hurt. We didn't get anybody wounded. There was some violent artillery fire, I don't know if we had any casualties.

KP: How would you pick your targets during the fighting in the cities?

CS: Our forward observers, who would be with a company commander at the front.

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

KP: You were saying that the forward observer would be up there with the company commander.

CS: With a rifle company commander, a captain, usually, and he would request, it was actually artillery fire, it was 105mm howitzer, it was a substantial shell. He would request it. The forward observer would read the map, get the data from the map to issue his first fire order, which was always long, so he'd be sure, you know, that it would go long, and then he would begin trying to bracket it in. He would go a little bit shorter, then he would adjust his fire based on his observations. Then his orders would be radioed back to the company, and if I was a platoon sergeant on duty, I would take those orders, call them out, and they would set their guns, and then [give] the command to fire, and we had a couple of different commands. We would first fire with one cannon to get the right range and the right direction, and then when we had the target with the one cannon, all the other cannons would be taking the same orders, taking the same settings on their guns, so they all now are supposed to be pointed at the same target. When we thought we had the target, it would be battery fire until the captain of the infantry would tell us to stop. That basically is how it worked.

KG: What exactly did the forward observer do during a fire mission?

CS: I would do it. I did it a couple of times, but most of the time, [I was with] with an officer, because Captain Tankel liked to have his officers be the forward observers. You can understand that as a better liaison, and, sometimes, when there was no action, you would just sit there on the top of the hill and look out, you know, and see what was going on. If you see something move, hey, we have so many shells and we were so anxious to hit something, anything, that we would fire, or we might request, no, I think we had authority to fire. But the Germans were painfully aware of this, and they didn't move on quiet days. You didn't see much movement.

KP: How often would you hit a target?

CS: I hit a house once where they thought there was a radio operator, who's radioing back, you know? I hit the house. Frankly, I didn't think anybody was in the house, but I wasn't gonna say so. I didn't know whether anybody was in the house, but I hit the house.

KP: You hit the house?

CS: I hit the house. Smashed the roof.

KP: What about during battle?

CS: I was very lucky. I never experienced a living target that I could actually see. I remember seeing riflemen advance and hearing machine-gun fire, but you couldn't see the German machine-gunner. They were well-hidden, as a matter-of-fact. Our artillery would just saturate a whole area before our troops would advance, after they got done saturating it, troops advanced. Up would pop well-camouflaged, a German machine gun squad, and they'd hit our guys that were trying to advance, despite our very best efforts. They were tough and you didn't see them. They were camouflaged, and they stayed hidden until somebody would try to advance on them and boom, there they were, and they had to be taken out. Now, I never was a forward observer during a really major battle where I could see a lot of strategy going on, but I heard about it, and I was, sometimes, back in company headquarters, and heard orders. Then they tried to get them with grenades, you know, and other ways, of course, and I never took part in that.

KP: You seem to remember a lot of the people you fought with.

CS: Colonel Martin. I remember him. He was a colorful little guy. He didn't like me very much. I admired him somewhat. I thought he was a good officer. I was not his kind of soldier, at all, that's for sure. I kept asking him for a transfer all the time. He didn't like that at all. I wanted to get into the engineers.

KP: You asked him for a transfer when you were overseas?

CS: Well, whenever I got a chance, I asked to be transferred to the engineers.

KP: What impressed you about Colonel Martin?

CS: Well, I thought he was a doughty, no-nonsense guy, I thought. Down to earth, probably a good soldier. Probably one of the very brave ones. I saw some very brave officers and I think he was one of them.

KP: What would indicate that they were brave officers?

CS: They would sometimes come to the front lines and they were really quite oblivious of their position, and the fact that they could now be under artillery fire any minute, it didn't bother them. They usually did what they really thought they had to do, and we always admired that when it happened.

KP: So senior officers who actually had gone to the front line got a lot of respect?

CS: Well, I think General Dean, did you know our division commander was General Dean? Did you know that?

KP: Yes, I was going ask you that.

CS: Yes, we all remembered General Dean, because, [with] the Korean War later on, and I remember seeing him on the news, and I was appalled. But General Dean once gave me a ride. I don't know whether I was goofing off, or went for a walk. I used to do these things; I'd go for a walk if I wanted to, you know, if I had the chance and I got get away with that. And I was probably on my way back and he was coming along in his jeep and he gave me a ride, and I was very respectful, and he was a very nice officer. He was asking me questions of what we were doing and, probably, how comfortable we were, and I gave him very nice answers, and he dropped me off and went on his way. I had a lot of respect for him.

KP: You must have respected the fact that he was interested in your well-being.

CS: I did.

KP: He was actually concerned about how his men were doing.

CS: And we heard stories about General Dean, you know? He was the kind of a guy that would walk around up, with the riflemen, quite oblivious to his own danger. He was one of those officers. There are many such officers.

KP: You gave the impression that there wasn't a lot of chicken shit on the front lines.

CS: Oh, yes. There's very little chicken shit. You get rid of that. That's one of the real blessings, one of the real blessings of the front line. It's wonderful.

KP: Could you explain that a little more?

CS: Well, they were ordered to do that, and there was no saluting. There was no formal difference. You still had difference, especially for the guys that you respected, and there was companionship, rather than formality. The officers did stay somewhat to themselves, and this had to be, you respected that. But at the same time, they were also your companions, at times, and, also, they were ordered to do some things that were sometimes more difficult than what you were ordered to do, and you respected that.

KP: Like what?

CS: They were forward observers a lot more than I ever was. I would have done it, if ordered, but they were ordered to do it a lot more than I was ordered to do it. That was Captain Tankel, you know? He was a solid soldier, and he wanted it done right. He had no fear at all that I could see. He used to scare his jeep driver half-to-death. He'd come back a nervous wreck a few times, you know, because Captain Tankel would go on reconnaissance missions that were very dangerous, you know? He was that kind of a guy. He never got hurt the whole war, either.

KG: Did anyone in your unit ever receive any decorations?

CS: Well, I got a Bronze Star, along with several other men.

KG: Was that during the war?

CS: During the war. Meritorious service. That meant that I was there, but I don't think we had any in our company. We didn't have anything above Bronze Stars, and the guys that got the Bronze Star were probably the guys that didn't get drunk, you know? [Guys] that did their job, we got Bronze Stars, didn't do anything outrageous. I never got drunk on duty. That's one of the reasons I got promoted, because I wanted to survive and I wanted the guys to survive, and so I did my job, you know?

KP: Did other people drink on duty?

CS: Some of the guys would drink anything they could get their hands on. They needed to escape the desolation.

KP: Even when you were on the line?

CS: Yes. If they could get it, they'd drink it, which is not good, that's not good to do.

KG: Did the officers know this?

CS: Well, a couple of otherwise good sergeants, who were probably National Guard, lost their commission, and we got their jobs. I got promoted. I went from corporal to buck sergeant, to platoon sergeant and, I think, one of the reasons was, quite frankly, alcoholism.

KG: Did this happen also with the rifle companies?

CS: I don't know.

KP: Where would you get your liquor?

CS: How would they get it? I don't know how the hell the guys got it, I really don't know. I didn't get any. I really wasn't interested in it at the time.

KP: Did you drink at all?

CS: Not often. The only thing that ever happened to me, I got a terrible case of diarrhea one night from something that some farmer gave us. It was probably 150 proof. God knows what it was. He probably made it himself, you know, and I got a terrible case of diarrhea under very trying conditions. I'll never forget that. That was really unpleasant, but I survived that okay.

KP: How did it feel to be an NCO and having to give out orders?

CS: Well, I was married and I liked the money. I got a raise in pay, which I appreciated greatly. I hated KP. KP was not funny in the Army. I disliked giving orders and only did so when necessary. Giving fire orders was okay, impersonal.

KP: How many times did you do it?

CS: I did it a fair number of times.

KP: What was your first KP?

CS: I restrained myself from physical combat with many a mess sergeant. I hated KP, because this was one of the things that you wanted to avoid, believe me. It was a long, grueling day and I met very, very few people that had any hankering for it. There actually were a few guys that didn't mind it. They almost liked it, but that was odd.

KG: Were you able to get more food?

CS: They were probably able to get food all day long, but this was no attraction to me.

KG: When you were at the front, did you even come into contact with any foreign troops, who were fighting for the Germans, or any SS troops?

CS: Fortunately, I never came into direct contact with any SS troops. I once got as many regular, I got a flat tire one day, my truck, we got a flat tire, and we had to fix the tire. By the time we got the tire fixed, we had a segment of the German Army. [They] were hungry, as well, and they wanted to surrender, so we lined them all up. I have just a vague recollection of this. Some of the less scrupulous of my own platoon relieved them of their wristwatches, of course, and, luckily, they

didn't call on any of their compatriots that were probably still hiding in the woods all around us to shoot, and we managed to get a number of them hanging all over the damn truck, and we took them prisoner. You know, they wanted to surrender and they didn't shoot at us. If there had been SS in the area, it would have been a different story. But, apparently, they were alone, left to their own devices, saw what happened to us, and took advantage of the opportunity, and I remember when I brought them back, nobody on our side was very delighted. I'm sure they didn't know what the hell to do with the prisoners, you know. I didn't see them again. I guess they marched them off somewhere. I went back to my business.

KG: Were you able to talk to them?

CS: A little bit, yes. You know, we were wary. I was being as wary as possible. I wanted to get out of there, wanted to get me and my men out of there as quickly as possible. It was an uncomfortable situation.

KG: Had things like this happened before?

CS: That's the only time it ever happened to me.

KP: Really?

CS: Yes. That's the only time I ever took any prisoners.

KP: You mentioned the time your commander got you lost behind enemy lines.

CS: Yes. I'm trying to remember whether some of the other guys, also, I think one of the other platoons may have also brought some prisoners back that wanted to surrender. Again, there were a lot of Germans that wanted out of that war, you know? There was no question of that. And I'm sure that what they did in the Battle of the Bulge was that they had the SS in a position to force their men to fight in advance. That's what they did. I think many German troops were more afraid of the SS behind them than they were of the soldiers in front of them. I'm sure that was so, because, I think, they would just shoot their soldiers if there was any provocation. We didn't do that in our army, that wasn't done in the American Army, thank God.

KP: Did anybody ever loose it while you were on the line?

CS: The only thing I ever had happen in my platoon was, I must have been a little bit of a, of course, we had a total democracy. We had a little society of a mutual protection organization, that was my platoon, and they were a gaudy bunch, actually. And they devised their own manual, this is true, for loading the cannon, and they did it beautifully. It was like a football formation, no thanks to me. They did it themselves. They wanted to do it and they were very efficient, and they didn't jar the gun when they put the cannon, and they did it with a minimum of men, so that we could rotate. It was so good that Captain Tankel brought Colonel Martin over to watch them operate. This was the formerly rather delinquent platoon, and they devised it themselves. They wanted to do it.

KP: What did the colonel think of it?

CS: He liked it. He probably couldn't believe I was a sergeant. He didn't pay too much attention to me. He just watched the whole thing. But they did a great job for him. It was just very good. They could've written a new manual around what these guys did, actually. Because what they had to do, as I recollect, we had to put the right number of charges in. I think there were eight charges, as I recall, and part of the order was the number of bags of powder you left in to propel the shell, and you had to get that right, because, otherwise, the range would go totally off. So you had to do that, and they had to do it right, and they had to check it. They had to get that back on the shell, and they had to get the shell into the muzzle, and sometimes there was already a setting. This is coming back to me now, there was already a setting on the cannon, and you didn't want to jar that. You wanted to go from that position of the gun to the next position of the gun, accurately. So these guys had devised a way of getting it in there without jarring it, you know. It was really nice to watch and they would close the breach and they did it very fast, and very efficiently. That was my platoon. When we had guard duty, we would, first of all, decide whether, I was a little bit political here, I would say, "We are supposed to do guard duty again, so what do you think?" They say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, we'll do it, don't worry about it, we'll work it out." And I often didn't have to do the guard duty, and they would arrange it so I could sleep. That was great.

KP: They divided up guard duty among themselves?

CS: Yes. They would divide it up amongst themselves. Of course, on the other hand, they would occasionally wander off, if there were any civilians around. I just vaguely recollect having guys come to me and say, "I'm gonna be in the house over there. If we move out, come over and get me," you know, and I would have to keep track of this. That was my contribution to them, you know. I would keep track of where they were gonna be, and I wouldn't say anything. I figured that it was their business, not mine, and, again, here, I had no interest in anything like this, so I was always available for this, so I was a very handy sergeant to have.

KP: Were they shacking up with women?

CS: I presume they sometimes were, but very, very rarely, because, usually where we were, there were no civilians. It was a rare thing. I had a temptation one night. We had advanced, the Germans counter-attacked, and we retreated. That was rare. The 44th didn't retreat very much. We retreated and, now, here, we found ourselves in a small town with a lot of civilians. They had already moved back in and I remember going for one of my walks around town. I had my carbine, and I didn't like the military police. Here's this guy giving, what I thought was a nice, little, village girl a hard time, and I just saw a great opportunity. I thought I might be able to get into sufficient trouble to, maybe, be on trial or something for a while, to get something a little more entertaining. So, I went up and really put the MP in his place, but he was too smart for me. He backed down, probably not because he was afraid of me, but because he knew I had a loaded carbine and was looking for trouble. Fifteen rounds, he knew that and the young lady was really quite grateful. She was a nice girl and she took me home to her family. I'll never forget this. She took me to her home, and they were playing Parcheesi. So here we are, around the table, and I'm in this game with them,

she had brothers and sisters, the old man was there, and the mother, and they were very nice people, you know. They were very warm and a few shells bounced around there that night because apparently the Germans had, you know, had made a little counter-attack. And how I got away with spending a couple of hours there, I'll never know, but I got involved in this game, and that was a very warm, charming evening for me.

KP: And then you went back?

CS: Then I went back to the usual stuff. I can't even remember. I guess I wasn't on any special duty or anything. There were lots of times, when we had time to kill, I had a little pocket chess game that we spent many hours, you know, playing chess. But, of course, that was a little more sensible, because we would do that right on the guns. How I got away from the guns that night I can't remember.

KG: Could you talk about your antipathy towards the MPs?

CS: Well, there was nothing personal between me and the MPs. It was just [against] any authority. I was not amiable to much authority, if I could help it. Especially if they were trying to pull rank on us, anything. We, in the infantry, once we're issued the [Combat Infantryman's Badge], we got a little bit proud, and we got a little surly, also. Once I got that Badge, I was not always that easy to live with, you know. I was proud, you know. We were Combat Infantry. I didn't really earn the badge, you know, actually, because I was not a rifleman, but I came close enough to earning it. I had it, so I enjoyed it. And this MP really was not behaving correctly toward this young woman. He was giving her a hard time, and that was the only time that I ever saw one while we were under combat conditions. I never saw one again, and I think it was a freak of, you know, the way the battle went. As a matter-of-fact, most of the time, there were no civilians in sight. A few lame cows that had been wounded, that was about it, wandering around aimlessly.

KG: How did American soldiers treat German civilians?

CS: Okay. I had the misfortune of knowing the language spoken in Alsace-Lorraine. I could speak and understand German and there were very many nice people. [They were] French, but they spoke German. So the American GI, also, was not politically, actually, a genius would hear them speak German and immediately see them as being the enemy, you know, and, sometimes, they were treated badly. As a matter-of-fact, the American soldier was a little bit of a, he felt that he was put upon, didn't want to be over here, which you could hardly blame him for, wanted to be home, wanted to go home, and, so, they were exactly, not very polite, they were not always exactly very professional soldiers. Some of them were engaged in too much looting, in my opinion, and I never hesitated to let them know about it whenever I had the chance, and some of them were non-commissioned officers, and I even remember a couple of them who were officers, and I didn't like that at all. I thought this was very unprofessional behavior. I told them I hadn't really planned in going overseas with a band of common thieves, and I would state that. I would state my case. I was young and a little bit idealistic in my own way, but that's the way I was.

KP: What were the common objects that were looted?

CS: I remember one sergeant, who was a pretty good sergeant, and he had a jeep full of stuff, and he managed to get it, I think he mailed some of it back home, don't ask me how, I really don't know.

KP: Like what?

CS: Silverware, china, there was good china. The favorite thing, of course, was any kind of pistol, which was understandable and a lot more excusable. What else?

KP: What about artwork?

CS: China, glass, yes, if there was art work. Watches, jewelry of any kind. I told you, my platoon immediately lifted all the watches from all of the [prisoners], which I didn't like. I thought this was absolutely horrendous and dangerous. But I couldn't stop it. They did it so fast that I couldn't stop it. But that's about the way it was. I think they lifted a lot of ceramic stuff. There was a lot of good glassware. Now, how they managed to get any of it back, or how much of it they got back, I don't know. I don't know.

KP: What about gambling?

CS: Oh, God. Absolute, total disease. I used to dread payday, because I wouldn't be able to sleep. They'd be gambling right next to my cot, you know, and I never gambled, except I used to play a little poker, once in a while, for low stakes. There was gambling all the time. It was just the favorite activity.

KP: Was this all throughout your service?

CS: All through my whole memory of my entire Army career.

KP: From?

CS: From day one right on through. I think, mostly, I think it was less of it, actually, maybe less of it in garrison. In combat, every chance they got, you know. There was gambling, and I was reading *War and Peace*, and read the entire novel *War and Peace*. I played a lot of chess, I played a lot of chess.

KP: You read on the front?

CS: I read the entire novel *War and Peace*.

KP: Where did you get it from? Did you bring it with you?

CS: I had it in my pocket.

KP: Oh.

CS: Now, don't ask me how I got it, I can't remember. I carried it around; it was a pocket book. It was thick, 1,500 pages, in my recollection. I carried that thing around pretty much all [my time in] combat.

KP: Did you read anything else?

CS: You know, I can't remember what else I may have read, but I distinctly remember reading *War and Peace*. Yes, that was great to read during the war. It was great.

KP: It's long enough to last.

CS: It was great. It lasted me a long time.

KG: You ended up in Austria at the end of the war, right?

CS: Yes.

KG: You said that you ran into a Hitler Youth unit.

CS: Yes. That was actually in Bavaria, before we crossed the Austrian border. It was not in Austria, it was in Bavaria. We ran into a bunch of young, tough Germans. I think they called them "brown shirts" or something, does that strike a note? A youth organization?

KG: They had brown shirts.

CS: And they fired at some of our guys and our guys fired back. And I have this one horrible memory of this young German kid, whose jaw was shot off, you know. I'll never forget that. He'd been taken prisoner, but his jaw was gone. There were probably some casualties on our side, and I really went out of my way to lay low. I'll admit it, you know.

KP: You didn't want to be the last casualty.

CS: I had a fear of getting hit that last week, I really did. I had a real fear. I wanted to survive that damnable last week, and I didn't see any need for anymore, there was no more need for violence. The war was over, I mean, we had gone right to the edge of Germany, and it wasn't long after that when we went into the mountains and the war was over and this was just a nasty little incident.

KG: And these young kids fired at you?

CS: They were young kids, yes, fourteen, fifteen years old.

KG: Do you have any recollection of the Dresden bombing in February 1945?

CS: I remember hearing about it. I heard stories about my father's relatives, years afterward. My father loved Dresden, loved Dresden dearly, and I think they said that he shed a few tears over that.

KP: Really?

CS: Oh, yes, yes, some tears. Yes, that was sad. Yes, because it was a beautiful art center, and he may even have had some distant relatives there, you know, in Dresden. I went back to Dresden in 1981, saw the monument, and I saw what the Russians had done. They had erected a plaque saying that we and the English had bombed Dresden and firebombed it, and they forgot to mention that they had requested the bombing. They left that out, you know, that was the way it was.

KP: What was your attitude towards the Germans as you're marching towards Germany, especially towards the end of the war? How did you feel?

CS: I had mixed emotions, very often. Sure, I never came face-to-face with a German soldier under combat conditions the entire war. I was lucky. The combat patrol, the combat patrol missed us. I never saw a German that we hit, you know. I never saw that happen at any close distance. I think I saw some machine-gun fire come from them at a great distance, but I didn't see who it was. I never saw a face, or anything. There was one incident when the war ended, and I wish I could recall it more accurately, we met a group of German soldiers, not SS, in uniform. Germans, and they acted as though we had just come to the end of a football match and they had lost and it was over, and "let's talk," you know. "Let's have a glass of wine." They probably thought we might offer them a drink if we had something. They were ready to sit down and talk and they also said, "Well, we will now join you in your coming battle with the Russians. It will be starting very soon and we'll be on your side."

KP: What did you think of that?

CS: I think I was very painfully aware of the fact that we would be coming into conflict with the Russians.

KP: So you had a sense that the alliance wouldn't last?

CS: Oh, yes. I stated this on more than one occasion. I knew this was going to happen. I didn't agree with Roosevelt's illusions about Stalin. I knew already that he was, I somehow knew already that Stalin was a despot. Also, we heard stories about some of the Russian prisoners and how they didn't want to go back, and we'd already heard the stories. We had some contact with some of the Russian prisoners, and they were very subdued, very subdued people, when we encountered them, you know, probably in Germany. So, I wasn't too surprised. I was a little bit amazed at the Germans' attitude. I was really reminded of the end of a football match, you know. "The match is over, let's have a little conversation and compare experiences." That was the way it was. We weren't like that. We had orders not to fraternize. That was the word. I hated that order, I absolutely hated it. I wanted to be left to my own judgment. I wanted to talk to people. I particularly wanted to talk to the Austrians, especially wanted to talk to them, and I did so against orders.

KP: What did you learn by talking to people?

CS: Well, I learned they were hungry, the Austrians were hungry. They subsisted mostly on oatmeal at that time. I observed one lovely Austrian family once, somehow, in my wanderings, and they were having dinner, which was oatmeal, I remember that, and I can't really recollect a lot else. I didn't have a lot of contact with the Austrian people, either. There was a non-fraternization order out.

KP: When did you first learn of the death camps? Was it a shock?

CS: Word went out. We got descriptions. It was a shock. There was considerable horror and indignation. My own feeling was, at the time, that I already knew pretty much about that before the soldiers went in and discovered it. I already had read about this to a considerable extent. I had read about concentration camps, so it didn't come as much of a shock. It must have come as a dreadful shock to the soldier who went in there and saw the conditions, saw the emaciated prisoners. To them, it must have been a dreadful experience. And there was a lot of indignation, and I understand it went right up to General Eisenhower, who, as I understand took action against even the German prisoners after he got the reports. So there was a lot of indignation. Yes, understandably so.

KP: One of the things some GIs have commented about is that they would find no more Nazis at the end of the war.

CS: They could what?

KP: They could find no more Nazis. Everyone they talked to never admitted to being a Nazi.

CS: That's right.

KP: Even the German soldiers played down any connection to the Nazis.

CS: Yes, they were very politically astute, I'm sure. They were also very aware of the coming conflict with the Russians. They were very aware of this, and, I think, to a degree, we were, too, to some degree.

KP: Your division was slated to go to the Pacific to fight against Japan.

CS: We were [scheduled for a] very early departure, very early departure. We started to leave, I guess the war ended in May, and we were already on the way back early in July. And my recollection is that we got back to the States in July. Okay, I should have brought this along. We were the division that came back on the first trip of the *Queen Elizabeth*.

KP: You mentioned that in your survey.

CS: Right, and I have newspaper clippings of this, and we had 15,000 of us crammed on the Queen Elizabeth, and we were photographed in *Life* magazine. Somebody was holding Marlene Dietrich up, and one of our guys, I think, reached out and gave her a hug, and I was on the wrong end of the ship, opposite end of the ship. I didn't see any of this, I wasn't aware of any of this, but I saw it later in *Life* magazine.

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

KP: This continues an interview with Mr. Werner Carl Sturm on March 1, 1996 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

KG: Ken Gilliland.

KP: So you came over on this return trip. How was the *Queen Elizabeth* compared to your first troop ship? Was it any more comfortable?

CS: Yes. Somehow Cannon Company drew pretty comfortable quarters. A whole bunch of us were crammed into a, what was, I guess, a stateroom. I recollect sleeping on a bunk on the way back. A lot of the boys were sleeping up deck, in sleeping bags. I was in the hull, sleeping on a bunk. I even managed to escape and I went for one of my walks, and I remember walking around the *Queen Elizabeth*, where I probably was breaking some rules, but nothing very serious. And I remember looking over the ship a little bit, and I had a very nice walk, and I remember a very comfortable trip back, and, of course, when we got to New York Harbor, I was amazed at the reception that the ship got. Fireboats squirting hoses, water in the air, and there was a dirigible flying around, and I was amazed. I was really amazed.

KP: So you got the traditional welcome home that GIs talk about.

CS: Had dreamt about, yes, absolutely. We got the welcome home most GIs dreamt. Yes, that's correct.

KP: And then you were sent back into training.

CS: Yes. We were not permitted, we were sent right to Camp Kilmer. Right to Camp Kilmer, which was not overly exciting, as I recall, and we were just chafing at the bit.

KP: It must have been weird to be at Camp Kilmer, because, Rutgers is right there.

CS: It was very weird, and, I believe, I managed to arrange about a two-minute meeting with my in-laws and my wife on the edge of Camp Kilmer, which was, again, somewhat unorthodox. But I managed to somehow, and I don't know how I did it, and we met for just a few moments, and I assured them that I'd be on leave, because we had a one month leave coming. One of the main topics of conversation on the way back was how we might possibly figure out some way to avoid going to Japan, which, of course, none of us would have done. We'd all have gone, but one of the favorite topics of conversation were possibly, what possible means we had available to us to escape

the Japanese campaign. We would not have carried any of them out, but it was a topic conversation, understandably. We were told that we were going to Japan and be in half-tracks, they were gonna make us more efficient and more aggressive, you know, and just a better equipped unit and probably a lot more dangerous. They were gonna put us in half-tracks, with an open top, that would have been lovely, but that was what we had in store for us. But we were looking forward. I don't think we really, at that point in time, truthfully, really looked at seeing the end of the war alive.

KP: You didn't expect to make it through the Pacific?

CS: We really didn't think about a life after the war. We really didn't. We were looking forward, greatly, to this one month off, and we really didn't want to look beyond that. That was too painful.

KG: So you weren't even allowed to leave the confines of Camp Kilmer?

CS: No. How I managed this meeting, I don't know, and it wasn't very long, and I can't remember what happened after that. I went back to Camp Kilmer and I was given this leave, you know. I can't remember, I think I was put on a train or something. Next thing I knew I was free. Free for a month, and I didn't have a long trip home, of course. So here I was. I probably didn't have any difficulty arranging transportation to get home.

KP: And you must have had a great time on leave.

CS: Yes. At the beginning of the leave, I remember seeing a couple of shows in New York, because Elsie was taking courses at Columbia at the time, and I was a GI in uniform and I was getting tickets, Broadway tickets, and I think I saw *Carousel*. I may have seen either *Oklahoma* or *Carousel*. I can't remember which, as a GI. And then, of course, the atom bombing event. That these events transpired, that were, like, unbelievable to us.

CS: Yes. I was out in my father's place in Jackson, listening to the radio, out in the country, and I remember, I guess, probably, hoping, "Hey, this might have, you know, real impact on what was gonna happen." And, of course, it wasn't long after that the surrender came and, just, euphoria. I had a very quiet ending to the war. I was out in Jackson, way out in the country, there was just the family, that was the end of the war for me.

KP: And then your leave ended.

CS: Yes, the leave ended, and, by the time, I had just one super mission in mind. I wanted my discharge. I wanted my honorable discharge and I wanted to go home. It was very simple. I didn't want to go into the reserves. I didn't want any life insurance policy, and I didn't sign anything. I actually dropped my life insurance, which was stupid, you know, stupid. But I just had this attitude, I had an attitude problem. I wanted out. I wanted an honorable discharge and out.

KP: Once again the anti-military tradition emerges.

CS: Well, I just wanted out, you know. Yes, I didn't like the military.

KP: Did you have to listen to the reenlistment pitch?

CS: I was asked if I wanted to go into the reserves and I said that I didn't think, I said "No" to the National Guard, I said "No" to the reserves. Actually, thinking back on it, I might have enjoyed some National Guard work after that, you know. But it was a good I didn't, because when I got out and finally got a job, I was so busy that I would not have had time, truly would not have had time. So maybe it was probably just as well.

KG: You left the Army as a first sergeant, right?

CS: Left the Army as a first sergeant. That was a rather an unfortunate [event] for me, a promotion that I had Captain Tankel to thank for. Which was a nice raise in pay, so I took it. I didn't care for the rank, but I did care about the raise in pay. It was a nice raise in pay. But then I had the disagreeable duty of doing a lot of clerical work. I discharged a lot of guys, and the other guys were out playing touch football, which I loved, and I was sitting in the office doing clerical work. I liked Captain Tankel a lot, you know? I really liked doing it for him. Tankel, probably, I hope, was having a ball for himself over at the officers club, probably playing golf or whatever it was they did at the officers' club, and I did the clerical work, and then, finally, I got discharged. I don't know whether I discharged myself, or what. All of a sudden, I had discharge papers. I didn't have any money, not a lot of money, and Elsie was already with me at the time.

KP: Where was your last base?

CS: I was in Arkansas. Camp Chafee.

KP: So you did go to Camp Chafee?

CS: Yes. That was going to be where we were going to learn how to drive these half-tracks, you know. We were gonna be like an armored company. We were gonna learn how to use them. I guess that's good country there, nothing but these tumbleweeds there to get in your way. You could ride anything all over the place there. Of course, we never saw the half-tracks. We never got anymore military training. We just started to discharge, gradually, all the troops. That's the end of the story.

KP: I'm curious. You mentioned the companionship and comradeship of a unit.

CS: Yes.

KP: Did you ever stay in touch with anyone from the unit?

CS: Oddly enough, I never did.

KP: You never went to a reunion?

CS: I have on my desk right now, some mail for another reunion, and I won't go, probably. I lost contact with all my friends. I had some good friends. I had some good buddies, but since we were not subjected to the same degree of danger as the riflemen were, I don't think our comradeship was quite as close as theirs was. And after the war, I got caught up in an entirely different life, with entirely different kinds of people, and I just lost all interest.

KP: It sounds like you've never even thought of joining a veteran's organization?

CS: I thought of it a few times, but I never really held many of the same opinions that veteran organizations have. I never really thought I was entitled to any great reward for this or anything, I really didn't, and I really wasn't looking for any kind of military contact of any kind, so I just stayed away. I almost joined the VFW once, and I thought better, but I figured I wouldn't fit in very well, so I just stayed out of it. I made a few contributions to some wounded veterans organizations, that's all.

KP: What were your attitudes towards the Korean War, then later the Vietnam War?

CS: My attitude toward the Korean War was that I was a little bit horrified when I saw General Dean, whom I remembered well and thought highly of, and I thought he was a very, very fine fellow, and what he went through was quite painful to me. I felt the Korean War was justified in resisting the Stalin advance, very much so. I was of the opinion that it should have been held at the 38th Parallel. I felt that General MacArthur was absolutely dead wrong. Totally wrong, and that anybody that would get into a land war with China belonged in a mental institution. This, to me, being an infantryman, a land war with China, to me, would have been absolutely insane.

KP: So not only as a partisan Democrat, but also some of it from being in the infantry, it sounds like in both counts ...

CS: A land war with China was absolute insanity, a total disaster for the United States. I admired some of General MacArthur's tactics in the Korean War very much. The Inchon Landing was a stroke of military genius. I voted for Harry Truman in 1948. I was a Truman supporter, pretty much all through his presidency. I probably didn't like Governor Dewey's mustache too much. Understandably, right, considering what we all went through, and that was about the end of that. The Korean War, I was a supporter of that. I was an admirer of people that were in it. By that time, I was already involved in some pretty good technical work. I worked on the Thule Air Base in Greenland, and we were involved in some pretty good, you know, defense work as structural engineers, and I was up to my ears in interesting structural work.

KP: What about Vietnam?

CS: I started out with a very conventional view supporting Vietnam. We had to hold the line against communism. And then I started to read the *Pentagon Papers*, and, to my considerable chagrin, I found myself very much in agreement with young people. I just, really, I hate to say it, but just really, just kind of changed from driving around with my headlights on and I just kind of

dropped out, and I voted for McGovern. What else could I do, you know. I voted for McGovern. That was it, and I was appalled after that, once I started to hear the truth, what I considered to be the truth. I was appalled and I've been appalled ever since, and I was grateful that I was not ever drafted into that war.

KP: Your sons weren't of draft age then.

CS: My son was in grammar school. At the time men were being drafted, I was still supporting the war, you know. I had my headlights on and all that, you know. I really didn't understand it, except that it was anti-Communist. But as soon as I started to read the *Pentagon Papers*, and I had one friend, a New Yorker, that knew the facts, and he was beginning to educate me, slowly, and he had the facts, a lot of facts, and the more I used to eat lunch with this guy, and the more his facts ran true, and I gradually became educated. And then I read Halberstam's book, and I also signed a petition that Calley, Lieutenant Calley, should not be court-martialed. I felt that he was just a kid that was in over his head, and I signed a petition, you know. He should not be court-martialed, even though I think the guy just went totally bananas, and I used to daydream about being there and just taking him out temporarily with a well-timed butt, you know, with the end of a rifle butt, which I probably wouldn't have done either, if I had been there, but you daydream about those things, you know. That's my view of the three wars.

KP: You mentioned you dropped the life insurance even though you probably shouldn't have.

CS: Yes, that was just ...

KP: Had you thought of using the GI Bill for any graduate school?

CS: I thought about it very briefly, and I probably should have done so. I could have used some graduate school. I could have become an architect. It was my usual, fantastic luck, I walked into a hot, young, up and coming, structural engineering office in Manhattan, top-drawer hot. I walked in there, and I worked overtime for forty-five years. That's the way it was. Forty-five years of overtime.

KP: What exactly do you mean by "overtime?"

CS: As much as I could stand.

KP: Really? So, if you wanted to work six or seven days a week, that was allowed?

CS: Right, and time went by so fast. This is most I ever reminisced about the war.

KP: Really?

CS: Yes, because the time in between, it was so absorbing, it went by so fast, you know, that I was so busy. I was really busy.

KP: When did you retire?

CS: I finally, I started to retire at age sixty-nine, no, I started to retire at age sixty-seven. Did consulting work, on and off, until age sixty-nine, and then did some part-time work up until age seventy. And I'm still on the hook, a little bit, as an expert witness on a very old case, which is deplorable, but I have to do it.

KP: It sounds like you also enjoyed your work.

CS: Very much so. Very much so. I loved it. I loved my work.

KP: You also mentioned one air base, Thule Air Base. What were some of the other projects that you worked on?

CS: I think my favorite job was, I was a structural engineer of record for all of the original buildings at the State University of New York at Albany. This was an eighty million dollar, super-reinforced concrete project and I especially loved reinforced concrete. Reinforced concrete is a very substantial, earthy material that's available almost everywhere in the world. New Jersey has some of the finest aggregate for reinforced concrete that you'll ever want to find anywhere. It's just a great building material and I did a lot of reinforced concrete design. We did a gymnasium of a 112 floor span at SUNY-Albany, with a beautiful reinforced concrete ceiling, like a sculptured art ceiling, and they used that gymnasium for some of the graduation ceremonies, that's how attractive it was. We also did four twenty-two story high dormitories. We did a bell tower that was actually a water tower, that is quite nice. It's a nice campus and that was my favorite job. I went up there for five years.

KP: You were on site to supervise?

CS: Yes, on that job. I was an inspector. And I did work for Corning Glassware. They were active. I did a lot of laboratory buildings. I'm a structural engineer of record on the NYU Library at Washington Square.

KP: Oh, yes? I've used that.

CS: Philip Johnson.

KP: Yes.

CS: I'm the structural engineer of record for the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center. My partner did the band shell there, so we did a lot of good work. So I really never had time to, you know, think about the military very much. Until now, I have a lot of time now.

KG: You also did work at Rutgers, right?

CS: Did a lot of work at Rutgers, yes. I enjoyed that very much. I was the structural engineer for the student center on College Avenue.

KP: Oh, yes?

CS: Yes.

KP: Which is a lot of concrete.

CS: Which I don't especially care for architecturally, but, really, I had nothing to do with that. I think they used the wrong brick or something. I don't know.

KP: Apparently, the guy who designed the student center also designed prisons.

CS: Well, see, this was the ultra, this was the architectural style of the time, but it doesn't happen to fit Rutgers very well, sadly. It is an interesting building, though.

KP: Oh, yes, I know.

CS: Interesting building. The Mathematics and Statistics Building, I was the structural engineer of record on that, as well as doing a lot of design. I worked on a lot of buildings on the Livingston Campus.

KP: Do you remember any jobs where you had a lot of problems?

CS: I had some dreadful structural problems. Yes. I was a little bit of a troubleshooter for this company, and we got overloaded and we made some mistakes and we had some bad incidents and we had some tough problems. Yes, structurally, but we were very lucky. We never had anything seriously go wrong. We were called in as expert witnesses in some real disasters that were terrifying to any structural engineer. Terrifying.

KP: You don't have to name the particular case.

CS: Well, we had some, we happened to do the replacement structure in Kansas City, that was the worst nightmare, for the hotel. And some of our people were out there and the stories came back, and we had contact with that. That was a particularly bad nightmare. I think 100 people got killed there, that was every structural engineer's worst nightmare. Worst nightmare. I remember hearing it on the news. I walked out of the room. I had to leave the room. Couldn't stand it, it was awful. But we did structural design for the replacement structure on that, and that was quite a traumatic experience. So, we also have this saying. We worked with a lot of Hungarians. And just as a parting thought, the Hungarians have a saying: "The people who work hard for a living don't have time to make any money." And there is truth to that. People who work hard don't have time to make money. I had a lot of opportunities to make money, and I never really took advantage of them very well.

KP: Really? In terms of investments?

CS: Yes, in terms of investments. I just didn't take the time, and I was too absorbed. But, I didn't take the time, and I was too pre-occupied. But I don't have any great regrets either, but there's just some truth to that saying. There really is.

KP: I get the impression that you really enjoyed your career.

CS: Very much so, yes. I was really very lucky. I got so involved, so much work, and so much interesting work, that it was a rewarding career for me.

KP: You can actually point to buildings and say that you had something to do with their construction.

CS: Yes. Right.

KP: Have you gone back to places where you were in combat?

CS: I went back through parts of Germany that I vaguely recollected and I tried to specifically go back, but I couldn't remember exact locations very well. But I definitely saw some of the towns we had gone through, and I was, of course, absolutely amazed at West Germany, which was a totally new world. Everything [that was] screwed up, [was] repaired. We had driven through Frankfurt during the war in a convoy, and all I can remember is streets with huge piles of rubble to the left and to the right as far as the eye could stretch. And I went back to Frankfurt, and all I could see was skyscrapers, a reconstructed old town, with some of the buildings actually put back together again.

KG: What about East Germany? You also went back to East Germany?

CS: I went into East Germany, and that was a traumatic experience, because no sooner did I get to the border that I got involved with a bunch of people that I immediately detested. Instantly detested. They were some of the most, if you'll pardon the expression, chickenshit people I've ever met in my life, and I wasn't in there very long when the only desire I had was to get the hell out. I could not stand the people in charge. I'm glad they're gone. They were mostly a bunch of people at the border. They were nasty, chickenshit, arbitrary, completely nasty people. They really were and I didn't dare stay there very long. I had a visa, a special visa, I got one, and I met my wife's relatives, who were very nice, very nice people. They told us to be careful, to be a little cautious. I took pictures, anyhow. They told me, "Be careful with that camera," you know, and I couldn't believe this, but that's the way it was, and this was late. This was not too long after that whole thing collapsed, thank God. The Berlin Wall went down and the whole thing changed. I'd like to go back now. I may do that. I may go back one more time.

KG: Were there still parts of the cities in East Germany that were still destroyed because of the war?

CS: East Germany, Dresden was still damaged, it had been reconstructed but they deliberately left the rubble of one of the famous churches there, which was still, I think the Russians did that, that was propaganda. East Germany, some of the roads looked as though they hadn't been touched since Hitler left, you know, truly, you could hardly drive your car over them. Whereas in West Germany, everything was painted, paved, repaired, modern. The contrast was mind-boggling. At the same time, some of the people I met in East Germany were living very quiet, subdued, not necessarily terribly unhappy lives. They were, I thought, rather subdued. So that's about as much as I can recollect, I think, that is of any possible value. I think none of what I said has any particular value. I think none of what I said has any true significance, but, maybe, the very down-to-earth position I had, and the strange, almost half-participant, half-observer position I had, is a little bit unique.

KP: It's rare for us to actually talk to people who were close to the front lines.

CS: I heard a radio report come in from a platoon that had been badly shot up in no-mans land, freezing cold, that nobody could reach, and some of them were bleeding to death, and I heard the radio report, you know. This is something that stays with you. I say when I see a Mauldin cartoon, there is a considerable element in truth in how the troops looked. We started to look a little bit that way ourselves, although we were understandably more protected against all that.

KP: Did the rifle companies resent you at all?

CS: They never would have accepted us into their special, what would you call it, close camaraderie. They did not consider us as way back, because, you know, that we were in danger, we were getting shelled a lot. They knew we were getting mortar fire. They knew that if a combat patrol got through, we could have been wiped out. They all knew that. So they had reasonable respect for us, but we were not in their special group of people. This is a very close knit group of suffering people who formed this group that I'm very, very aware of.

KP: You could really spot them?

CS: I could sense it. I knew it was there, I knew of it, and I know, for a fact, that's what keeps people up on the line under horrifying conditions. That's a fact. The Army knows it, too, now. You can read about it. It's a fact. Yes, it's a very human and very moving phenomenon.

KP: What did you think motivated other GIs to fight?

CS: My thoughts was that there was a tremendously good morale that we had to win this war. Unbelievably, you know, tremendous morale. We all wanted to win this war. There was a feeling, a feeling that we would win this war. There was also a nice comfortable feeling while I was a student here, that we were being encouraged, that we were really, in a sense, doing our duty. We were gonna learn to be skilled, technical people. So it was okay for us not to volunteer for military duty. It was also very conveniently, very pleasant that we could volunteer to become a weatherman in the Air Force. This was quite patriotic, you know. We had the qualifications. They needed weatherman in the Air Force, because I knew this would be a nice, comfortable job in the Air Force. I wasn't gonna volunteer to go into the infantry, and people that were in the infantry would

have been very gratified if they could, if they could have gotten out, and I tried to get out, you know. There were, however, I did meet people, friends of mine, who wanted to be in the infantry. One guy wanted to be in a rifle company, deliberately bypassed the eye exam. He had glasses that were a half an inch thick, and I think he wanted to pass. I was behind him when he did it, talked his way past the eye test. If they had taken his glasses off, he wouldn't have been able to find the chart, let alone read it. Went into the infantry, we wrote back and forth, he became a Browning automatic rifleman, which is almost instant casualty, became a casualty, got a million dollar wound and went home. And wrote me when I was still there. That was also one of my favorite stories. His name was Smith. He was a great guy.

CS: He wasn't from Rutgers, was he?

CS: No. He was a Midwesterner. He was a great guy. I used to tell him he was absolutely out of his mind, wanting combat duty, but we were still great friends, you know.

KP: Are there any movies or novels that reflect your experience during the war?

CS: I saw some of the war movies. I didn't go out of my way to see them. I really didn't want to be reminded, I don't think. I also realized that I was uniquely fortunate in not experiencing any face-to-face horror of any kind. I was not traumatized. I could've been, but I wasn't. I got very accustomed to seeing dead bodies in all kinds of imaginable positions and states, but they start to look like wax figures after a while, you know, and, of course, you don't stare at them very much. I was once asked to volunteer. A German truck had gotten shot up and they tried to force me to help carry some of the bodies out, so I disappeared. I didn't feel this was, this wasn't my cup of soup, and I just got the hell out of there. And I was probably on one of my walks at the time. They didn't know who the hell I was, so I disappeared. So I never, you know, other than that, I was in this very strange position all during the war. So, I never felt that I could ever write anything that would have any great meaning, I could never even philosophize the way a rifleman could've philosophized, so I never tried to do that.

KP: What did you tell your children when they asked you what you did in the war?

CS: Oh, I told them about it in much less detail, about what I told you, but much less detail. My grandchildren have borrowed my Combat Infantryman's Badge and my Bronze Star, which I have in a little box at home, and they take that to school with them, and I let them have it to do what they want with it. I tell them a few stories once in a while, which I don't think they understood. How could they understand them? They're very strange stories. I tell them I saw General Patton. I educated them about, "I saw the general about six miles behind the front lines." I educate them on that. And I saw the entertainers about six miles behind the front lines, when we were in what we called "divisional reserves." That's where you see the entertainers.

KP: So you went to a USO show?

CS: When we were in divisional reserves. After we've been [on the line] for 160 days, we had a week and we went.

KP: And who did you see at the USO show?

CS: I'm trying to remember who in the hell I saw. I think I saw Bob Hope, and I saw Jack Benny in Paris, I believe, I can't remember. I think I only saw one show. We were only on divisional reserves for about a week, this was before we crossed the Rhine, then we went back. We were in reserves during the crossing of the Rhine. We had a night show. We had movies. We got horribly drunk, awful, once. We were strewn through this forest where we were camped. They issued us liquor, some of which was sweet, and we just drank it. We didn't even think, we just drank it down, and we got so sick that I didn't drink again for a long time.

KG: Were there any discipline problems when you were back in reserves?

CS: We all got drunk. I think they expected us to get drunk. We all got to drink one night, totally stoned, then we had a hangover, and I didn't drink anymore, and I don't think the other guys did either. Now, why they issued us all this strange liquor, whether they knew we were gonna get sick, because the sweet stuff makes you sick, I think. So that's about what I can recollect of the damn thing. There're a lot of things that I would like to recollect [that] I can't remember. Can't remember.

KP: Any more questions?

KG: No. Nothing that I can think of.

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

Reviewed by Dennis Duarte 6/13/01
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/20/01
Reviewed by Werner Carl Sturm 9/01