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Interview with

Mr. Arthur Dodge, Jr.

January 8, 1971

Place of Interview: Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Arthur B. Dodge, Jr.
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Mr. Arthur Dodge, Jr.

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Lancaster, Pennsylvania Date: January 8, 1971

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Arthur Dodge, Jr. for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place at Mr. Dodge's office in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on January 8, 1971. I am interviewing Mr. Dodge in order to get his experiences and reminiscences when he served in the United States Army during the North African and the Italian campaigns in World War II. Mr. Dodge, before we get into your actual experiences in the Italian campaign would you give us for our record a brief biographical sketch of yourself? Where you were born, when you were born, your education, family, so on and so forth.

Mr. Dodge: My name is Arthur B. Dodge, Jr. I am a native of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, being born here on June 13, 1923. I was educated at the local public schools, leaving the Lancaster Boy's High School in 1938 to go on a scholarship to Saint Andrews School, Middletown, Delaware, where I spent three very happy and helpful and informative years. I went from there in 1941 to Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, going immediately into an accelerated course in biochemistry and finishing two years prior to voluntary enlistment . . . actually volunteering to be drafted in the Army at the end of 1942 and starting active military service on February 11, 1943. Via New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, and a long train ride to Camp Howze, in Gainesville, Texas, I went through my basic training there in the Red River Valley. And I spent a very typical enlisted man's basic training course in the infantry there between February and about September, 1943. It was highlighted, I might say, by having friends from school and college who were natives of Dallas and Fort Worth who somehow found out where I was, and by good fortune I was able to get away frequently on weekends. In passing through your community of Denton, Texas, again I made friends with the people of T.S.C.W., and as a result I have very fond memories of that part of the world. We learned in August or September of 1943 that the 86th Division either wasn't up to par or was behind in its level of training. I forget what the military term is, but they were drawing on men out of the 86th Division to go into the 88th Division, which was on orders for overseas movement.

Marcello: What sort of specialty or job did you have in the service?

Dodge: Having volunteered for the job . . . I was one of these oddballs, young, gung-ho, etc. When I went for my first interview at New Cumberland Gap, the interviewing sergeant who was making out the early part of the forms turned out to be a fraternity brother of mine from college. Knowing I was interested in biochemistry, he wanted to get me into one of the medical units where that particular skill would be available, and in my naiveté or being gung-ho or what have you, I insisted that I go into the infantry, which I did. I made it a very strong point not to reveal that I was a so-called college man, and it was only after I was through basic training that the platoon leader, having reviewed the so-called "201 Files" of the enlisted men of the platoon, discovered who I was and chewed me out because I had not shown more initiative or more something or other, had not volunteered for OCS, had not done this, had not done that. And I merely told him, "Sir, my first job is to learn how to be a soldier." Obviously very naive. But anyway I did not go into the so-called ASTP program for which I am heavenly thankful, because the lure of getting back to a college campus and so on and so forth was greatly tempting. But I had a fear of it for some reason. And true enough many of my friends who did, wound up at the Battle of the Bulge as individual replacements (chuckle) rather than being scientists or what have you or what they thought they would be.

Anyway I went on my merry way volunteering again to go down to Fort Sam Houston and join the 88th Division. I took a reduction in rank from being a so-called temporary sergeant back to a Pfc in order to do that, and to my then initial horror wound up in a machine gun platoon of Company M of the 350th Regiment of the 88th Division.

Marcello: You say that your "initial horror." What do you mean?

Dodge: Well, because having been a little boy growing up in the twenties, and having seen all the movies of World War I, the life of a machine gunner in the trenches of France was one of the shortest possible. And I sort of had visions of, you know, being in the jungle of some Pacific stoll, you know, having . . . getting it that way and not having any freedom of movement. I must say that I stayed with Company M throughout the war. That was a tremendous outfit and a great bunch of men. And it was one of the most satisfying experiences of my life, having been fortunate enough to be one of few in the company who lived through it.

Going on from there, we went through a brief training cycle, getting oriented and acclimated with our new unit down there at Fort Sam Houston. I rapidly learned or felt that the caliber of leadership was superior to what I had had previously. And I don't mean this in a demeaning way or casting of bad reflection on the other people. But maybe I was a little older and wiser and more sophisticated, for having been through six months of training, I had some measurement by which to judge. But in any case, I responded to the people I found there from platoon leader to the company commander to the sergeants, etc. And although I think I am a normally shy and reticent type of person, I found a home there very rapidly and made friends and got along and tried to learn how to be a machine gunner. We went overseas through the normal course of events, going through Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, again one of these long train rides, etc. One of the things I do recall from that was going down to the point of getting on the train at Fort Sam. And as we were all lined up to get on a train parked there, which was to our rear or left, a train pulled in to our right or front. And there debarked what looked like a number of companies, by which I mean several hundred men, from the Afrika Corps in full uniform with the peaked hat and full field packs and everything else and obviously minus weapons. They were prisoners of war. And again, although I'm six feet tall and was in the prime of physical health and so forth, these chaps who were sunburned, etc., etc., looked like the supermen that Hitler claimed them to be. I mean psychologically, this meant a tremendous impact.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what thought went through your mind when you saw . . .

Dodge: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . these individuals?

Dodge: . . . the thought was that this was a tough bunch of people, and we had better be in tiptop shape. And if we've forgotten something in our training, we'd better learn it fast because we must go out and tackle these boys. It was sort of like a small eastern college team all of a sudden pitted against the University of Texas or Oklahoma or California or what have you. You had better dig in and be prepared to do your job.

Another thing that I recall in the trip across the country was passing through Memphis, Tennessee, in the middle of the night and stopping as we frequently did in the railroad yards of large cities. And one of the boys in our platoon, Sergeant John Tibbels was looking out the window, and saying, "God, Almighty, that's my home!" And he was looking in, literally, across the railroad yard, the kitchen of his home, and his mother was in the kitchen. Needless to say, we all covered up for him, and remember that at the end of each of these cars was a military policeman to see that all us little boys who were headed overseas did not do what we helped John do. And I suppose it's too late now for him to get in trouble, but anyway we opened the window and let him jump out. He ran across the yard and through the field and up and embraced his mother. And after a tearful, but joyful farewell he got back on the train within, let's say, within five minutes, and no harm was done. And the psychological impact on those of us in that particular car made us feel 10,000 per cent better. You know, we had beaten the system in such a minor way. Nobody was hurt, and this was accomplished, and obviously it was accomplished for the good. We got down to Patrick Henry, our port of embarkation. We had to be there for, I guess, a week or so until the whole group got together because I think we moved out as a convoy from Newport News on November 23, 1943 with over a hundred vessels heading across the Atlantic for North Africa.

Marcello: What thoughts were running through your mind? Do you recall at that time? When you knew you were on your way to North Africa?

Dodge: . . . only that I was glad to be on the East Coast rather than the West; that's the one thing that I recall.

Marcello: You wanted no part of the Pacific campaign if possible.

Dodge: Well, I had no knowledge of the Pacific really, whereas I had the feeling, at least going to Europe, that if I had to die there, I would die where a lot of other people had. There was a sort of historical, romantic, what have you . . . you're thinking of Caesar, Hannibal, Napoleon and all . . .

Marcello: Carthage and the whole works . . .

Dodge: . . . which goes through the mind of a young man in his late teens or early twenties in this particular situation. I recall also . . . how could I tell the family where I was and where I was going? You were censored, the telephone calls were monitored, etc. As it turned out the calls went from there through Richmond, Virginia, and anybody trying to backtrack a call merely was told that the call came from Richmond. And the way frankly--and obviously everybody was trying to signal--that I told them that I was in that vicinity was mentioning a senior naval officer who was a friend of the family's who was stationed at Norfolk. And I simply said that so and so and I were together and one day would be going out. Again this did no harm because nobody tried to do anything about it. But I'm sure a lot of boys there wanted their parents at least to know they were on the East Coast rather than the West. It was also, as I recall, at Camp Patrick Henry that I learned to sing the famous song "Gee, I don't want no more of the Army life. Gee, but I want to go home." The old song, "The coffee that they serve you they say is the best. It's good for cuts and bruises." And something and something and something, anyway. That song I've heard many times since, but I learned that song in the mess hall at Camp Patrick Henry. We sailed overseas and it was a twenty-odd day voyage.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen on the convoy?

Dodge: There were a number of submarine alerts that were rather hairy but not nearly as bad as the one crossing the Mediterranean. All I recall is trying to live as much as possible up on the prow of the ship and having a bunk which was the top bunk. This is my real master accomplishment on my two sea voyages--always managing to get the top bunk right beside one of the gangways.

Marcello: For our records you might explain why you wanted the top bunk.

Dodge: Well, I figured because I would time myself religiously, and with practice I could make it out of my bunk to the side, the gunwale, of the ship in less than six seconds. And I figured if we were torpedoed I had the chance of surviving, and you always wore a life jacket around you. There was just that one extra-slim chance that you might jump overboard and get picked up. You must remember that the convoys did not stop. And that might of been a horrible way to go, all by yourself in the Atlantic, but the instinct for survival which I had to learn the hard way was such that it was one of the things I made up my mind to do when I tried to get that bunk, as I did.

Another thing that I did on that voyage was give up gambling. I don't know how many tens and thousands of dollars changed hands in the hold of that ship. On the vessel there were some 600 infantrymen which represented about one battalion plus the naval complement on the ship. And the gambling that went on went on twenty-four hours a day for what to me were huge sums of money. I never was good at that, but I said to myself, "This is one thing that would not be difficult for me to forego." I gave it up then and now. "If the good Lord will remember it, I'll use any odds that are in my favor to get through what's coming ahead."

Oh, yes, another funny thing that happened was that about three to four days before we landed in Casablanca the so-called secret orders were opened, and the platoon officers, platoon by platoon, would assemble the men on the hatch covers and open the secret orders telling us that we were going to North Africa and what our job was going to be etc., etc. This was a great relief, but then came the time when we had these so-called briefings as to how to conduct ourselves in a foreign country. I'll never forget a very delightful 1st Lieutenant by the name of Bob Milspaugh from San Francisco. Very fine man, later killed in the north of Italy. But he was a Jimmy Stewart type of personality. He looked something like Jimmy Stewart, the type of person. And he told us how to conduct ourselves should we be among the native personnel of Morocco and Algeria or should we be invited out to dinner. This was one of these things probably put out by the State Department, you know, with which hand we could touch our food with, with which hand we did not, and how you had to cough, hic-cup, and burp, to signify that you enjoyed the meal, and not to try to pull the veils off the native women, etc. Well, it wasn't five days later that we were bivouacked out in the back side of Casablanca in an old French Foreign Legion Camp* with a lot of native people running around and so forth. And this poor lieutenant was teased to death because the Arabs or "Wogs" as they were called live a rather miserable life there, and are normally not able to keep themselves clean, etc., etc., etc. And the idea of going out to one of their mud huts or camel-covered, skin-covered tents, etc., was beyond anything

*Renamed Camp Don B. Passage

that we would imagine enjoying. And Bob Milspaugh was very much teased.

Another thing that happened was a boy by the name of Joseph Simon from Detroit was a sergeant in Company M, and he was a Syrian by birth or origin and spoke the Aramaic language which was close enough to the Arabic that the natives understood him. And a lot of bartering went on immediately after you got there. They wanted to buy your mattress covers which you weren't supposed to sell and any extra pair of shoes or personal things that you could get rid of for food or hand carvings, handicrafts, so forth. And in the middle of one of these first sessions in the wadi back of the area where we were bivouacked, all of a sudden Joe Simon stuck out his chin and began peeling off in vitriolic Aramaic. The expression of surprise and horror and chagrin on the face of these Moslems, the Moroccan natives, was hilarious to behold and worth the price of a ticket to a good Broadway show.

I recall also from there going across North Africa via the old "Forty and Eight," the boxcar, and literally we were probably, maybe, thirty-eight in the car, or forty, but you had to pile 'em in along with your personal gear. It was a very long train ride, moving from Casablanca up to Rabat and going back across the Atlas Mountains, coming down into Algeria through Tlemcen, winding up about 100 miles below Oran, below Sidi-bel-Abbes, the real home of the French Foreign Legion. And there we detrained and got into trucks and went south to a little farming community called Magenta, sort of on the north edge of the Sahara. And there we bivouacked for a number of weeks.

Marcello: One question comes to mind when you talked a little while ago about the relations with the natives, I suppose you could call them, the Moroccans, the Algerians. What sense of loyalty did they have?

Dodge: Well, remember that since the war I have been back to Morocco dozens of times, because that's a place I go on business today. I am in the cork business, and I go to the Mediterranean like I go to Philadelphia. And they have their own traditions, heritage, history, loyalties, etc. In those days they were under French domination. They were having great masses of foreign troops moving through their area, and all they wanted was to have food and shelter to live by. There was no question at that point of politics or anything else. It was just simply a matter of day to day survival. And all the implications of the previous Free French versus somebody else and somebody else really didn't matter. The French Foreign Legion and the French Units and the government civil service, etc., were very much in control.

We later--this is skipping a phase--got up into Italy and were exposed to the type of situation where the Russians, our so-called allies in those days, had in their long range plan the political outcome of the war and were so much more sophisticated than we naive Americans. Nothing is more stupid than we Americans who traditionally have gone overseas to defend liberty or our brothers or some very happy idea of an optimistic future without a clue about the pragmatics of what we have to do. So here we had a situation in Italy . . . and I'm skipping a phase, but I wasn't even aware of this as a man of the ranks. Because on insistance from Stalin directly to Roosevelt, it was agreed that several highranking Russian officers and their staff or entourage would be admitted into Italy; into the area of General Clark's Fifth Army. Who did the Russians send but Vishinsky. They didn't send a boy; they sent a man; and they sent a man who knew exactly what he was about. And he had a whole bunch of people around him who were political. And as we in Italy would occupy a town, village, countryside, or Rome, what have you, these people went together to get organized a Communist Party. And the Communist Party in Italy today, which I believe is the largest Communist Party outside of Russia . . .

Marcello: It's the largest.

Dodge: . . . is there simply because we Americans from the top on down our chain of command were so naive as to permit them to be there. It's as simple as that. And this has been written about in a number of books by people who today with 20/20 hindsight, even though they participated in it, realize the significance of it. And the unfortunate thing is that we keep on doing this sort of thing.

But to get back to North Africa, we finally were getting staged out of there up through Oran into Italy. One of the things I do recall . . .again having free time, and I might make myself up to be something of a Beau Geste which I wasn't. I was simply a healthy, young, American boy taking advantage of his own experiences, and I have through my education learned a bit of French. So on the tiny bit of free time one had, you could sort of wander around, and in this village, small country town of Magenta, there wasn't much place in which to wander. The type of restaurant or so forth you would enter was just too dirty for me. But this is the type of area inhabited by the French-Algerian of whom we heard so much about later in the fifties during all the bitter struggles there in Algeria. And I met--and I forget the sequence of events--one of these French families. And a part of the family was a very beautiful girl whose name I couldn't even tell you any more. But I did have the opportunity in the course of a half of dozen evenings in the month to visit in this French-Algerian home under the strict supervision of papa and mama and grandfather and so forth. But practicing my schoolboy French and having a bit of their native tongue and learning something of their life there and how they felt in their own personal orientation gave me two decades later a far better feeling as far as the tragedy that occurred in that area.

As I said, then going from there we took another ride up to Oran and were into the area right outside Oran at Christmas. And here again happened one of the funny things that became part of my overseas career because I happened to be an Episcopalian, and there aren't that many. It's not a faith that is common, but in our division I believe there was only one Episcopal chaplain who happened to be the chaplain of the division artillery. That meant that I as a front line infantryman had to get myself way back to the rear to get to communion. But on Christmas day a truck was arranged for the regiment, and we went back. And we were in this field tent. The service had started and Chaplain Francis J. Prior was this fellow's name, the Episcopal chaplain who celebrated communion.

And the tent flaps went up and in walked a beautiful girl. I was distracted, I must confess. She was in a Red Cross uniform. And after the service I made it my point at least to get close enough to find out something about her. And she had come in with an artillery captain, and I was a lowly Pfc of infantry, and that didn't, you know, give me any leverage. But as she was introducing herself to Chaplain Prior, I heard the name, and sort of over her shoulder I whispered another name. And she turned and put her arms on my shoulder, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "You know Johnny?" And I said, "Indeed I do." And I gave her my name which she recognized, and I got the very nicest Christmas present I could have which was a great big kiss from a very lovely girl. It so happened that this beautiful creature was the friend of one of my roommates at Saint Andrew's School.

And I won't embarrass anybody by talking names or situations, but the joy for me was that we walked out of the tent arm in arm leaving the artillery captain talking to the division chaplain or the Episcopal chaplain. As we drove off in this young lady's jeep, I pulled out a letter which I had from our common friend. He at that time was an officer in the armed forces as a submarine officer. He was at New London, Connecticut, and had written me this long letter. He was a very fine boy from the South with a lot of feeling and emotion and sentiment. And he was telling me how much he admired and appreciated the job that all his buddies in the infantry were doing, and he sort of felt badly about it, when he was eating beef steak for dinner and this sort of thing, because they lived pretty well in the Submarine Service. And this was quite a long letter, and so I composed a reply telling how much I appreciated his thoughts, particularly at Christmas time, and that I'd try to do a good job and that we'd try to get together after the war. And at the bottom of the letter my newly found friend wrote a little note: "Dearest Johnny, I am well, so is Arthur. Love. . . ." and signed her name. And she mailed this that day, Christmas Day, from Oran to New London, Connecticut.

Now, it's hard to believe that in wartime the mail service was so efficient, far better than today. But on the thirty-first of December while we were still there in the Oran area, I received an air mail special delivery letter from New London, Connecticut, which started out not "Dear Arthur," but started out something like, "You miserable scoundrel, you thing lower than a sow's belly. You're not fit for snakes to keep company with." And he went on like this tearing me down because here he was feeling so sorry for me, and I wound up with his (chuckle) girl friend. This is the type of amusing thing that happened to me repeatedly, I think, during the war which boosts the morale in a very innocent sort of way. Our romanticism, or whatever you want to call it, that made life tolerable.

Anyway, we set sail for Italy in February, went up into Naples, and on to an assembly and training area around Piedemonte d' Alife. You always trained, and one of the things I enjoyed was about a week going off with the mountain climbing school run by the American Fifth Army with the assistance of the Italian Alpine Division. The Alpine Division and also the division of the Bersagliere, the ones who wear the eagles' wings, the black eagles' wings, on its hat. They don't march; they run in formation. And these were grand chaps, and they took us up on these peaks there that were 5,000 feet high or something, and we learned how to jump off of rocks, rappelling, belaying, doing all the things that you do with rope. This training came in very handy during later stages of the war in the North Apennines. We considered ourselves very much amateurs but at least proficient enough to use this type of equipment. Much later in the spring of 1945 when the Tenth Mountain Division came into Italy at the last phases--a brilliant outfit, fine men--but they came in with all this fanfare, and the New York Times announced that the mountain troops had finally arrived in Italy. Those who had been living in the mountains for two years getting shot at found this rather amusing.

Marcello: I assume that the trip from Africa to Naples was relatively uneventful. You haven't mentioned too much about it.

Dodge: This is the sort of thing when you get into a narrative of this kind, unless you're reminded, one forgets. No, as a matter of fact, it was a very eventful trip. I forget how many ships were in the convoy. It was not nearly as large as the one crossing the North Atlantic, but there might have been twenty or thirty ships. We were on a British vessel. I think I'm telling the truth. Memory fades. But I am sure it was a British vessel. But again there was an American vessel . . . American infantry battalion on board. We traveled in convoy, although we supposedly had to . . . had control of the Mediterranean. There still apparently were some German submarines lurking around because a ship indeed did go up and the speed with which it exploded and disappeared from sight left you sort of crawling.

As I recall, this was somewhere in the vicinity of Malta. We crept down along the Italian coast and then cut north around Malta. I'd have to get a map out. There was another island there whose name is rather famous and which was bombarded like mad from the air. I know we came up from the Straits of Messina, the so-called Scylla and Charybdis of ancient times. I remember being off the shore of one of those big seaports there in Sicily and having bumboats come out and buying a cigar box full of delicious almonds, where you threw nuts over the side and the boys . . . you would throw a coin down or something and they put these things . . . just like a tourist. And seeing Mont Etna with the plume of smoke coming off the top, and it was covered with snow--very, very dramatic. We crept through the Straits at night. I recall passing the island, the volcanic island of Stromboli at night. Stayed awake all that night because we knew that in the morning we were landing. And seeing, you know, the flame coming out of the top and so forth. And the dawn! Entering the Bay of Naples, even under the conditions we were, it was dramatic because it is one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

Marcello: Now by this time Sicily had been liberated . . .

Dodge: Sicily had been liberated, Naples had been liberated, the American Fifth Army was to the north of Naples on the Cassino-Rapido-Garigliano front. So we came in the easy way. And as I said, the advance parties had been there. They came down, and then these people of our own units with the experience of . . . we were sort of led by hand up into combat through various stages.

We finally went into a position, occupied a position on the front lines. It was the beginning of March. I hesitate to say the third of March, but it was in the beginning of March, 1944. And we again went up by night. We crossed the pontoon bridge across the Garigliano River there below Minturno and moved up replacing units, I believe, of the British 5th or Black Cat London Division. As I say, we were wearing parts of British uniforms, and we were blacked out. We were trying to disguise the fact that Americans were there, and we went up past Minturno up on a ridge to a little village called Tremensuoli. And looking down to the Gulf of Gaeta on the sea, I believe the little town is called Scauri. That was right along the railroad and highway. And we were facing the so-called Arunci Mountains in a forward position. Really the Germans were around us on about two and a half sides, and to get out the position where we were in this dugout sort of position, flanking two sides of a tiny valley or draw, looking out into the larger valley in front of us.

It was very exposed, shall we say. It was so exposed that daylight movement was impossible. You were under total observation from the front and flank.

Marcello: Did they occupy the high ground?

Dodge: They occupied the high ground about five to eight miles to our front. And by high ground I would say that we were on an elevation of maybe 300 or 500 feet; they were on an elevation of 3,000 to 4,000 feet. And they were below us in the immediate front, but above us to the distant front, and with telescopes, etc., etc., they could dominate us and shell us and everything else.

Marcello: With 88's I assume?

Dodge: Mortars and a variety of things. Now we weren't there very long before they knew there were Americans. A patrol from L Company of the 350th went out within the first week we were there and some of the men were captured, and that, you know, "took the ham." The Germans immediately sent a patrol into our area and I believe captured somebody or got into the rear far enough to know that there were Americans there.

Somewhere along the line I had been promoted to a corporal, and my job was to take care of communications in our platoon which was a heavy machine gune platoon. And that meant that most of the night I was out running up and down trails splicing wire. I recall one night--I also spoke a little German--hearing somebody come by. I was alone. It was much more effective to operate alone, and I rolled over into the mud and buried myself as well as I could. A patrol of Germans came by. I was kicked by one, and one of these Germans said, "Der ist ein guter Amerikaner" meaning, "There (he) is a good American," the idea being that I was dead. It was rather uncomfortable in one sense, although, if you want a cheap thrill, that's a good way to get one. Another experience . . .

Marcello: You passed over this particular experience rather lightly, I think. What thoughts were going through your mind, if any?

Dodge: It was like the old story. Will they see me or won't they see me? If they see me, will they touch me, or won't they? If they touch me, will they take me prisoner or kill me? If they take me prisoner, will they beat me up or simply take me prisoner? You go through a series of if's. And the thing went by rather fast. It was all over in a matter of minutes. Thank heavens they didn't sit on me or something. They didn't jab a bayonet in me to make sure, you know, a lot of things. They were busy, too. Somebody farther down the trail that night actually got shot, from my own company as I recall. Then the Germans went away; they weren't looking for trouble in that particular situation.

Oh, I recall the first experience directing mortar fire and setting a haymow on fire and the German machine gunner running out of the haymow. You weren't conscious yet of death. You weren't conscious of the destruction and such things. You had to smell the feeling, but it was like being in a theater.

Marcello: About how long had you been up from the lines by this time?

Dodge: Oh, a few weeks. Always in the same position. We were up on the forward line for a week, and we'd come back to the rear for a couple of nights and then go back up again. When I say back to the rear, I mean a mile.

Marcello: Both sides were simply probing one another?

Dodge: That's exactly right. A static position. It was rainy. It was cold. It was wet. It was muddy. And you were up there for a period of time exposed to the elements, what have you. But nobody beside me yet had been killed until the night of March 11, 1944. By this time we had been up there a week or two. We were in the so-called rear position, which means on the reverse slope of the hill. And somewhere just before midnight several rounds of artillery came in right on top of us. And I was half awake because I was supposed to go on guard duty at midnight. And I got my first real smell of cordite that close, etc., and screaming shrapnel in the prone shelter-foxhole combination. Next to me, by which I mean five feet from me, were two very good friends, our platoon officer, Lieutenant Franklin W. Payer and my best friend, Sergeant James Foster, from Erwin, Tennessee. And Jimmy was blown to bits trying to protect Lieutenant Payer who had shrapnel all through him. The platoon medic wasn't available so I had the job of trying to get Lieutenant Payer down the hill. Oddly enough he could walk. You know, you say you get it for the first time. A piece of shrapnel had gone through his head immediately behind his eye balls and had come out the other side and had not killed him, but had popped his eye balls out of their sockets. So they were hanging at odd angles like light bulbs on a loose cord. And he could still see. Now an eye doctor or surgeon who has done this knows that it is possible, has happened. To a youngster like myself this was the horror of horrors. This beat Frankenstein and everything. And I am taking this man down the hill, and he is saying to me, "Dodge, Dodge, for crissake, do something for me, help me." You know, do anything, do something, do something. And I kept saying . . . we had given him morphine, but he still was able to walk.

We met medics coming up; we put him on a stretcher. They carried him; I walked beside him. We got him down to the aid station. I stayed there while the doctors were going over him. And you start at the head and bleeding . . .and go through all the procedures. He died in an ambulance on the way to the hospital, because what killed him apparently was a piece of shrapnel that went undetected and had gone through his arm pit into the lung, and he bled to death inwardly.

This was my first exposure of horror. I stayed up the rest of the night waiting for dawn and with some others of our close friends talking about this. Of course, Jimmy Foster had been killed. This to me was the end of the world because he was a Tennessee hillbilly, indestructable and a prince of a guy. And this was the sort of thing I didn't think would happen. I was going to get it; he wasn't. He knew how to take care of himself. He was teaching me about the birds and the bees. But it happened.

I recall the next day writing a letter to my mother in which I described the dawn of this March morning on a hillside in Italy with birds and flowers and the scent of mimosa and orange trees down below in the valley etc., etc., etc. And then my parting line was, "And the sound and smell of death is everywhere." I had to communicate this intense feeling somehow. Of course, this left my mother rather shattered, she was wondering if I was going out of my mind at this early stage.

Another thing that happened in this same general area on the reverse slope was . . . the type of odd thing. It sounds so corny, but what does the young soldier feel? I think of the boys today in Vietnam. Why do they all get doped up, etc.? And I think it's the loss of the knight errant, the loss of gallantry, the loss of these little fine things which keep us one millimeter above the level of the beast. But such a thing as going overseas . . . I was nineteen, I guess, or maybe twenty. In fact I was over . . . what am I saying? I was twenty, yes, going on twenty-one.

I was very fond of a girl from home who was probably seventeen, but I was carrying with me a picture of her taken when she was maybe sixteen or fifteen, a very childish-looking picture. In the mail one morning shortly after that, as I recall, we were sitting with our machine guns on what was called a "high mount" to shoot at aircraft. Well, nobody thought that any German aircraft were coming around anymore, but anyway we were in this situation. The mail came in, I opened it up, and here was a picture of this girl, suddenly turned eighteen, with the long pageboy hair on her shoulders and so forth, and looking, you know, just like she stepped off the front page of Mademoiselle. I was totally overcome. You see, this metamorphosis had taken place behind my back, and I suddenly realized the girl with whom I was enamored was not just a lovely girl, but she was beautiful!!! Would you believe at this precise moment, an ME-109 flew over and just shot us all over with machine gun bullets, and I didn't touch the triger of my gun. And when it was all over, and people got up—nobody was hurt, no damage done, and so forth--the lieutenant came over to me and chewed me out unmercifully, and said, "What the hell do you think you've been doing here?" And I simply said, "Sir," and I showed him the two pictures. And he shrugged his head and laughed and walked away. He was intelligent enough to understand what the situation was. Be that as it may.

As a result of my best friend being killed, and Lieutenant Payer being killed, we got a new officer. And I wound up being, all of a sudden, the sergeant with three stripes and took command of the first squad of the first platoon, Company M.

Marcello: What sort of advice did the old "pros" give you about staying alive? Did they have any sort of advice which they could pass along to you?

Dodge: Well, you see, our Lieutenant Payer, who was killed, had been in a sense an old "pro" because he had been out in the Pacific prior to coming back to join us. As a matter of fact, I think he had been involved in Guadalcanal and had come back from there to O.C.S. I don't recall that much advice excepting keep alert, keep alert, and keep alert. Keep your weapons clean and dry. Keep alert, keep your mind on what you're doing, don't take unnecessary chances. This is very basic, you see. You get into these tactical things. Don't get yourself exposed on the skyline if you're out at night. Don't make unnecessary noise. Don't make light. Don't attract attention. It's the nature of the Indian or the wild beast moving through the forest. But when you're walking up an Italian hillside in rain and mud and so forth, this is hard to do, although if we have time, I'll recount how this works both ways. But we really learned pretty much ourselves, and if you're fortunate enough to get through one experience, you double your chance of getting through the next one, except that at a certain time the odds run out for you again. But I would say that from this type of experience, being up on the front lines for a continuous number of days, up and back, up and back, and when you're back, you're only a mile away, or half a mile away, you get a little bit of seasoning. It's like putting a little salt or pepper in soup. It doesn't make the soup. It's not themeat or broth, but it does a little bit.

One other experience, again typical of the army mentality or so forth, I recall, was getting a one day pass because among my activities in the rear area I had been in charge of our unit's malaria control. This meant going to a school getting out of the routine. And I learned how to look for mosquitoes and larvae and so on and so forth and what the anopheles was. As a reward for that I got a one day pass to Naples. This was a tremendous experience, because of the historical sights in the area. The amazing thing was that there was a brigadier general, I believe, in charge of the PBS, Peninsular Base Section, who thought that the rear area was his and the front line troops were animals and had no business being there. And literally front line troops were being arrested on the streets of Naples by the local MP's if they didn't have neckties, shined shoes, and this sort of thing. Now on a one day pass what chance do you have to press uniforms, etc.? I am told, that is to say that rumor has it, that combat division commanders got so fed up with this in a short time that they appealed to General Clark that if something weren't done they were each going to detach a battalion or regiment and go back and reoccupy Naples. It was hushed up, cleaned up, and the situation did change. But the day I was there in March, this was actually true.

I had the very good fortune of running into a man or encountering somebody who was related to a friend of my father's out of Florence, a business connection. And I was able to get for my mother a perfectly beautiful cameo for the price of a package of cigarettes, this sort of thing, which I still have. And I enjoyed the day in Naples, seeing the sights and so forth. I never got much beyond the downtown area. And later experiences were even funnier, but was . . . the most vivid thing was this conviction of front line soldiers not being welcome there. I think also it was just about the time I was there, I recall, that the post office of Naples exploded. When the Germans left they left time bombs. It might have been just previously, some months previous to that, and they were repairing it, but I recall seeing something about it.

Anyway back up at the front lines another thing that happened was on Easter Sunday of 1944. Religious services were held up on the front lines, literally. The chaplains of the 349th Regiment who conducted services in the face of the enemy, in the face of the Germans, and nobody was shooting at anybody. You know, it was one of these oddball situations but very tolerantly effective.

April and May sort of drift into oblivion, but there was a preparation coming for a big attack because something had to be done. Of course, Anzio had occurred, and in the meantime there was fighting back and forth. Nobody was getting anywhere. And there was obviously a tremendous build-up coming. And we were moved at the beginning of May up into the sector in flat land right to the southwest of the Castelforte-Monterumichi area. The French-Moroccan troops, the Goumes, were coming in, and we were getting ready for an attack. I was in a dugout one afternoon with a Mexican boy whose name was Villareal. The Germans started pumping white phosphorus in the area. And I recall we got out of that one alive because we were lucky enough to have a five gallon can of water in the dugout and poured water over the blankets and sucked air through the wet blankets. But to this day I still have bad breathing and so forth.

Marcello: You might explain for our record what the white phosphorus does.

Dodge: Well, white phosphorus was a type of artillery shell used to set fires or to mark like smoke, registering a spot on which they wanted other artillery units to direct fire.

Marcello: And it'd keep burning for a long, long time.

Dodge: It keeps burning for a long, long time. And if you get caught in white phosphorus, it forms a gas, a burning gas. And you can be gased by it and pretty badly harmed just like any other thing. But the amusing thing again by that was that the machine gun dugout I was occupying was not more than fifty, seventy-five yards in front of a house. And there was a well out to the front and a ditch and so forth. Oh yes, I recall something else that happened there. During this being under this white phosphorus, we knew they would probably start to shell. But also we had used up our water; and I knew I had to get water. So I went dashing out with this five gallon can to the well which was to my front, crawling down the ditch to fill it up with water. And on the way back I heard a shell come in, and I hit the dirt. I was in this ditch which had a depth of about eight inches, and a large artillery shell of a caliber of about 170, I believe was the size . . . that's rather large. A 170 mm. shell landed. The point of impact was not more than thirty feet from my head. And I recall then the vivid sensation of lying there and having this tremendous concussion in waves, not just one blast, but in waves going over my back and literally tearing the cloth of my uniform. I was within millimeters, you see, of being reduced to pulp, and that time I knew I was close to death. I mean that was my first personal experience, not a sniper's bullet, not a booby trap.

You asked me how I was in the ditch when a German patrol went by. That was an academic, mental exercise. This was when the shell went off was an intensely emotional exercise. You were it. The doors were open; you were there. The mall of eternity was there, and but for the grace of God and two millimeters I had had it.

Anyway, I got out of that, got back in. We got out alive; we got dragged back. Back at the Aid station they poured some horrible goop down my throat and up my nose and at that point brought in a sergeant who had stepped in a mine with his foot blown off. Again my medical or my, you know, background came, and so Larry Singmaster from Philadelphia who was the surgeon said, "Arthur, I need you." And I was standing there, as I recall, holding a bottle of plasma while this sergeant was going under morphine and while Larry Singmaster, who was a captain, medical officer, was amputating this man's foot. And I recall as he was doing it, he was explaining to me the clinical steps by which this was being done. And he was trying something new in keeping a large flap of skin available. And this is called the Johnson, I think, technique of having the flap of skin available to wrap around the bottom of the stub because it heals more rapidly and forms a more solid base for a future prosthetic device. And I'm academically taking all of this in and quietly fainting as I am standing there, you see. (Chuckle) Somebody practically had to catch me. The afternoon's experience that I had gone through, and the problem that I was in to some degree, the thing all of a sudden culminated. I was just about to collapse. Well, I survived and so forth, but I remember vividly.

Well, going back to this building that we occupied--and I recall vividly the day was the eleventh of May, which was the day we jumped off--and we decided we were going to . . . we got our orders to attack that night. We decided to take anything we could and have ourselves a banquet. This is the first platoon of Company M, which was a heavy weapons company, and we were centered around this farmhouse.

Marcello: I was going to ask you exactly what you did do when you found out that you were to attack that night and really get your feet into combat.

Dodge: Well, we had all kinds of briefings and maps to read and fire plans and so forth, and this is, you know sort of basic military. But to me the interesting thing was that in this position the front of the house to the German lines was completely demolished. The rear of the house, stone, was totally intact including the yard, the kitchen yard, and the vines and so forth. Well, asparagus was available, artichokes were available. There were a few chickens somehow still around. The roses were in bloom, and they were deep, deep, dark roses. And I recall vividly two things: One, the banquet that we prepared with tablecloth and silverware, what have you, you know, the accouterments which you have in normally civilized eating. And taking our K rations and C rations and "four-in-one" rations as they were called, plus asparagus, plus artichokes, plus the chicken and really making a banquet with some wine we had requisitioned, etc.

And I recall Newbold Noyes, who today is the editor and publisher of The Washington Star. He had been in the American Field Service with a number of friends of mine in North Africa and the Middle East, including an uncle of mine, and he was now back doing his newspaper bit. He wandered up into this backyard, and he thought he was at division headquarters or something. We invited him to dine with us. He did and he enjoyed it. He said, "Now how do I get to the front?" And I recall vividly taking him by the arm walking him through the house, up the stairs, and through a shelter half. And, of course, there's nothing but demolition in front of you, and saying, "Six hundred yards out there, do you see that little rock? Well, right beside it are German machine gun positions." (Chuckle) He had a fit! And he wrote an article--I think I'm telling the truth, but you know memory plays tricks--but I think he reported this back, and it was read in Washington by friends and reported home to my family: "Did you know that your son was so and so and so and so and so?" These funny things. Also, and this is where I say the romance never left me, I cut half a dozen roses from this rose bush, with stems not more than about seven or eight inches, rather short, sprinkled them with water, put them inside the plastic liner--one of these ration things--put them inside the box, sealed it up, and put it in an envelope, and addressed it "Air mail Special" to Bennington, Vermont, to where my dear girlfriend was, and gave it to Newbold Noyes, and said, "You're getting back to the rear. Would you mind getting this mailed off promptly?" He promised he would get this out by dispatch. Again, the mails worked very well because those roses were delivered, I think on the fourteenth of May, about the time the news was reaching the states that the Cassino front was breaking open. They were put in a vase at Bennington, Vermont, and bloomed. And, of course, you know, the idea of roses from the battlefield, this is strictly Hemingway. This is pure corn, but honest and truly, it did happen, at least to me. And it did not involve, you know, the orgies of sex or all of this sort of thing. It happened in the most corny sort of old fashioned way, if you would have it. But this is sort of the way I grew up, and I got a tremendous bang out of it.

Anyway, we took off that night at eleven o'clock. All hell broke loose on the Italian front from seacoast to seacoast, from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian Sea, with artillery axle to axle practically.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what sort of preparatory bombardment . . .

Dodge: It was the biggest artillery preparatory fire that happened anywhere except perhaps outside of Stalingrad. But in length, you see, across the 150 to 200 miles, it's described in many military histories: the number of tons of rounds and so forth. But the clever thing that was done was that every half mile or so a British Bofors gun, which I believe shot twenty or forty millimeter shells, once a minute or at very regular intervals was shooting a tracer shell on a true north azimuth the whole way across the front, so it was impossible to get disoriented, not to be moving in the right direction. Every man couldn't have a compass, but, boy, every man knew that way was north. This thing went on, you see, for hours, and we were in a supporting role on a flank. Our immediate objective was a Monte Chericoli, beyond which was Monte Cheri, and then to the right was this . . . oh, I'd have to get the maps out, if you want the map names and coordinates and so forth, but it was a big mountain. You had the Castelforte front, and to the northeast of that was the Cassino front. The whole thing started to move. The 85th Division was on our left, then came the 88th, then came the French-Moroccans, and to the right of them were the Poles at Cassino.

Marcello: What was this Castelforte front exactly?

Dodge: Well, it was a sector of the Italian front line north of the Rapido River or the Garigliano River between the seacoast and Cassino. And it was a part of that sector as opposed to or compared to the Anzio front at the Anzio beachhead. And the objective of our division was the town of Santa Maria Infante and then breaking into the Arunci Mountains and cutting north to Itri, Fondi, Terracina, and so forth and linking up with the Anzio beachhead.

Anyway, we took off in the night, and of course as machine gunners we remained emplaced for a long time until we were told to displace forward so far and get set up and so forth. And the next morning we were set up in a position to help repel any counterattack that might take place and to assist the regiment on our left with supporting fire if called for, etc., etc. And I recall two events, again walking through the dim dawn, the "Nebelung" of the Germans, and seeing for the first time dead bodies because this now had been no man's land for months.

Marcello: Right.

Dodge: This land had been chewed up and blown up and mined and stunk, and we had to follow tape paths of people who had cleared mines and so forth. And I for the first time saw how purple and green and putrefied and bloated a body could become. And I saw skeletons on the battlefield and all this. This left an impression because I expected it, you see. This you saw out at the movies--All Quiet on the Western Front and the hands in the barbed wire. But this is what you came for, so to speak. Here it was. It stank. It was awful, but you mentally were prepared. It wasn't that shocking. All of a sudden you realize that you are out of water and find that around this little farmhouse there is a well. And you go over and stick the bucket down, and you draw up the water. And you start to drink it, and it tastes awful funny. And then you look down the well and find a dead body down in the well. This got to you very fast.

Marcello: This actually happened?

Dodge: This actually happened. I had drunk water which had been bathing a corpse for I don't know how many days or weeks. Now about this time the comic relief took place, if you can call the tragedy of war comic relief. Around the side of the hill came a small, five foot two Goume. And they had shaved heads and a queue like a Chinaman. And they wear this long sort of corduroy-appearing burnoose of brown and tan and white stripes. And he had about a 1903 or 1898 French-type of rifle with one of these enormously long French bayonets they had, and he was prodding in the buttocks a German prisoner who was a tall, good looking, Nordic type, minus helmet. And as they approached, that poor German was screaming "Bitte hilfe, bitte hilfe, bitte hilfe," which obviously meant "Help!" And I could see why, because this little Goume was holding the rifle in his left hand and jabbing this Kraut, and with the right hand on a lanyard was spinning something like a cowboy, And as we got close we found that he was spinning the ear that he had cut off the German. And this German, who was going back to the rear, didn't know if he was going back to be shot, bayoneted, garroted, or what. And we don't know what happened to him. All we knew was that we stood there and laughed like idiots. We thought this was fun. Obviously this was horrible and everything else, but this is the mental state into which you get after so much in this type of situation.

We moved through the Arunci Mountains. I recall the engineers literally building the road right up through the mountains. I recall getting down into this valley. It wasn't the Liri Valley. I forget what the . . . the Arunci Valley was in front of us. And this flood of soldiers crossing this three or four mile broad valley . . . the French got off the track somewhere and were getting into all kinds of mine fields and blowing up like mad. We moved through the night. We moved through Santa Maria. We moved right up into the hills and started walking, and the engineers behind us literally building the road. And for the next two weeks, I guess, we did nothing but climb hills and walk. And the idea was to cut off as many Germans as we could by going through territory very thinly held.

Marcello: One question comes to mind at this point. Did you have very much contact with any of the Italian partisans?

Dodge: Limited at this point. We had more in the north of Italy later on. We had quite limited contact with the partigiani at this area. We had some contact with, as I say, the French and the Goumes.

And then we simply disappeared into the mountains and followed a technique of going out in battalion column and walking as far and fast as you could until you simply had to stop to rest or ran out of supplies. And I can go into detail, as I recall it, getting down, I think, into Itri, seeing my first 88, getting into Fondi on the coast, and sleeping twenty to a room that would sleep two piled on top of each other, pushing through roadblocks, sporatic little fire, but we didn't encounter much. We avoided the main roads, you see. The 85th on our left was going up Highway Seven, I guess, the main road up the coast.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what sort of resistance the Germans were putting out.

Dodge: Very sporadic. But the type of things . . . and, you know, your experiences mellow sometimes, but I think it was on this stretch north of Itri up back to the east of the Pontine Marshes, headed in towards the area called, I think, Priverno, and above Priverno are two mountain villages called Roccasecca and Roccagorga. And this is an area maybe fifty miles, sixty miles south of Rome inland up in the hills.

Two things I recall happening. One was a patrol going out at night. And what I am about to describe may have happened here or may have happened six months later in the

North Apennines. I'm not sure. It was the type of event where we were walking at night through a tremendous rain and windstorm. Now I climbed at the age of thirteen or fourteen Mount Washington one night in August in a windstorm where I know the recorded velocity was 105 miles an hour because when I got there they told me I was an idiot for going up the trail alone. I would judge this wind velocity to be about that, in the range of a hundred miles an hour. And we were moving holding each others' rifle belts. At a certain point, the word came back, "Take a ten minute break." And I recall, being a sergeant at that time, telling my squad, "First man, take two steps forward, go to the left. Next man, take two steps forward, go to the right, breaking up. Sit and don't move." And the first man to take two steps forward and go to the right, stepped into a German machine gun nest which wasn't even aware that a couple hundred soldiers had walked by. Now this is incredible to believe it happened. There was a fist fight, and we took him prisoner. But literally, the man stepped into a German machine gun nest which was supposed to be guarding that trail. I know also we had some wounded who were being sent to the rear and were machine gunned in their stretchers going to the rear that night. I recall that we had supplies airdropped to us from LC-5's, I think they were called, the small type of observation aircraft. And you know, this was, oh, this was great stuff. There were no airborne troops around us in that sense or no big planes. But just the idea that we were getting ammunition and supplies!

I recall moving down out of the hills there at Roccagorga. I recall looking down into the valley by Priverno and seeing masses of German troops moving north. We had instructions . . . we couldn't shoot at them because we didn't have enough force, enough power, to do anything. And so there was a grouping of forces, and then we went down and cut that road. But the idea of looking from 4,000 feet, 3,000 feet up, down into a bunch of Germans, and I mean regimental size--trucks and convoys--and not being able to do anything was frustrating. We got into Priverno more or less around the, oh, I don't know, the twenty something of May. This was a small city with villas and houses. And I recall getting into one place that had a lot of very good paintings that I would have been happy to confiscate, but I had no time. I recall getting in one farmyard covered with cherry trees and learning that the Italian word for cherry was ciliegia. And I recall that here was a company of American soldiers moving through this farmyard like Tarzan in the trees. We were up one tree and down another, filling our helmets with cherries and eating cherries like mad.

I recall being . . . thinking you were pinned down and our regimental commander, General James . . . later general, then Colonel James C. Fry, coming up the path with a little riding crop and telling us to get on our feet and on our way and so forth. He there earned the name "Fearless Fosdick." And this is the way he encouraged the troops to move forward, which we did. And it was this type of experience of rapid and fluid motion, sporadic contact, and so forth. We were the first troops actually of the 88th Division to link up with the Anzio beachhead. By that time the beachhead had already broken out, but physically for a day I sat on what had been the area of the battlefield of Anzio.

I recall at that point mail coming up, you know, the funny things of war. And there was a beer ration, and I recall drinking warm beer and all of a sudden a jeep driving up and dumping a full U. S. mailbag addressed to me. And it was an accumulation of something like six months of packages from home. And so our platoon, you know, enjoyed the most wild assortment of crumpled pretzels and cookies and cakes and chocolate bars you can imagine. It's the only time in my life that I have ever personally received, not in business, but personally received one full mailbag full of genuine U. S. mail. Oddball, really oddball things.

We moved out from Anzio in support of, but to, I believe, the left flank of the American 36th Division, which had to go into Rome through--I'm forgetting the name of the town, now--Velletri, if I'm not mistaken. It was a major stronghold south of the Alban Hills where the Pope goes in the summertime. And there was a city there where they expected a lot of resistance, and this was a thing that was done with tremendous success. And I think it is to the everlasting credit of the man who was commanding general of the 36th Division because I think it was General Walker, as I recall, on his neck that it was possible, that he pulled off this manuever. And we went in to the left of that operation. The road was clear, and we moved in on highway . . . I think it was called Highway Six coming into the outskirts of Rome from the area of the town called Valmontone. I recall at that point that I was suffering from diarrhea, and I didn't move more than 100 yards without having to heed a call of nature. And if you ever heard the expression, "sore . . ." you know what, I had it.

It was a bitter and tragic experience, but here you were coming into Rome, the first army in history to enter from the south, and I was determined to be a part of it. And I recall seeing the first sight of Saint Peter's dome so forth. This was on, I think, the afternoon of the fourth of June, a couple of days before the landings in Normandy. And we came in at night and our unit, the 3rd Battalion of the 350th, moved, I recall, at one point past at least one of the dairies of Rome. And there were a lot of moonlight requisitioning of milk. We passed, I know, the railway station. We passed the Grand Hotel. And we moved and were the first troops, I believe, up the famous Via Veneto, and as we passed the famous Excelsior

Hotel, the German flags were being taken down, and the American, British, Italian, and so forth flags were going up. And I recall it was the Excelsior and then the next hotel up the hill right by the gates of the Villa Borghese was the Hotel Rosa or Flora or some name like that. Here were these . . . you were in a city now, you know, lighted lobbies, chandeliers, liveried footmen, all this sort of thing. Now the temptation to suddenly disappear and check in for the night, you see, was overwhelming. I was carrying a tommy gun, and I recall sitting on a curb outside the main entrance of the Hotel Excelsior where you now pay two dollars for a drink of campari or something. And it was really . . . you know, this can't be true, you know. This isn't the way the war goes, but we did.

Marcello: (Chuckle)

Dodge: And we moved from there through the gates in the Villa Borghese down across the famous Borghese Gardens into the Piazza del Popolo and from there down to the Tiber River, and our mission was to secure the bridge across the Tiber which led into what was then called the Foro Mussolini. It was a big school with this enormous stadium with cheesy looking statuary, reproductions of historical statuary in the background.

Marcello: Did you encounter very much sniper resistance . . .

Dodge: None.

Marcello: . . . or anything like that.

Dodge: None. We on the narrow ridge we followed . . . encountered nothing. You could have been a conquering army of Caesar coming in as far as we were concerned. But it was at night, and the idea was to get through Rome like the 28th Division went through Paris . . . later on in August of '44, or September, the fastest way they could get through was to form them up in a parade and march them through Paris. Well, we literally were walking through Rome just as fast as we could get there. It was tactically best . . . the best way to do it under the cover of darkness. We had some argument because I think there was a tank and a couple of Fascisti, Italian people, at the opposite end of the bridge. But there wasn't anything that was . . . you know, my, oh, any rough stuff. We moved through the Foro Mussolini sort of looking like this (gesture), you know, at the statuary and this beautiful olympic swimming pool. Within a week this became the Red Cross leave and rest center for the American Army in Rome. It was that big. And behind the Foro Mussolini was an escarpment several hundred feet high, and we crawled up this thing.

And we then had the mission of occupying high ground to the north of Rome to intercept any counterattack that the Germans decided to mount. And here is another one of those funny things because I had been given the mission as a sergeant to take out a patrol and start checking these villas. These were beautiful things with fifteen-foot high walls around. And going in and checking them out. Well, about the third or fourth one I checked out I rang the bell, (chuckle) and an older man came in and so forth. I talked to him in my broken Italian, and he understood and so forth. Oh, he got very agitated. And I looked into the distance and saw some young girls fleeing. What have I run into here? Well, it turned out that we had moved into a convent school for young ladies apparently, I guess, of Roman society run by an order of Belgian nuns. And we were sort of asked not to go in. Well, it so happened that this was the largest building in the area, and it had a beautiful tower up in the top of the upper floor with a cupola which would have made a very nice observation post. I wanted to put a man up there with a radio, which I did.

But in the course of it I was introduced to a woman who was taking shelter there. The Contessa Guiliana di Carpegna. She was of Venetian nobility. Her husband, I believe, was fighting with the partisans. A week before that she had been nursing in a German hospital. She was quite a personage, I guess, for a woman in those days in their thirties. I've known her since; I've met her since the war. It turned out that she had an uncle who was, I believe, a cardinal or high dignitary in the Papal court, and as I had a brother who was a Trappist monk down in Gethsemane, Kentucky, and it was a frustration to me because as a Trappist, for him I could do nothing. She thought, well, if I didn't overrun her girls' school maybe she could reciprocate. And so she told me that the next time I came to Rome maybe she could do something, which in due course she did.

We left Rome. We didn't have time to a . . . enjoy the triumphal entry of General Clark and General Keyes and everybody else; we had to move on our way. And we wound up to the north of the town of Civitavecchia, the old seaport of Rome. We bivouacked there and went into one of these training situations. You know, the minute you don't fight you have to train as a soldier. I recall getting my first experience with . . . I think it's called strega which is a very strong Italian drink. Grappa is one and strega is another mixed with grapefruit juice. Very Powerful! And I recall trying to go to bed that night which was lying down on the ground in a prone shelter and never quite being able to get my head on the ground. And I encased my head in my steel helmet and prayed that I would awake in the morning, which we did, of course, but it was one of those things.

The following week was the thirteenth of June and it was my birthday, and I got a one day pass to Rome and went with one of my good friends. He was Polish, Joseph Ochenskowski. And Joe and I went back--we were both sergeants at the time--for a day in Rome. And we were detrucked at the Foro Mussolini, as I say, and the trolley cars were running. And we got whatever little papers we had to have and so forth to go into the city, and we got on the trolley car and rode downtown on a trolley car. The disjointedness of the whole thing was quite something. As it turned out I don't think there were any other GI's on that trolley. It had come from somewhere, and it was full of Polish soldiers. And so my real experience of getting into Rome was that night walking through, and then my triumphal entry into Rome was riding this trolley car with Polish soldiers singing Polish war songs. And Polish war songs are very dramatic. And of course Ochenskowski could sing along with them and was teaching me the words, and I had to learn how to say quite a few things in Polish. And it was quite a thrill.

And in due course I went back to see Guiliana di Carpegna who had for me immediately arranged a meeting with His Holiness Pope Pius XII, and that afternoon it was with not more than a dozen people who had what is called a semi-private audience. That, I must confess, even though I am not a Roman Catholic, was quite a thrill; and I was aware of being in the presence of, you know, a holy man, a great spiritual leader coupled with all the pomp and ceremony of the Vatican. And I wound up coming out of there with a document intended for and addressed to my brother, and I had the satisfaction of so-called beating the system again. You know, one of the loves of the American is to beat the system if you can do it without harming anybody. This was my idea. You know, it's fun to bend the ropes a little bit if really they can be done without sinning or without harming etc., etc. Well, I bent them, you know, wild. And I won't describe what this document was, but when I sent it to Gethsemane it had the benefit that was proper, but it created the sensation I wanted to create.

We went back up to the front then and were involved in hop-skip-and-jump sort of activities until the beginning of July when we were moved up below the town of Volterra, which is maybe thirty miles south of the Arno River in the heart of Tuscany and this was the drive on Florence in the North Apennines.

Marcello: What was the fighting like in these mountains? They were really mountains weren't they?

Dodge: Well, between Rome and Volterra you were in long, rolling plains, sort of I guess like Nebraska, Iowa, that sort of thing, and a bit hillier maybe than Colorado going up to the mountains. But it was open; there is no cover. And Germans were withdrawing hill feature by hill feature and always seemed to get a little bit higher. They always seemed to be looking down your throat.

And I know when we were . . . again preparing for this jump off at Volterra, I had a letter from home advising that a nephew of a friend of the family was a general officer there; and I had his name, address, and so on and so forth, you know.

And from the naiveté of the civilians from home, "Why don't you go visit?" Well, the afternoon of the day before the attack--we had known this was coming--everything was tidied up; you had nothing to do. So I asked my platoon leader, did he mind if I went back to the rear to corps headquarters for a couple of hours. He said, "No, just be back in time," you know. Things were loose at that point. So I got on a truck that was to bring water up; they call it the "water ride." I rode back to corps headquarters and got off. I at that point was still a three stripe sergeant, and I found my way to this headquarters, and I asked to see general so and so. I won't again mention names to avoid anybody being embarrassed in history. But really, my idea was to sort of say hello, see what a corps headquarters looked liked and maybe get a good square meal before I jumped off into the attack.

And I got up as far as the so-called command tent or the "war tent," and this was full of nothing but generals and colonels and the final briefings before this attack. And when this broke up a lieutenant came out who was an aide, and an MP guard pointed to the aide. And I went and introduced myself to the aide, and said that I was sort of a friend of the family. And he was a decent sort of chap, and so he said, "Just a minute. I think the general has time to see you." Indeed the general came out and said, "Why Arthur, what are you doing here?" Very informal and very kindly he said, "Won't you come to lunch?" So there I was--a dirty, ragged infantry soldier--going to lunch, sitting at the left hand of the brigadier general. And this was it; I had it made. I could write home that I had done my duty, and I was going to get a meal. And as I was talking with the general--there was a plate of metal enamelware--I heard a "plop" on my plate. It didn't sound like roast beef or even a hamburger. And I looked back, and there was a box of K rations. (Chuckle, chuckle, chuckle) And the general looked at me and said, "What's the matter, Arthur? Did you expect roast beef?" And I said, "Yes sir, as a matter of fact I did." And we all had a big laugh out of it.

But the bigger laugh came when he kindly offered me his jeep to go back to my unit because he was not going anywhere at that moment. So he instructed the driver to take me back to my unit. We headed up towards the front line, and apparently the driver hadn't been up to the front lines before in this particular situation. And he was asking me to guide him. Well, we were busy "yakking" with each other. "Where do you go?" I said, "Turn here, turn here," so forth. I recall vividly coming to a certain crossroads. And he said, "Do we go straight ahead or turn to the left?" I said, "I think we turn to the left." And as we turned to the left we started up the slope, a very long slope, maybe a half mile. It was a totally open, open field with this road. And I looked and spread out in a fan shape to the right and the left were tanks and people around and so forth. And I said, "Yeah, I think I've saw these guys before," and we started up. And we finally got up almost to the brow of the hill. And fortunately there was a tank right there, and the guys were out of the tank. And one of them was on the road and said, "Where in the hell do you think you're going?" And I said, "Well, back to the 350th Infantry." And he said, "Well, buddy, you better drag your ass the other way, because twenty yards more over the top of that hill you're going to see not the 350th; you're going to see two panzer tanks." (Chuckle, chuckle, chuckle). That driver was most unhappy, most unhappy. He took me back to the crossroads and let me out there. I had to walk back to the 350th. And when he got back he told the general, who wrote home to his aunt, who told my mother and so forth that we almost got captured with the general's jeep. So that was my experience before the attack.

We started off in the attack at Volterra. It got bitter. This was the really first battle where we were moving as opposed to heavy tactical support from the rear, heavy weapons. We were carrying light machine guns and were providing what is called "close in assault support" for the attacking line companies. And the first platoon of M Company was attached to Company L of the 350th under Captain Ned Mahar of Brooklyn, New York. And we got into a rough, long, hot, July day. This is the eleventh of July of '44; and it got to be very, very messy.

And the thing really bogged down somewhere around noon when our immediate objective was a fairly large farmhouse on the side of a hill. I think it was north and east of Volterra, near Villa Magua. And things started stagnating, and it was hot, and nobody was moving. And suddenly, as I recall, the back door of the farmhouse opened; it was on a hillside with this sort of a cellar door. And ten or fifteen Italian people came running down the hill at a distance of several hundred yards towards us, yelling words like "libre, libre, Americani," and so forth. And as they were running toward us, I recall very vividly a woman carrying a baby in her arms--this way you see in the Madonna effect (gesture)--running toward us. And-from our right flank, which would of been from the east at a distance of maybe 600 yards, a German machine gun opened up on these people, and among other things that it did, it pulverized that baby right in the mother's arms. Probably broke her arms and so on and so forth. There wasn't a single command given, but all of a sudden across the area where I was, people started putting bayonets on their rifles and going up on the hill to clean out a mess.

And we occupied that house and a couple of houses surrounding it, and then the German's started to counterattack. We were supposed to have tanks and support. We didn't know much about how to use tanks in close support. The tanks didn't know much about supporting infantry in close support. This is a platoon from an independent tank company. And it was one of these tragedies that in that situation the tanks were sort of green and new. They were drawing enormous quantities of fire--artillery, 88's, machine guns, and everything else--and were really not what I would call vigorously responding. As a matter of fact they were buttoned up, and at one point they were so tightly buttoned up that I recall climbing up to the hatch with my tommy gun and sticking it in the air vent and announcing to the leader over those little microphones--they had outside microphones--that if he didn't start to fire on such and such an azimuth rapidly, effectively, and with vigor that I was about to turn that tommy gun loose and let everybody inside that tank have it. I mean it got kind of touchy, you might say.

Well, in the meantime we were dug in in an olive grove on the east flank of this one particular farmhouse with L Company sort of all around and inside of it, and the Germans hit us with elements of several battalions. We took very heavy casualties. I mean a rifle company in that situation maybe had a 130-150 people; a heavy machine gun platoon up in there had thirty-five people. Out of our platoon I would say less than ten of us walked away. And out of L Company, I don't think more than a couple dozen walked away. It was a mess.

Marcello: What were they hitting you with mostly?

Dodge: I don't remember the name.

Marcello: Artillery?

Dodge: Mortar and artillery and machine gun fire. And of course they were assaulting time after time.

Marcello: What German weapon did you fear the most? Of course, all of them were bad, but . . .

Dodge: I never got that . . . I figured the one at the moment . . . I figured the one that . . .

Marcello: With your name on it? (Chuckle)

Dodge: . . .at the moment. No, no. "To whom it may concern," you know. That was the one. Don't worry about the one with your name on it. You can change your name. It's the one that's marked "To whom it may concern." But no, you sort of feared the one that was closest at the moment. I never got that I dreaded one more than the other. I guess an 88 was . . . I would say the most terrifying sensation is to have an 88 go by you and land shortly behind you.

Yes, as a matter of fact, that reminds me. Back there in that early stage on the Minturno front in the very beginning weeks I was in that dugout facing the mountains to the north, the Arunci Mountains. And I recall vividly one morning--I have to be graphic--having to heed a call of nature, and as I said, you could not go outside, so you did what you had to do in the confines of that little foxhole. You very cleverly managed to scrape everything up and put it in an empty K ration.

And right behind that foxhole was this stump of a tree, maybe eight inches in diameter, and what was left might have been six feet five. And we were on the forward slope of a hill--mud, sandbags, and so forth, machine guns. I recall at that point stooping down to pull up my britches--and I was wearing a so-called tanker's suit which is a suit over a suit, and it enables you to tolerate all that mud and wet--and as I stooped down an 88 shell came overhead and cut that six foot tree in half. And the scream of that thing which exploded maybe ten feet farther behind! Well, I later looked up, and had my head been up, from the angle it was coming in and so forth, it would have probably taken my head off in the course of that trajectory. And from that day forward, when an 88 went by me somewhat close, exploding to my rear, you've got this scream, this enormous scream, from this high velocity shell. And then you've got the bang of the shell behind you, and then you heard the gun going off. And it was that sort of triumvirate of bing, bang, bang. That was probably to me the more terrifying of all the things.

Marcello: I guess that was a rather versatile weapon. The Germans used that for everything--as a tank weapon, an artillery piece . . .

Dodge: Would you believe that the . . .

Marcello: . . . antiaircraft . . .

Dodge: Yeah. Would you believe that in 1937, '36, '37, and '38, my father, being in the cork business, went to Spain as the delegate elected by the American cork industry to negotiate with Franco's government for getting cork, a raw material, out of Spain. He was in the areas occupied by what is now the Franco government, not in the loyalist area. And he was in places like Seville, Badajoz, and Toledo and so forth in some areas not very long after the fighting. And would you believe that we had in Spain during the Spanish Civil War observers from the armored forces, which was still like the cavalry in those days, from the artillery, from the infantry, from the Army Air Corps, etc. And I believe I am stating the truth that these reports were filed by the various arms that here was a new weapon--German, 88 millimeter, antiaircraft, such and such a muzzle velocity, such and such a capability of rounds per minute, so on and so forth, effective at so many thousand feet in the air, etc., etc., tremendous antiaircraft weapon. And the artillery reported this as an artillery weapon, and the armored people reported this as an antitank weapon, and the infantry people reported this as an antimachine gun so on and so forth weapon. And I am under the impression that this information was never coordinated by the War Department until somewhere around Kasserine Pass when the 1st Division or 1st Armored were getting their tails knocked off over there in North Africa by this same weapon. I may be wrong, but I've lived now for twenty-five years under this impression and have talked to people who have tended to corroborate what I've said. I'm under the impression that they did use it during the Spanish Civil War as they did many other new weapons. This was a testing ground.

Dodge: This was the whole idea. The stuka dive bomber and so forth were all used. Well, anyway this is the weapon I found most bothersome. But along this situation up by Volterra I had the horror of sort of reciting the psalm to myself, you know, "ten thousand shall die at my right hand" and so forth, and "thou shalt not cast thy foot against the stone" or whatever the meaning. And literally men were dieing in my arms, at my hands, beside me, within feet, and so forth, shot through the head, the neck, and one thing or another.

I recall a man from Texas by the name of Vaughn--and he was from Tyler, Temple, in that general area--being hit in his foxhole maybe twenty feet behind and sort of down the hill. And I can still hear it. And I can recall this man; he was older; Vaughn was in his thirties, and I think a bachelor. But he was screaming, "Oh laudy, laudy, laudy, save me, save me. Do somethin' Lord." And I could hear this mortar round coming in. There was no more. You see, that really got to me. Talk about Texas, you being with a Texas college and so forth, there was a boy named Ed Lancaster in our platoon from Sanger, Texas. You can't get any closer to Denton than Sanger.

Marcello: You sure can't.

Dodge: Ed may still live there for all I know. He is one of the few who got out of that thing with me. But I think the other man's name was Alfred Vaughn. His death, you know, had a tremendous impact. And there was an Italian boy from right down here near Pennsylvania right there in the foxhole with me. I can almost recite the names as they were killed one by one.

So what finally happened under these counterattacks in this situation . . . the tanks were doing us no good. L Company sent out a patrol over to the flank to knock out that machine gun which was too close for comfort. But finally those of us who could crawl, crawled into his farmhouse which had tremendously heavy walls, 16-18-20 inches thick, into the basement. We each took an automatic weapon and got up to one of the windows. We got onto the radio; Mahar got on the radio and called for the artillery to come right down on top of us. What they call TOT, "time on target," total saturating, and then they came behind the Germans that were attacking and rolled right over us. And I don't know how many Germans were killed in that thing, but masses of them. We took a great number of prisoners, and relief had to come up, and as I recall all night long it seemed they were marching prisoners away and then . . .

Marcello: How do you process a prisoner when you take them? What do you do when you capture an enemy prisoner?

Dodge: Well, the one that I actually captured personally, later on in the North of Italy, you approach him at a comfortable distance of maybe ten feet or something so he can't swing on you, and you point your weapon at him and you say, "Hande hoch!" if you know any German . . .

Marcello: Hands high! (Chuckle)

Dodge: . . . and you've got him. This is sort of a different story which I could tell, of course, if you want to hear it. At this Volterra thing . . . again the situations of war . . . I recall Ed Mahar, a Lieutenant Desbang, and I were in a slit trench barely big enough for one, sort of on the rear side of this farmhouse taking shelter from a barrage. And this machine gun which had not yet been knocked out over on the flank opened up. I got a round that spun around inside my helmet. Mahar had his dogtags cut in half, this way, (gesture) as they were lying on his chest. And Desbang got one through the throat and was killed.

In 1949 I was at Indiantown Gap with the 28th Division during summer training. And I was at the Officer's Club on a Saturday evening doing nothing particular, and a nurse came up and happened to see my right shoulder the 88th Blue Devil Patch. And she asked me my unit etc., etc. And she said to me, "By any chance, did you ever know a Lieutenant Desbang?" And I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, he died in my arms." And she said, "I'm his sister. Would you tell me about it." There's so many coincidences that I can't recall them all in one afternoon.

I've had dozens of things like that happen. And I told her the story. And she told me all they knew was that they got a few personal effects back--his wallet and a few little momentos--and there was still blood on the one thing, and she'd assumed that, you know. . . . And I said, "All I can tell you is that he never knew what hit him." She said, "That, at least, is a relief for me and my mother to know." But at the moment that that woman said to me, "I'm his sister. Would you tell me about it." You could have flattened me with a feather. You really could've.

Going back to the Volterra situation, we were inside the house. We had this thing going on just like the Alamo, and it was crazy. But we came out of it and we won. A few days later . . . I had been hit several times during the thing with mild doses of shrapnel and what have you. And a couple of days later I collapsed, and I woke up in a hospital in Rome. I was totally unconscious for a day or so. And I woke up and I was tagged as having gastrointeritis which is a very fancy name for acute indigestion. It was a mild nervous breakdown, so to speak. And then they picked all the shrapnel out of my shoulders and arms and what have you. And I recall the hospital was the 100th General Hospital, and I was lying on a bed in a corridor, and an elderly nurse came by, and I guess I was looking, you know, pained or grieved and so forth. And she said something about, "Don't you worry sonny. This is not just an ordinary hospital. This hospital is run by the Massachusetts General." And as I later learned, many big metropolitan hospitals in this country staffed general hospitals for the armed forces overseas. And I recall looking at this nurse and saying, "Oh, are either Dr. Gerald Blake or Dr. Champ Lyons with you?" And she, in a very gruff way, asked me what I knew about them. And I said, "Well, I'm from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and they've both got relatives there, and they're very good friends and so forth. Well, it turned out Dr. Blake wasn't, and Dr. Lyons was just invalided at home with hepatitis. But the fact that they were two prominent doctors associated with the hospital, and I sort of said the magic password, and I wound up that afternoon out of the corridor and into a room with a dozen other fellows. But at least I was in a room, and it was the same old story the world over--if you say the magic words, you get one step ahead. And I recall that happening.

But I also recall from that experience going back up to the so-called Replacement Depot System or "Repel-Depel." It's a method of . . . I was really in the hospital. I wasn't that bad off for ten days or something, and they cleaned me up and sent me back on my way because by the early part of August I rejoined our unit which was then up near Leghorn. They had gone through a bit more trouble on the way to the Arno River. The platoon leader again had been killed. At the moment I don't believe there was one. There was somebody temporarily, but I forget who it was. And I wound up all of a sudden getting another stripe and was a staff sergeant.

Marcello: What sort of tempo did the fighting take? I assume there was an attack and then perhaps a pause and then a counterattack. Were the Germans stopping, then fighting awhile, and then retreating to the next hill?

Dodge: If you can imagine the Italian Campaign, you had certain definite stages. You had the initial landings at Salerno, which were in what, September, I guess, of . . .

Marcello: September.

Dodge: . . . '43.

Marcello: That's correct.

Dodge: And you had a lot of blood and mess and so forth. Then a fairly fast path through Naples. You had the Rapido . . . no, the Volturno River came first, I think, and then the Rapido, and, of course, the tough situation. The 36th Division found itself in, and moving without enough force through mud and terrible terrain, the famous Battle of San Pietro and so forth, into the Germans who were just too well dug in and fortified. So your whole thing by October-November of '43 simply bogged down. You had the Anzio landings in January of '44, and that was not exploited. So that bogged down and the Cassino front was there until the eleventh of May of '44. You have a static position with patrols and fighting and bleeding, and dieing and so forth, but it's static in that sense. Then your move from eleventh of May of '44 through Rome was fairly swift and so forth. I think General Patton, had he been there, would have said that without tanks this was a pretty good show. But after Rome, which we occupied on the fourth and fifth of June of '44, the high command of powers that be, stripped the American Fifth Army of the 36th Division, the 3rd Division, the 45th Division, plus heavy artillery, etc., etc., and moved them into the south of France. I think there that by August of '44, I forget what it was, but we had not even a battalion, one platoon or something with eight-inch guns and so forth. We were down to the bare ass bones, you know. And still we were moving ahead in the attack. Well, now there's a certain attrition that takes place in the attack, you know, from being sick, being shot at, being knocked out, being so on and so forth. And what happened really was that by the time we got to the Arno we were running out of steam. Even in that type of fluid situation, it gets harrowing on the nervous system, on the physical system, and so forth. You need a pause of refreshment. And we reorganized again there south of the Arno, and the British were the first, I believe, to cross the Arno. They occupied Florence and fortunately most of Florence was spared. And then we took off in September of '44 trying to break through the North Apennines and hit the Po Valley. And in one sense this got to be very rugged because we were not ill-equipped, we simply didn't have enough of it. And we had no real reserves. You went up in the line, and I think the 92nd Division came in at that point. The 91st, I think, the Pine Tree Division, was a good outfit. The 92nd came in, and it was a Negro division that had all kinds of problems. The Tenth Mountain didn't come in until the following spring so that a lot of the burden in our sector . . . and there was a mix up with . . . oh, by that time you had a Brazilian unit in there, you had Polish forces in there. You know, the real polyglot army to deal with, and all the problems of supply and communications, etc., etc.

But from the standpoint of the variable level I occupied at the moment, it was how far could you go before you simply fell on your face. And the ensuing North Apennines Campaign again was one of these rapid plunges. The idea was that you take off at nighttime and go up some goat trail as fast as you can move, and you wake up in the morning often totally surrounded by Germans, and you fight all day like you did in the Wild West when they encircled the wagon train and hope that they would pull back, and then you'd take off the next night again. You know, how many times could you do that? And I know that in the North Apennines we had our first . . .my first close encounter with partigiani because we were supposed to be led in this particular area. This was a two-faced outfit that literally led us into a German ambush, and we got out by the skin of our teeth.

Marcello: Would you care to describe the incident?

Dodge: Well, I . . .

Marcello: Are we getting ahead of the story here?

Dodge: No, not really . . . well, we are a little bit because of all the things that happened. I forget what or why, but I very rapidly moved from being a buck sergeant to a staff sergeant to a technical sergeant and took over running the First Platoon as a sergeant. I recall getting back to Rome for another two day pass or something and having a ball. At that time I was wearing a mustache to disguise my youth. And I was just a typical young American--twenty-one years of age and at the prime of your physical condition and, you know, a real buck. One of the things I recall--this is a hard thing to put in history, but you're asking about a story--was one night here in Rome literally searching the streets for a beautiful girl. Never found her. My standards were either too high or the good angels were watching over me. I sublimated by walking all night, is what it turned out to be. Many of my friends, in that sense were more successful. But again it's one of these things that makes one pause because of the four of us that went into Rome on that trip, I was the only one who didn't have what he thought was going to be a successful trip to Rome. And I was the only one alive that Christmas. You know, what does that mean? Probably, maybe nothing, but it made an impression on me.

And I recall the situation in Rome as in many of those cities in those days where through to the tragedy of starvation and the backwash of war and so forth the little boys would come up and so forth and ask if you wanted to go with his sister, or his mother, or his aunt, or his anything, I guess. And this is the socialogical impact that nobody taught you about in basic training. We read about it in books today. We're more realistic. But in the literature of Tennsyon or Kipling or what have you that we were brought up on prior to World War II, one never heard what life in the raw was, you know, like this. And, maybe I was a little more sensitive than most because it made quite an impression on me that the world had to come to this point.

But when we took off in the North Apennines . . . before going up we'd gone into Florence. And I had the addresses in Florence of a number of people who were, again, family friends or friends of friends. People that were my family's next door neighbor here in Lancaster had an aunt living in Florence who was an artist. She had been there all through the German occupation. I recall the sensation of again, you know, being in combat clothes, going up and knocking on the door, having a maid come to the door, and saying I would like to see Senora somebody and somebody and somebody. And all of a sudden, you know, you're out of the foxhole, and you're not just in an army barracks, but you're in civilization and being able to take somebody a little pouch of coffee. I didn't smoke so I could take them cigarettes. You know, cigarettes, of course, were gold. Since I didn't smoke, I became relatively wealthy in terms of the local economy because I could keep all the cigarettes I was allowed, and they became, you know, a bargaining source and so forth. But during the remainder of the Italian campaign, I always had Florence as a point to visit, to sleep in a bed, to be among friends, even to have a meager meal, but to have it in a civilized way. And I had some things happen at Florence that were, you know, really again a delight.

But we took off on this North Apennines thing and, as I say, going up these hills and so forth with mule skinners. I ran into at one point in this area a Major Berkholder from Lancaster here, who turned out to be the CO of the whole mule skin operation of Italy. You know, you turn a corner and here's Johnny Berkholder: "What the hell are you doing here?" and so forth.

Marcello: You're talking about the mule skin operation. What exactly is that?

Dodge: Well, the transport problem in Italy was so acute that even the great army jeep could only go so far up these mountains.

Marcello: You actually used mules?

Dodge: Why we used, I guess, thousands of mules. And in many cases I believe the mules were shipped from . . . the old Missouri-type mule was shipped from the USA over to Italy as beasts of burden. And we carried weapons, ammunition, water, food, up the mountains; and dead bodies and injured and wounded down the mountain on mules.

Marcello: I'm glad you brought up this point because it also illustrates the ruggedness of the terrain in the North Apennines.

Dodge: Well, I could tell you that in many, many cases your transport went from truck to jeep, from jeep to mule, and you would get many places that would go off the mule and you would backpack. This was a square type of board, a packboard. And that would be carried by individual people. Now you put a case of ammunition or a case of C rations, or a five gallon can of water--a pint's a pound of water; four quarts is eight pints; that's forty pints--that's forty pounds plus the can plus the pack. And it feels like lead. And you're carrying a rifle or weapon or something or other, and you clabber and clabber and slop around and so forth, and it all would leak somehow or another and slop wet water down your back in the cold of winter. No, you went for miles with all that stuff on your back. It was that rugged. Nothing else could get there.

But in the North Apennines what had happened was that we had stripped forces out of Italy to go in the south of France. That meant that our momentum slowed down, and that gave the Germans the chance to regroup. And they had some pre-prepared positions in the North Apennines and were digging in as fast as they could as they withdrew. And from a distance of maybe, I don't know, thirty-forty miles north of Florence where there's now a four-lane super highway, from Florence to Bologna . . . well, it didn't used to be. It was a winding road. And, of course, we weren't fighting on the road; we were back off in the mountains, in the high ground. And you had to scramble for about every inch of land.

And the real engagement that we got into started at a town to the right of the main Florence-Bologna highway and in the next sort of valley over. And there was a town called Castel del Rio. And we moved in there at night, and that was sort of our division base point, I guess, for this campaign. And I recall that we were supposed to take off up a certain mountain trail off to the right, which would be northeast. And as we were grouping . . . I at that point was a technical sergeant, platoon leader.

We were relieving a British unit again, and I saw a batman--British soldier--standing there with a great, beautiful horse. And I went over to him, and I asked him, you know, was he here for any purpose. And he was waiting for major so and so. Well, that happened to be the name of the officer we were relieving, the commander of this British unit. I said, "Well, what are you going to do?" He said, "Well, I've got to walk this horse up." So I said, "Do you think the major would mind if I rode his horse up?" I got this, "Well, no sir. Do you ride sir?" And I said, "Yes, matter of fact, I do." "Oh, very good." So he turned the horse over to me. And I didn't feel badly because all of our weapons and impedimenta and packs and everything else were on mules going up this, so all the men had were their light field packs and their hand weapons. So I had the experience of literally riding into combat in World War II, and this was five miles or so maybe, up through the hills. And this horse was battle trained. A shell would come in; it didn't jump or anything. At the head of my platoon!! Again corny, corny as all get out, but there was a boy from, I guess, Alabama--we called him a ridge-runner--by the name of Thompson, Shorty Thompson. And I can still to this day hear him in that nasal twang voice of his. I turned around and smiled or something or had some conversation, and I heard his voice saying, "Stick with her, sergeant, you look mighty fine." You know, things you do!

When we got to . . . up there we regrouped, you know, and we started off through the mountains, and as I said, the Italian partisan leading us led us into an ambush.

Marcello: How did you meet the Italian partisan?

Dodge: Oh, this was all prearranged, you know, through higher headquarters.

Marcello: I see.

Dodge: And he came down and there were a couple of them and so forth. And they were going to take the Third Battalion of the 350th to so in so--to a point. Well, instead of doing that, they took us off the trail down to the left. And this whole area was surrounded by Germans. And I forget what tripped the whole thing off, but we smelled a rat and we backed out. And raining like all get out, and I recall going from there forward.

We were moving towards . . . well, we had successive fire fights, and so forth, as I say, in this business of plunging ahead, being surrounded, and fighting your way out. We'd done this for a number of days. Bob Milspaugh was killed at this point; then Mahar, whom I mentioned earlier, was shot up at this point. And many good friends. But we were headed for a place called Monte Battaglia, Battle Mountain, which was a high point of ground from which you could actually see into the Po Valley. And it was steep. It was sort of an opened C-shaped mountain, the flanks pointing back to the south. And our objective was to take it and hold it. That was the objective of our regiment. Well, in the move upwards we again were attached to one of the rifle companies, and in this rainstorm and so forth the line got broken, by which troops simply got separated.

And we holed up in a farmhouse on the side of the hill which later I learned was on the right flank of Monte Battaglia. And we were there totally alone for maybe a day, and the weather was so bad. We had no radio communications, no nothing. And finally it got to the point we were running out of food, and we knew there were Germans around. We had no choice but to take out a patrol. Well, there were several officers in the place, but they were all green as grass from that standpoint, useless. Good men and so forth, but I guess I was the senior noncom and the so-called most battle wise, so I took the patrol out. And with me was this Ed Lancaster from Sanger, Texas. We had tommy guns and we took off. More or less we had a map, or somebody had a map there, and we had an idea of where we were going to go but not quite sure how to get there. Well, we got there. Monte Battaglia was under siege, counterattack, and there was a Congressional Medal of Honor awarded at that battle and all kinds of battle honors and a Presidential Unit Citation. It was one of these great big battles, so to speak. And we walked sort of into the middle of it through the side door. And the regimental commander sort of tore us apart for not being up to it.

But at the same, he realized what the situation was and told us to get our tails back and get these men because they were . . . oh, sixty-seventy men, you see. So we got back. And on the way back, it was dark. And we were walking along sort of a ridge line to the right flank of Monte Battaglia. And at the point we were walking, we were at a level with the front of the mountain. And we heard somebody coming. And we crouched along the side of the trail, and we realized that all of a sudden here was coming a German patrol, not a little one, but a very big German patrol. We were only eight men. And this was like hundreds of men. So we crouched down on the side of the trail. They were maybe a hundred feet in front of us. And we agreed what we were going to do. Having come that way, we knew the terrain and so forth. We also knew that to our right flank and forward from us down the side of the hill was the house with all these fellows in it. We had to get back. So we agreed what to do. To the right of this trail, the hillside broke away sharply, rather precipitously, but still negotiable if you were a mountain lion. So we all agreed what we were going to do. And Ed Lancaster and I and another boy who had tommy guns just moved up to the forward, and the rest of them got ready to jump. Then we opened fire with our tommy guns just as fast as we could into this mass of Germans coming. Then we all just sort of stepped over the side of the hill. We just disappeared so to speak. And I said, "You're on your own. We'll meet back at the house." I think, as I recall, we could even probably see it.

Well, my recollection was that I kept going down, down, down, down that hill below the level of the house because obviously the Germans were spraying the hillside with fire and everything else. And then I came back around and then up again towards the house. I came up over a hill and into the field, and in the middle of this field was a German soldier.

No, I'm sorry. I made a mistake. In the point of this fire fight we didn't do what I described. This was another thing. We did not do this. We had heard these Germans, and they backed away and sat. And this one German had come towards us.

Marcello: Now, is this still when you were heading back toward the farmhouse?

Dodge: No. Where I said Lancaster and I and some of these other boys fired into the Germans, we did not do this. We were still debating what we were going to do when the Germans stayed put. And this one scout came towards us. Lancaster jumped up and grabbed him by his shirt front and shook him so hard he dropped his rifle. And Lancaster pulled him over the side of the hill. And he let out a scream and we all took off. All right? This is how the man was originally taken prisoner. Lancaster literally dragged him down that hill, at a certain point apparently he had gotten away. We had already agreed to meet back at the house. There was too much there for us to tangle with. And I had, as I said, had gone way down the hill and come back up. And I came up into this field, sort of like on the shoulder of a hill adjacent to this farm building. And here was this man--German. And he was yelling out names in German. You know, "Ulrich, Otto, Ludwig, Karl, Heinz!! Wo bist du? Wo sind Sie?" And I came up on his flank, and I took him prisoner then. So he was retaken prisoner.

Marcello: Oh, but this is the same soldier.

Dodge: Same soldier. Same soldier. And I brought him into the house. Then everybody there got so scared because the Germans were . . . we looked up and we could see them off on the ridge line digging in, shooting, and so forth. Fortunately they didn't know where we were. All lights out, all fires out, and so forth. Then we had a council of war. Well, what are we going to do? In this type of fear situation many people said first of all kill the kraut. Well, I tried to interrogate him. I remember he was from Wiener-Neustadt. That's a large city to the south of Vienna. I asked him in German why he was fighting" "Warum kempfen Sie?" And he said for his wife and children. And I said, "Not for der Fuhrer, not for Hitler?" "No, no, no." He convinced me that he was a simple Austrian, you know, and he wasn't a Nazi. Anyway, he sold me a bill of goods, and so I convinced the guys that he was more valuable as a prisoner to be interrogated than he was as corpse lying on the hillside. Now, how do we get out? Well, we, as I said, made a plan. And moonrise was going to be at 3:00 A.M. or something.

Marcello: Meanwhile were they still firing down into the farmhouse? They knew where you were?

Dodge: No, they were digging in. They didn't know where we were exactly. But they were digging in up on the hill. We could hear the pick axes and so forth digging in. And we knew by dawn we would be cooked.

Marcello: Well, they were very close then, if you could actually hear the pick axes and all.

Dodge: Oh, they were 500 yards above us, something like that.

Marcello: About how many? Could you estimate about how many there were?

Dodge: Well, I later learned. I later learned from interrogating the prisoner that this was the advance party, the scouting group, of a German division moving up to out-flank, Monte Battaglia. Because what happened was that later when I was back in Naples, through family associations, I knew some people who were rather high-ranking officers back there. I was in the war room of the Supreme Allied Command, and I saw the big map of Italy. And the sergeant replotted on that map the situation at the front at the time this event took place, and we were like at the point of a finger sticking about fifteen miles into the German line. And we were surrounded on three sides. It was just for that particular moment. And they were trying to cut us off and annihilate us actually. So we had bumped into a very large force, and the information later became very valuable.

But anyway, moonrise was sometime after midnight. And the question was how to get out of there and get out in one piece. So we all agreed to go out single file, ten feet apart, carrying as much as we could--weapons, ammunition, and so forth.

Marcello: How many of you were there altogether?

Dodge: Oh, forty-odd, I guess. Lord, there was our whole platoon, I guess, from M Company, which was my whole platoon which was maybe thirty-five men. And another thirty-odd men from . . . yeah, there were sixty-seventy men. And there were a couple of officers from the other company which I recall was K or L. K, I think. And there was an officer with us, but he was grass green. You know, fresh off the boat, so to speak, a nice fellow and so forth. You know, what do you do? So I wound up leading this group out of there. You know, I started to tell this story, and I remembered five more, leading this group out of there. And this was, you know, tiptoe through the tulips after dark, and don't make a sound. Well, the idea was that if the Germans could sense that we were pulling out, they'd come charging down the hill and wipe us out or shoot us up or do something. And we got out, and they never knew it.

But again, we retraced our steps to the south, back the way we'd come in a couple of days before--across a little stream and so forth. And we walked south until dawn. This was my idea to keep going south because we sensed the situation. And then we turned west and then started back north again, thinking to get on what would be the main line going into Monte Battaglia. We did this. And by dawn's early light I looked up, scared, you know, and wondering if, you know . . . all right here it is, now we've had our, you know . . . we're in American lines or the Germans got us. And I recall by dawn's early light looking up on the hillside above us as we'd started back north again and seeing people in camouflaged uniforms. We'd had it because we GIs were in either fatigues or O.D.s and this was it. But we sat there. Well, now how do you gracefully give yourself up without getting shot up in the meantime? Or can we back out anymore, and here we are . . .another capsule of war. We really weren't thinking of surrendering, but we thought we were trapped. We didn't think we had much of a chance to do anything. We kept looking at these fellows, but they were all sitting outside. They weren't dug in; they were running around. 'These can't be krauts; these must be Americans. Well, how can they be wearing these uniforms? Well, they captured them' Anyway, we went up and waved and yelled and came in and so forth. And it turned out that this was a unit of the 6th Armored Infantry from the 1st Armored Division that had been brought up to protect the supply line, the main trail, going into Battaglia. And this was the type of uniform they had.

They passed us on the way, and we got back up in the front, and we had one hell of a fight for a week, during which time in our regiment . . . I think every company commander except one was a casualty. You know, the historical record shows out of the regiment how many casualties there were. But it was a high sort of thing with counterattack after counterattack. The German threw elements of several divisions at us to knock us out of there. And this was the sort of thing that . . . you know, night and day you don't know from one hour to the next what is going to happen.

I recall at one point with the machine gun on position. Of course, machine guns then became a vital part of the defensive position, and you were lots of times literally on free traverse. I recall being in a foxhole firing a tommy gun while the gunner was changing the trunnion block in a .30 caliber machine gun. That's a piece of metal which has specific function in the operating mechanism of the gun, and it had a double bevel on one side and a single bevel on the other, and it could go in either way, except one way it would fire and the other way it wouldn't. And we had to disassemble the gun and replace the traverse piece and then put it all back together and start firing. While you are waiting there the ammo man was throwing hand grenades, I was firing a tommy gun, and the time came for them to open fire. The whole battery up there opened fire. WHANG! (Chuckle) And I thought I was going to fly apart. You know, here it was, if you can imagine. They are below you, you see.

Marcello: Yeah.

Dodge: And they are shooting out this way, but they're going WHANG! And they make a tremendous crash. And that, I think, shriveled my nervous system for a while. Well, we got back

back and one of the things I know we got was a shower and a change of clothes. And I recall writing my mother and father and family a long letter describing in intimate detail the sensation of a shower bath. You know, a six page letter describing the sensation of soap and water.

And we got back up to our units from the shower bath area and were told we were going back up to the front. We thought they were kidding. You know, everybody was saying to this guy, "Impossible." You know, we did. Back on the trucks in fresh uniforms, clean weapons, and new ammo, up to the front. And we had been decimated several times over and were filled up with new recruits who barely knew their names, etc. A terrible situation to get new men at nighttime, and they're gone the next day, and you never even saw their face. This happened. Back up and this boy very quietly was field-stripping that gun and putting it back together, for which I got him the Silver Star because had he lost his cool, we'd have had it. So I thought he was the best of the three, so to speak. His name was Russell Glass from either Cincinnati or Detroit.

Marcello: Well, when did you get your battlefield commission?

Dodge: After all this mess and so forth, we straddled back from Monte Battaglia, and there was going to be a relief by a British unit. But there had been an enormous rainstorm like the one that hit Florence a copule of years ago, the flood. We had one of these things. It washed out all the bridges, and the whole army . . . just everything stopped for about a week. And so they were a week or five days late getting there. I never waited so long for anybody. Real mess. They finally got up, the exchange was made, we got out of there. One of my recollections was of the night going back. You know, you're alive, you're well, you're on the way back. And coming down the mountain trail--again it's dark--and unknown to us we were immediately adjacent to a battalion of 155 millimeter Howitzers parked in a field. They were spread out in a field just below us on the mountainside. We're coming down the trail; to the front, and we were up at Monte Grande, Italy. Again, you could see into the Po Valley. Forli, I think, was the town down there. The Via Emilia, I recall. The Via Emilia. There it was. But while we were on the crest of the mountain, the Germans were occupying the slope with their backs to the valley. But they were on a plateau, while our backs were to the mountain peak, the Germans had their backs to the valley. But they were better supplied and better dug in 600 yards away. And we didn't move for months.

And it was in this area that I got to . . . a call to go back to the rear one day. It was on the twentieth of October. And I think that I had been told that somebody was nominating me or something for a commission. And they came and told me to go back to the rear. And I recall asking the regimental adjutant for use of his razor so I could shave, so I could clean most of the crud off of me. And there were five or six of us at that time. And General Keyes, who was the corps commander, General Clark, General Kendall, the division commander, were all there. I recall as the bars were being pinned on me, the General saying, "Son, you look a little bit young to be receiving a commission." I looked him straight in the face and said, "Sir, I'm over twenty-one, and I've aged considerably over the last year." (Chuckle) And he laughed it off.

Marcello: Was this General Clark?

Dodge: I think that was Clark, as I recall--either Clark or Keyes.

Marcello: Well, did you get this commission for any specific action or . . .

Dodge: I . . .

Marcello: . . . competence on your part or . . .

Dodge: Well, I think that the denoument of what you might say a number of demonstrations of leadership. You could simply put it that way. You know, I'd been around a long time. It was getting the unit out of that particular trap. The documents are over there in the drawer.

Marcello: At the farmhouse?

Dodge: Yeah, I think that was sort of the final icing on the cake that made somebody say, you know, 'Maybe he can carry the load." But anyway, we got a bottle of Scotch and a pat on the back and a cup of hot soup or something, and back up you go to the front lines. And I recall having come down . . . I had to come way down over a whole bunch of hills and walked my tail off. And looking at the map, I figured it was much easier if I walked down this road and sort of around the hill, and I'd go straight up to where I belonged, which I did. And as I completed my roadside journey, I was politely told at the end, before I started up in the hills--there was a little house--that that whole road was under German observation. And that's how I got down walking and so forth, you know . . . they were racing down at night sixty miles an hour. And I could walk down there. How, I don't know. You know, great!

And I got back up to the hill, rejoined the platoon, which normally wasn't done. You know, you got your commission, and they booted you off somewhere else. And I stayed with my old men and went through all the hurrah's and hi's and all this. And the next day Colonel Fry, who was our regimental commander, climbed up that hillside to check this situation out, and the place was a mess. We were occupying what was left of an old church. Well, fifteen units had moved through there, and all the debris--the empty ration cans, ammo boxes, a band of equipment--was just lying around. It was a mess, a real mess. And Fry tore into me like mad and said, "If you're going to command this platoon, you're going to do . . . so and so and so. You're a Harvard man, aren't you Dodge?" And I said, "No sir. I went to Williams." I don't know what he had against Harvard men, but that took me off of one hook. Well, of all odd things, he called for a fullfield inspection.

You know, you close ranks, strictly a parade ground operation which we did in the backside of this church. And he gave us fifteen minutes. And we did it. Well, that saved my hide and everybody's, and what sort of sent him off in a better humor was that every weapon was spotless. The ammo belts and the machine guns were dry. The ammo was clean. We were ready to fight. And the funny thing about it . . . oh, yes. There was this other lieutenant who had been, as I said, in this thing and was green as grass. He was a chubby little fellow and had been a bill collector from Kansas. He was still there, and he got so excited because the regimental commander was coming up to inspect us. When he went to report, he went up sort of sideways and backed up and he stepped into a foxhole and fell over backwards (chuckle) with his helmet rolling down the hill. Terribly funny! Well, after it was all over, I said to Colonel Fry, "Sir, you really didn't have to worry about this outfit. We're ready to fight on a moment's notice anywhere, anytime, for you. You really don't want us policing up somebody else's junk, do you?" (Chuckle) And he started to smile and reminded me that I could be damn glad that those weapons were ready to go and that the men were ready to go.

And I recall then the time coming . . . we got off of there in time to get back to vote in the 1944 elections. And we were taken back from the front lines.

Oh, we had a harrowing experience up there too, I recall. In some type of maneuver we were called forward for a conference up on that hillside. And I recall at nighttime going into this building. I Company's captain, whose name was McDonald--very nice chap--was there, and somebody from Battalion, etc., etc. And going into this meeting--tiny little room, blacked out, bunch of people sitting around--and I felt my way around and felt like what was a sofa or a pile of wood or something over on the side, and I sat down. And nobody was sitting with me. And this meeting was going on with a shrouded light, you know--flashlight--and so on and so forth. At a certain point I began to feel very funny. And somebody rapped on the side, the light went out, and then somebody came in with a couple stretcher bearers and said, "We came to remove them." 'Well, they're over there.' Well, to make this story short, my hackles went up because what I was sitting on was about four corpses piled on top of each other. And I didn't realize it until they came to move them out.

Another incident that happened there . . . you say what happened before I got a commission. I'd forgotten this. Somewhere in that operation on the way up to Monte Grande . . . that's right, we got into a very rough fight with the Germans on the way up. I was still a sergeant. And I was called to be supporting one of the attacking companies. And I went--this was my job--and placed my guns. This was a part of my job--where to go, put 'em in. And we actually at that point, as I recall, had four heavy machine guns, and we had requisitioned a .50 caliber somewhere along the line. And the battalion commander was sort of ill. His name was Whitter from Lancaster, New Hampshire. And his executive officer, whom I won't name, was a real gung-ho ball of fire. But on occasion he tended to act either by the book or know-it-all. And I got called in by him and told that that was no place to put machine guns in support of an attack and so forth. I should be up so in so. And I went out to make a reconnaissance to where he wanted me to put one particular gun and found a rifleman in there pinned down by hand grenades. And I was crawling up like this, and grenades were exploding around here, and I stuck my head in, and this rifleman told me I was an idiot and to get out of there because the Germans were lobbing rifled grenades and hand grenades all around him. And I pulled out. Cutting it short, I was given a direct order to put a gun in that foxhole. And I refused. And I was told I was going to be court martialed etc., etc. And I said, well, if I lived through the battle, that was the major's option, but this is the way I thought. I was going to run the thing my way. If I followed his orders, there wouldn't have been anything left to court martial. And I couldn't do the job.

We went back and one of the things I recall vividly doing was that as dusk came on I spotted a German mortar position about a mile away, deep down in the valley to our right flank. And I was able to direct machine gun fire on a mortar position. Now you might not appreciate this, but the mortar and machine gun are deadly enemies. It is one of the main jobs of the mortar to knock out a machine gun. A machine gun rarely, if ever, gets a chance to retaliate. Well, we knocked out several German heavy mortars through where we were. And also what I elected to do, knowing that the 2nd Battalion was trying to attack across our front, was go into an old World War I maneuver with a little instrument called a clinometer, in which you take the level of your altitude, all of this kind of thing, and you're firing at several miles away. Now you cannot get an accurate close beaten zone or pattern of fire at that distance. Your machine gun bullets tend to spread out. But if a machine gun bullet is coming at you from a mile or two away and zings past your ear, you don't really stop to ask how far away it came--only if it's coming hard enough to knock you down. So we fired all that night a number of thousands of rounds of ammunition like we were artillery. We just fired and fired and fired and fired.

Well, the next morning I had to go up to battalion headquarters to report to do something or another. Here was the colonel lying sort of in a manger, so to speak. He was sick as a dog. The major was running things. In came the colonel, Williamson of the 2nd Battalion. He was a southerner, and I recall him and his voice calling Colonel Whitter, who was a Yankee. I think it was James Whitter. I'm not sure. But he called him and said in exchanging information back and forth, "By the way, who set up those machine guns last night?" Well, he didn't know and so forth. Well, to make a long story short, the commander of the 2nd Battalion said that the machine fire was so stratigically placed and so tactically placed and what have you, did such a good job of saving the whole flank of his battalion from a counterattack, you know, and the man should get a medal or do something or other. And then Whitter pointed over to me, and the colonel came over and patted me on the back and said, "Son, you did real well." That's one of the things that happened, as I recall. So needless to say, I didn't get a court martial; I got a battlefield commission. The same old story, you know. If you do it, and you get away with it, it's all great. (Chuckle)

We came back anyway from this operation. I recall by the time we moved off of Monte Grande I was in a brand new . . . all of a sudden . . . I was no longer a sergeant. I was no longer in my realm. I was all of a sudden a lieutenant. I couldn't pass the responsibility along. I couldn't excuse a mistake because I was only a sergeant. I had had it. I wasn't a shave-tail. I was supposed to know what I was doing, and this weighed--I didn't realize it--quite heavily upon me. As we were getting ready to pull out, the Germans started placing interdicting fire on the trail, on the whole area. I know they dropped several mortar rounds right in the C.P. There was a British officer coming up to relieve us with a heavy weapons company, and the thing got to be a shambles, and he stopped and had his batman bring in tea which impressed me. And Lasker mule skinners outside were lying all shot up on the road and mules, etc., etc.

Well, we got out of this in one piece, safe. But I recall coming down off a . . . of Monte Grande that anytime a shell came in or out or something or other I was dropping to my knees. And looking back, I would say I was just about on the verge of what is called battle fatigue. I was driving the ragged edge.

Now what else had happened in the meantime? We went to a town called Montecatini. Well, it's a name now world famous. There's a famous Italian chemical company called Montecatini--Pirelli-Montecatini, and so forth. Montecatini was a spa. This was a spa to Italy, the same as Vichy to France, or Baden-Baden to Germany to give you a picture. It had lovely hotels, etc. And they put our regiment into the town of Montecatini for a rest. And what was organized was a regimental dance. And one of the things that I recall at the regimental dance was borrowing pieces of uniform from some of my other buddies. I had a date to go to that dance in the form of this lovely Red Cross girl whom I'd met back in North Africa the Christmas before and whom on occasion, anytime we came down off the front lines, she seemed to have word of when I was coming off the front lines--by the unit, of course. And I was off having a cup of coffee and a donut with somebody very attractive there who, you know, greeted me. Well, we went to the dance. I was wearing borrowed clothes.

The first dance I had with my date. The second dance, the regimental commander, Colonel Fry, came up and cut in on me and said, "Dodge, you're receiving entirely too much attention this evening. Step down." And he took off with my date who was wearing a lovely red velvet dress. And he didn't bring her back to my table. Well, then he took her to the head table where the division commander, General Kendall, was along with all the brass. And I went back to my table, and, of course, all of my buddies were kidding me unmercifully. . . . They said, you know, "You might as well either get drunk or go home." And after that . . . about half an hour of this, I was trying to get up my courage when dancing was resumed, and General Kendall was dancing with my date and my buddies were laughing in my face. "I bet you fifty bucks, Dodge, you don't cut in." You know, "I bet you twenty bucks. I bet you one hundred bucks." So finally, you know, what have you got to lose? So I went up and after all, the general had seen my face only ten days perviously, or two weeks previously, when he . . . he might just recognize me. So I went up and tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Sir, would I be permitted to have at least one more dance with my date before the evening is over?" And Kendall . . . and everybody was afraid of him, they called him "Bull Kendall." He was an enormous man and very gruff and so on and so forth. I learned to know him better in later life. And he is, again, one of these men whose heart was as big as his gruff is on the exterior. And he looked at me and said, "Dodge, you deserve to have every dance with this young lady, and if anybody gives you any trouble, you come and see me." And he turned around and looked at me very graciously and walked back to the table. (Chuckle) Well, of course, for the rest of the evening, I was, as far as I was concerned, to myself and my date, the hero of heroes. And this is really the high point, you know, of what war could be like. If you've got to go to war, this is the way to go to war--real great!

Well, we went back up to the front . . . I don't know, so many days later and were digging in for the winter, so to speak. Real miserable. And I fell on my face one day--literally. And I recall waking up in the division clearing station with a doctor bending over saying, "Arthur, what are you doing here?" And he was practically a neighbor from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who was a doctor whom I didn't even know was in the division. And Dr. Roland Loeb, who is now a top cancer research man here in town, was pinning a tag on me sending me back to the rear with what was called acute hepatitis, infectious jaundice, and so on and so forth. I simply collapsed as one of many thousands of soldiers in Italy did at that time. We were harder hit with hepatitis at that moment than by any fighting.

Well, I wound up in the 52nd Station Hospital in Naples, Italy. And was being fed intravenously for a while. And you were sick. You didn't care. You were so sick and weak. I lost, I don't know, thirty pounds and so on and so forth. But by Christmas time, you know, you started at least coming around. I recall I was in a room with eight or a dozen officers--lieutenants and captains. And we got to be sort of sporting, getting to know each other. They had various types of wounds and what have you but mostly were medical, I think. And this was a long recuperation. They didn't know what to do with you. And I was there over Christmas.

And about that time, or early January, I got a letter from this lovely girl back home to whom I'd sent the roses and so forth, saying did I ever hear of Dr. so and so? He was a great friend of her uncle, and she was writing to Dr. so and so to stop by and look after me. And I recall vividly . . . No, I didn't know him, but as he was in Naples why . . . Colonel Bondurant, I think, from New Orleans was the Chief of Medicine in this hospital and was looking after us because hepatitis was so unknown. He was, you know, kind of keeping an eye on these hepatitis cases. And he came around the next morning. And I asked him, "Sir, does this name ring a bell?" And he said, no, he didn't know any doctor by that name. And two days later, coming around for his morning inspection, this colonel was bending over me, and he said, "Lieutenant, what was the name of that doctor you asked me about?" And I said, "Why sir, Dr. M. Clay Stayer." And he said, "Do you think by any chance that that could be Dr. Morrison C. Stayer?" I said, "Well, sir . . ." He had a piece of paper in his hand. "If it's spelled the same, and the initials are the same, yes, it could be." And I said, "Yes sir, it could be the same." The colonel said to me, "Well, lieutenant, do you know who Dr. Stayer is?" I said, "Well, no sir, I really don't. He's sort of a friend of the family." And he said, "I want you to know that he is Major General Morrison C. Stayer, Surgeon General of the Mediterranean Theater." You know, and like would you believe he's coming here to visit you. Orderlies are suddenly scrubbing floors and washing windows and all hell is going to pay because I'm going to see the Surgeon General of the Theater. Well, he did come, and he was a delightful, most charming, witty sort of person. He had everybody terrorized. He's the person who was going to throw the soldiers out of the Excelsior Hotel in Rome because of somebody--it's in all the history books--was chasing "his nurses" up and down the corridors--half the occupation of Rome. And he had been in the Army for a long time. He had been General Marshall's personal physician. And as a Theater Surgeon, he could take any general officer and send him home, simply saying that he was unfit for duty and all this sort of thing. And he was a man of immense power and background, but from where I stood perfectly delightful. Well, the real amusing thing about it was that he took a shine to me for some reason or other.

And some weeks later when I was getting back on my feet, I was called to the telephone, and it was his aide out at Caserta, where Allied Force Headquarters was. Now, Allied Force Headquarters at that time was run by Field Marshall Alexander, who was the Theater Commander. And the aid said, "Lieutenant, are you free for lunch tomorrow--Sunday?'' Well, I guess it was today. It was Sunday morning. I said, "Well, certainly." "The General would like to have you come for lunch." I said, "All right, what time?" Well, you know, one o'clock I'm supposed to be there. I sat the phone down.

Well, the phone that I'd been called on was the phone in the office of the hospital commandant who was a full colonel or somebody--very nice gentleman. And, you know, I'm out of my element, and I'm standing in an army . . . you know, the typical pajamas and bathrobe sort of thing in the office of the hospital commandant. And the commandant looked at me and said, "Lieutenant, what did the general want?" And I said, "Well, sir, I was invited to Caserta for lunch." "Oh, well, that's very nice. Are you going?" I said, "Yes sir, I accepted." "Well, lieutenant, how do you plan to get there?" "Oh," I said, "Well, sir, it's quite easy. I walk out the front door of the hospital here. And this is the main road to Caserta, and I'm sure if I thumb I can get a ride without too much difficulty, with the colonel's permission that I may go."

Caserta was the home or the winter palace or something of the Italian royalty--an enormous place. You know, it was about half the size of Versailles--enormous. And in the back were these tremendous gardens, something like a quarter of a mile of water falls, and fountains and, you know, a palace.

And the colonel very kindly looked at me and said, "Lieutenant, how long have you been in the Army?" And I said about two years or something. "How long have you been an officer?" And at that point I said like two months or something like that. "Oh, well, then you have a few things to learn." I said, "Oh, yes sir. I have an awful lot to learn." Well, he said, "Lieutenant, I want to tell you something. If I were a lieutenant in this hospital--and this is after all a medical installation--and the Surgeon General of the Theater invited me to lunch, I wouldn't think of going out to hitch-hike." Oh, said I in my naive way. "Sir, what would you do?" He said, "Why I would go to the commandant of this hospital and demand to use his staff car." And I broke into a great big smile and said, "Well, sir, with your permission, I would like to have an opportunity to drive to Caserta." (Chuckle)

So I was chauffered out to Caserta and driven up to the General's headquarters which was in a Quonset hut up on the back hillside. And he was there with General Fox, who was a brigadier general who'd just come back from, I think, Yugoslavia where they were involved with medical aid to the partisans. 'Dodge, you can't have a drink because you've got hepatitis, but here's some gingerale or something or other.' And as I recall, he was sitting in his B.V.D.'s, and it was all so impromptu, and I couldn't quite get over this, but I was welcomed just as a nephew or son or what have you. It was just, you know, very casual. And then we went down to lunch, and lunch was in a room called the "orangery" of the palace. Well, this was an enormous building under a glass roof where literally palm trees were growing and tropical flowers and everything else. There was the head table and then a table down the whole one side of this building. And I would guess there were at least 150-200 general officers dining there that day for lunch with Field Marshall Alexander at the head table. And I was off sitting beside General Stayer at the side, right around the corner from the head table. And on the other side of me was General White, a major general, who was G-1 of the theater. General Fox was across and General this and General that with just one second lieutenant.

Well, I was such a curiosity, you know. I was like a ring-tailed baboon coming in from the . . . somewhere or other. And all kinds of questions: what's it like to be on the front lines, and what's this, and what's that, and how are they treating you, and how are the medical facilities here? Very good lunch, the waiters, of course, in white jackets. And this time I got a hot meal. I didn't get a K ration. I got a bonafide real up-to-date hot meal.

I think also a highlight of that sort of ruckus being back there in Naples was the fact that one of the senior officers in the air corps, so called MATS, which was the Mediterranean Air Transport Service in those days, and the operations officer also was a friend from home. And I learned that he was there and got in touch with him. And he had a roommate who was a British officer by the name of Douglas MacArthur, who was a full colonel in the RAF. And this was kind of funny going around somewhere with Douglas MacArthur.

And one of the treats that I had in getting out of the hospital, I had a very nice trip to Pompeii one day with a whole bunch of brass, and a trip up to Vesuvius. Vesuvius, incidentally, had erupted in March or April of 1944. I forgot this. And I recall from our foxhole up in the front lines there at Minturno before the breakthrough and so forth in the Spring of '44 looking back that night at Vesuvius erupting.

Now we were sixty miles north and the sky was red. We thought that Naples had been bombed into oblivion. An enormous amount of everything. Well, here this was now February of '45, almost a year later. I was walking up to the top of the cone wearing asbestos shoes. And the guide would give you a stick, and you would put a stick about four inches into the ash, and it would catch on fire. Quite a sensation.

Anyway, I had the great fun of not having to go back up to the front lines through the "Repel-Depel" system, which is a chore. General Stayer had said, "Is there anything you want to do?" He wanted me to stay back and be his aide, and I said, "No, my men are up there, and I'm going up to the front." "Well, what can I do for you?" "Well," I said, "Can you send me up some way other than jeep-truck, 'Repel-Depel,' week on the land, so forth?" "Well, yes I can." So I was flown back up to the front lines on the second of March of '45 in General Ira Eaker's own plane. Now the plane didn't make the trip just for me. It was going as a courier plane taking certain other officers. But I was allowed to ride in the tail gunner's position of what I think was the so-called Boston A-Bomber. And for a little old infantryman like me to go tearing up across Italy riding in the tail end of that plane--whew, what a sensation! Eaker was the commanding general of the Tactical Air Force of Italy. Now, the Strategic was the 15th, which was General Spaatz, if I recall. And the

Tactical Air Force in Italy, which number I forget, was General Eaker's. And as I say, this was quite a sensation. We landed in Florence, and I had a jeep. I somehow got back up to the 88th. Everybody wondered, you know, 'What am I doing here?' We were up in the front lines then straddling the road, which was the main highway, Florence-Bologna.

And I recall one of the things that happened the first day I got back up there was Margaret Bourke White coming up in the front line doing photograph work for Life magazine. And, ah, yes, I forgot something else, too. I had two funny experiences. Yeah, two things, as a matter of history. First of all, on the day before I went up on this business, the well-known . . . Claire Boothe Luce was a Congressman in those days, a Congresswoman. She was involved with getting the combat infantry badge, etc. And she was on a tour of the Italian front and had gotten disconnected from the main tour group. And they went off and left her in Florence. And there was a need for her to be sort of escorted quietly without fanfare so that the press wouldn't grab hold of this and wonder what she was doing. Well, I think she was just being a tourist for one day or something like that. But as part of my duties, I got the duty of sort of meeting her and helping her to get back, avoiding the other . . . press, etc., etc. And that was a job given to me by General Stayer, which came up later in my life when I met Claire Luce, and she recognized me as her escort at Florence.

And then I get up to the front lines and the first day I'm up there in my foxhole--that was my command CP of the platoon--there was Margaret White taking a photograph which became a full page photo in Life magazine of this mountainside, Monte Rumichi-Monte Adoni, Italy, at nighttime with artillery fire registering all over the mountainside. And two days later a mortar round landed and split my kneecap, and I went back to the regimental aid station. They patched me up, and I said, "For Pete's sake, bandage it up and put an ace bandage on it or something. I'm not going to stay here."

We had one brief rest period before the spring offensive, getting out of there in April. And I was called in to Colonel Fry's headquarters the minute we were back in the rear, asking me who in blazes I thought I was. And I said, "Sir, I have no idea what the Colonel has in mind." Well, apparently General Stayer--they apparently had not IBM, but they had a way that casualties were recorded through the McBee system, I think, card tags and so forth--he had put the word out if my name ever came up on a casualty list of any kind he wanted to be informed personally, immediately. And, of course, my kneecap was split. It was registered, and although I wasn't evacuated, it goes back on the medical record and bang! A red light comes up. So the Fifth Army surgeon along with the surgeon of the 28th Division suddenly appear in the headquarters of the regimental commander of the 350th, inquiring about the health of one miserable, poor 2nd Lieutenant Dodge. And the regimental commander was trying to find out who in the blazes I thought I was to get treatment like that. Naturally I tried to allay his fears and say I had no part of that.

Anyway, we jumped off the attack, which was a very harrowing thing because, if you saw Margaret White's picture, it would be like being on this desk top as your position on a mountainside and told you were attacking the top of that wall in front of you. Literally, the angle of deflection between where we were and where we had to be was at about a fifty degree angle going forward. And it was so rough the Air Corps would come over--the first time I saw napalm being used--and just plastered this hillside with napalm and bombs and everything else. It did no good. All it did was turn the hillside into rubble. And the Germans were dug in so deep that when it was all over they came back up. And there was a very, very rough fire fight for several days. I was spared that. We remained on position giving support across the valley because straight across it was only about 900 or 1,000 yards--every effective zone for machine gun fire. There was no point in us going down and coming up. And we had tanks and everything else. And as I recall, this was an area where I first saw search lights being used to bounce light off clouds and give light at night.

We finally moved out and up over that hill, as I say, charging through the rubble and everything else over to the far side, and all of a sudden you're in the Po Valley. And I recall the first night in the Po Valley being in a farmyard on the bank of a stream and having some fresh potatoes and asparagus dug up and put in your canteen with some water and some of that bouillon powder, and it made a very, very delicious stew, you know, hot meal.

Moving out into the Po Valley, all I recall is extremely fast movement, as fast as your feet or a bicycle or a captured horse or anything could move you. I know that we reached the Po River faster than the Germans expected. We moved into Verona to . . . so rapidly that we captured Colonel General von Vietinghoff and a whole German Corps. He was the Corps Commander. We were moving so fast that at one point we were strafed by our own Air Corps because we weren't where they expected we were going to be. We moved from Verona east to Vicenza, and I think just outside of Vicenza we held up for the night in a little town called San Pietro-in-Gu. We set up a roadblock. And again we had moved so fast, and a German staff car came boiling down the road, thinking to go to Vicenza, and I know we killed the occupants of the car and captured the car. I recall having now at this point . . . of course, being an officer and platoon leader and an old hand in M Company, with the number of vehicles we had in M Company, we had in M Company, we had a certain amount of support, maintenance. We actually had a sergeant in charge of the maintenance section, and I got him to get hold of some robin's egg blue paint, and he painted that car blue. And a couple of nights later, I drove the car back into Vicenza where division headquarters was located and drove up to the Red Cross headquarters office and got the MP at the door to ask this dear young lady to come down. And I presented her with this automobile which was a twelve-cylinder Fiat. She was allowed to keep it, I think, for three days or something. Then the Army issued orders that all captured vehicles had to be turned in. THe only time in my life I ever gave a twelve-cylinder car away. The wild romance . . . you know, this had to continue.

We moved out the following day from San Pietro-in-Gu eastward to a town called Citadella, which is on the Adige River. And at this point we ran into a large force of partisans who were on the far bank of the river and were told to hold and dig in because there was a very good-sized unit of Germans moving north. Now, remember, we're moving east and the Germans were moving north.

Marcello: Right.

Dodge: This was our mission.

Marcello: You were trying to cut them off in other words.

Dodge: And that afternoon we did. We had one whale of a fire fight. I recall I got in a personal sort of fire fight with a tank and liberated a man's Lugar. I had wanted all through the whole war to get a Lugar and I got one.

Marcello: Care to tell us about this personal fire fight?

Dodge: No, you know. You've seen too many movies. It's like you see in the movies, really. It happened so fast. The funny part to me was after it was all over . . . and again you're just shooting, you know, as fast and as hard as you can. People were running just like a mob seems, really. We squatted down on the north side of this road right, oh, maybe 100 yards in on the west bank of the river. The bridge was blown, but there was a dam, spillway, and with the help of the partisans and other soldiers this whole big, oh, you know, a thousand or more Germans were rounded up and being marched west. And they had a senior officer with at least the rank of a colonel, Oberst. And they were marching west about six abreast with their hands behind their heads. And where we were there were bodies spread all over the place--mostly Germans. And I recall sitting in the middle of a number of corpses. Hadn't eaten all day long and it was sort of, you know, you took your K ration box, put fire to it, and it made the tiny little flame just warm enough to turn water in the meat can warm. You had coffee or stew or whatever it was. I was sitting doing this when this whole unit comes by. As the head of the column came abreast of me, these senior officers in the front, I began to sing in German the famous Eroika: "Auf der Heide bluht ein kleines Madelein (or Blumelein) und das heisst Eroika." I have fairly deep bass voice, and I was looking these fellows straight in the face, you see what I mean. The expressions that came across their faces. You see, this was the ultimate depth of depravity or the ultimate depth of insult or what have you. I mean, you know, again worth the price of admission to see this whole rank of senior officers captured, and the best way I could humiliate them was saying, "Boy, you know you've had it. Here's your famous war song." (Chuckle)

We moved out of there, and we moved north getting into the high Dolomite Alps. And for several days you were walking up these mountain roads thanking the good Lord you were ahead of the Germans and not behind them because had they been up in there, we would have been there for how long?

Marcello: Right.

Dodge: I know we got in a little village called Arci. And in this was sort of a fortress-like training school by a bridge over a mountain gorge. And I think again this was in the head waters of the Piave River. I'd have to get the map to be sure. Or the Adige, the Adige River. And this was occupied by about a battalion of Hitler Jugend. And these poor kids were all steamed up; they were going to die for their Fuhrer. Now this was the day before the war was over in Italy. Remember it was over in Italy the second of May, '45. Four or five or six hundred of these youngsters, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years of age died for their Fuhrer. That was all there was to it. You know, miserable, awful, they did it. And the war was over the next day. And my recollection was this happening.

And the announcement just left everybody . . . you knew it had to be coming, but you weren't quite sure if we were going to have to fight our way the whole way into Austria into the Tyrol and so forth or not. And it was all over and it was in a way a tremendous let down. Nobody went out and got plastered, as I recall. We were all just happy to sit. And I know that one thing that I did was shave off my mustache which was a rather heavy mustache. I didn't care for it; I'd worn it all through the war to give myself, you know, add a few years. And people were taking me for late twenties or thirties. And I was actually twenty-one going on twenty-two. And I came back into the platoon CP, having done it and was not recognized which . . . funny little things that happen.

But in the aftermath of that, I recall having an unpleasant experience with the battalion adjutant who was a West Point graduate. He spent the war as an adjutant. And I got called in and was given two sets of orders. One called for 2nd Lieutenant Dodge's promotion to 1st Lieutenant, and the other called for 2nd Lieutenant Dodge going home. And you know which one I took. I took the one going home and I was fortunate to go back to Naples, stayed there for a few days, and went by plane to Casablanca, down to Dakar, across to Brazil to Recife and Belem, spent a day there, and came up to Trinidad, and from there to Miami.

And I was home before anybody at home knew I was home. And I had sort of a warped sense of humor. I had left with a friend in Naples two letters post dated to be mailed to my family. So I walked into my home on the evening of my birthday with my family thinking I was still in Italy, although the war was over. I rang the doorbell, and I recall vividly my mother starting down the stairs, but screaming before she got there that I was home, to my father, to her husband. And she opened the door and collapsed as I walked in. And I recall father was shaving to go out to dinner. And he, being an old New England Yankee with this type of dry humor, walked down and extended his hand and said, "Well, young man, welcome home." And he turned to my mother and said "Marion, for Pete's sakes, hush your noise." (Chuckle) That was my homecoming from the war. You know, it's all over, stop the fussing, you know, get on with the show. But I've talked now for I don't know how long here, and I'm sure that I have forgotten probably some things that were fairly choice. Oh, I'll tell you one. At the battle there by Volterra, where I mentioned was really a lot of blood letting and so forth, the day before or the evening before that particular battle in a valley to the east of Volterra . . .and I don't recall the details. And if anybody was interrested, I could still find them from a Dr. Edward Stratman of Fort Thomas, Kentucky, who was a participant. It turned out that there was a villa in the middle of no man's land occupied by a Swiss family, I think by the name of Weber. And several American officers--I happened to be sort of a guard you might say--went out and had dinner that evening in the middle of no man's land at this Swiss home. The idea was that everybody would be told of this Swiss home, and please don't blow it up. And I know that in the past several years a couple of those officers have gone back and had dinner again with that family who still own that villa.

Marcello: How did they manage to get away with . . .

Dodge: Well, being Swiss, you see, why should the Germans . . .

Marcello: . . . yeah. And neutral, of course.

Dodge: . . . and neutral and so forth. When they withdrew he was fortunately down in a valley and not up on a hill. And the thing, fortunately . . . what he was praying . . . went by him so rapidly that he had, I guess, got the German commander, whom he had probably entertained on various occasions, not to make a strongpoint of this little place. He probably said the one up on the hill or take the one down the road, see. So there was no need, you know, to run the thing down.

Marcello: You have a couple of interesting documents over here, one of which is a map which has some yellow stains or something on it, as I recall. Is it some sort of an old . . .

Dodge: Yeah, yeah, yeah, there are a couple of them here. I'd forgotten. You see, as you go along with the story, this yellow map was the stain on . . . the battle map that we had on the 11th of May, 1944, of the area there by Castelforte and Monte Rotondo and the Ausente River Valley, which we had to cross. There's Castelforte right up there. And our job was moving to Monte Rotondo. Monte Rotondo was ours. Castelforte was taken by the French Moroccan troops, the Goumes. And we were going out for these heights to the left flank of Monte Rotondo and going on up by Santa Maria. And this is actually an aerial photograph. And in fact, it's the map that I carried the night that we jumped off in the attack. And it was the map I had in my pocket or in my possession from the time that . . . oh, here, as a matter of fact, here are some coordinates I see written on the back side. I haven't looked at this for twenty-five years. With certain map coordinates and signals and so forth. Being followed between 2300 of the 11th and now at midnight and 0400 the next morning and so on and so forth, what we were supposed to do. With heavy machine guns it was very important that our fire be carefully controlled because if you're firing through a gap in your own lines or over the heads of your own troops, you have to be very sure that you're able to turn them off and you're not shooting up your own men. And you pick up these things . . .and a couple of other things I see here . . . well, there you are. "Soldier captures German in Italy." That reminds me . . .

Marcello: This is a newspaper clipping.

Dodge: Yeah, a newspaper clipping. Edward Lancaster of Sanger, Texas. I'd forgotten it was even in the newspaper. And here's a funny one. I see an invitation to a dance at the Villa Ginori Acollina. This was when we were stationed outside of Florence. This was the tenth of March, 1945. I mentioned that I'd gone up to the front and got my knee shot up, and we were back and so on and so forth. And we were in this little area just to the northwest of Florence, and there were a series of villages named numerically. And we were spread out in this valley and occupying this particular villa. The regimental dance was in this villa. Well, what is funny about it, and why I haven't thrown it away, is that some years later, I was at Mont-Tremblant, Canada, skiing. As a matter of fact, in the party, or at the time . . . was the family of Ethel Skakel, who is now the widow of . . . Mrs. Robert Kennedy. She and her mother and brothers and so forth were there, and there was a great big party. And at this party a woman was sitting near me, an older woman, and somehow I happened to mention Italy, and I don't know why this experience came up. She asked if I'd been near Florence. And I mentioned this and this villa happened to belong to her family.

Then I see here is also the card of the service of communion at the Holy Trinity Church in Florence on Easter of 1945. I was near Florence on Easter which was the first of April of 1945. And it was no April Fool thing, although it was great pleasure to me. Because again, being stationed there, I got permission to go to church on Sunday. This dear lovely Red Cross girl was also an Episcopalian. And as a matter of fact, her father was an Episcopal clergyman. I made a date with her that we were going to church together on Easter Sunday. And in this great feeling of romanticism that I had, I was able to contact, through the military communication system, this colonel I knew back in Naples. He was with MATS. And as operations officer of MATS, he had certain facilities for doing things. And I said, "Take some cigarettes and what have you, and go out and buy me a big box of camellias," which he did. And he didn't buy just a box; he bought a dozen red and a dozen white camellias and had them put in an enormous box. And he gave them to the pilot of the normal first day's courier run between Naples and Florence on Easter Sunday morning. And as on the way to church, we had to go by the Florence airport, we stopped on the way. And when the MATS plane came in, and the pilot came down, I walked up to him and so forth, picked up the box and turned them over and was able to give my date very romantically two dozen beautiful camellias. And we went off to church on Sunday morning. As I say, very, very corny, but compared to K rations or other things, it made up for some of the blood and, you know, being knocked about and mud and all these you had to put up with.

Marcello: One of the ways of keeping your sanity in other words.

Dodge: Basically speaking, the trouble is it's impossible for any but the most minuscule percentage of soldiers that have that, you know, sort of chance. But it sure beats any kind of grass, or pot, or anything else that you could possibly imagine to take off the tension or make life worthwhile. But I, you know, I could have been killed just along with dozens of other fellows. And why I wasn't also became a very strong spiritually motivating thing.

I left the war with the idea that there must be some reason behind it, and I've just got one more job to do. And I felt very strongly that, you know, I had an extra obligation for the rest of my life to do something. And I know at least at one point that I discharged that in part. In 1950, when as a National Guard officer, I was called up for active duty with the 28th Division. And I was in the division staff at that point in the G-3 section, training, and I was very much involved with the training of the men in the division. And I think that part of my job was--I have a gift for writing--was writing the training scenario. And I even got involved with laying out some of the training exercises. I know one of the things that I personally got involved in was establishing at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, sort of unofficially, but nevertheless in fact, the only combat training course that I had ever encountered in which live ammunition--ball ammunition--was being shot in two directions. And I won't bother to describe how this thing works. It was, of course, carefully done so that there was no more chance of injury than there was through the so-called machine gun obstacle course or what have you, where you crawl under machine gun fire. Psychologically, the idea was to give troops the sensation of being fired upon. And although the bullets were going somewhat over their head and striking them in the rear, it was to come as a surprise, and we even had men spotted in the ranks with moulages. They'd tear their shirt open and they'd appear as though their intestines were falling out. Their neck had bled. We had kids getting sick or passing out, but giving them the feeling of being exposed to this thing. And I got very much deeply involved in that and highly committed to it.

And when the Chinese crossed the Yalu, the 28th along with . . . many other outfits got levied, and troops were sent posthaste to Korea. And about six months later, through channels from the commanding general of the forces in Korea at that time, who I believe was General Ridgeway . . . through the commanding general of the field forces and on down to the commanding general of the 28th Division came a commendation of the high level of training demonstrated by the men who had come out of the 28th as reflected in lower casualty figures and in a high level of efficiency and so on and so forth. And I think I made some small contribution to the effectiveness of that training, at least in conceiving it or something or other. Again, it was with the idea of having seen these youngsters coming up in the front lines and being dead or shot up before they had a chance to even load their weapons, so to speak, or blow their nose. In fact, I think it was the worse that could happen. You cannot be too well trained. The time comes when there's no choice. You've got to fight. And unfortunately with man being partially beast, there are times when you have to fight. Then the men who have to do it must be thoroughly trained, must be well trained. This is mentally as well as physically. And you can't detract from it.

Marcello: How many days were you in combat altogether? Do you have an exact figure? Could you estimate it?

Dodge: We were in contact with the enemy, so to speak, for something over 300 days. I used to be able to rattle it down within a day and a minute, but it was basically a year. We were overseas from December of '43 until June of '45, and we were up in the front from the end of Frebruary '44 until June of '45. So you've got . . . six and nine is fifteen months which is certainly over a year. And out of that fifteen months, I venture to say it was, if you put it down to days, somewhere close to a year if you total the whole thing out. It seemed like an awful long time. But the hard stretches, you know, when you're moving it goes by pretty fast, even though it's exhausting. But psychologically the two winter lines there at the Cassino-Castelforte front and then in the North Apennines . . . Now I was lucky because I got out of it for a couple of months by being in the hospital. And you were spared that much. But these static conditions and constant exposure . . . you know, today the Vietnam situation must be a lot worse because you've got it coming at 360 degrees, anywhere, anytime. Up there, at least, you know it was pretty much to your front, and your rear was secure. The tragedy, though, is that we don't learn these lessons. When I think of the fact that by the end of Italy there were many of us who were pretty savvy as to mountain warfare. We knew what it took, and we did it pretty well. Five years later, we're over in Korea . . .

Marcello: It seems to me in many respects that it would have almost been the same sort of thing there.

Dodge: I was not in Korea, thank the good Lord, but some of my buddies were. But it was to me, looking sort of from the sidelines, appalling that the lessons learned in Italy were not, or did not seem to be, applied in Korea until the army began to bring in commanders from company level on up to the very senior commanders--from General Clark on down. Ridgeway, after all, was in Korea at one point; Clark was in Korea; Kendall was in Korea; Fry was in Korea. I mean there was a whole crowd of them over there. But from the end of '50 on, the Korean show was more and more in the hands of people who personally had been through the Italian Campaign. But in those early months, from . . . let's see . . . after all the thing . . . the balloon went up on the 28th of June, 1950. And the first months that we went in there, we had a terrible time. The basic concept of "hold the high ground" was forgotten. We were trying to run up the roads and trying to get in at nighttime in a cave or something.

I know that from Lancaster here, General John Michaelis was successful as a regimental commander over there because he implicitly did this, even to the point of taking one whole company out of his regiment and putting it on the highest ground in his regimental area with his air-ground radio and the liaison man and so forth. And I know that he was getting close-in air support frequently when other regimental commanders were not because he had communications. It wasn't that communication was given to him; it was that he had command of the situation and was going by the book and did it. But, you know, the Army is the Army. And just like the German 88 in the Spanish Civil War and not being up to it, that sort of situation. I get horrified that in the business of fighting that certain essentials that seem to be ignored. You get glamorized with new weapons, or, you know, 'I have a whole lot of tanks, and therefore, I'm king of the hill.' Well, if the terrain doesn't lend itself to having tanks, get them out of there. There're more of a handicap.

Marcello: Which I would assume was in many times the case in the Apennines.

Dodge: Oh, heavens, yes. Tanks . . . you know, we had the 1st Armored Division there in Italy, and it was reassuring to have an armored division in Italy in case the Germans started massing armor somewhere. But, you know, really, until you got to the Po Valley . . .and that is only east and west, you see. For tank territory, Italy as an area, as opposed to Germany or France or Holland . . .

Marcello: Right.

Dodge: . . . or somewhere else, is no tank territory.

Marcello: In other words, the whole campaign was basically one of slugging it out on the ground . . .

Dodge: It was.

Marcello: . . . mountain by mountain, hill by hill.

Dodge: People in the course of conversation have a . . . said, "Have you been to Italy?" And I have said, "I am an expert on Italian soil." (Chuckle) I have taken many, many samples. Oh, the idiotic things that you would do. This whole business of the American . . . and this esprit, this lack of regimentation . . . or stultified or rigid discipline that you would associate with the German would often happen. I know as an example one of the early attacks coming north on the way to Rome--a miserable, wet, May day--and climbing over the mountainside. And all of a sudden, we got up on the top of this hill, and we got to the barnyard. We were socked in with the clouds. You couldn't see twenty feet. And here was a haymow. We set the haymow on fire to get warm. Well, what happened was that the hot air induced by this burning haymow caused this cloud cover to disperse and all of a sudden here was clear sky above and over here were a whole bunch of Germans, and they started to shoot the hell out of us. You can't imagine . . . and it took us a minute to readjust from a bunch of Boy Scouts, so to speak. You know, guys on an outing, rover boys you might say, not Boy Scouts, around a haymow getting warm and dry and everything else to all of a sudden, 'Gee, this is war for real.' You're back in it. And I think that the strong point of the American is the capacity of the individual to act on his own initiative in many, many situations. It's also a handicap to a certain extent or requires a certain savvy on the part of leadership to be able to utilize that ability in situations where close and careful coordination is necessary. And we do it but we do it with a few select men like our astronauts who undergo the most superb training imaginable so that they get this immediate and automatic response. We're a difficult bunch to take any large group of men and get them honed to that level of discipline. Yes, in the submarine service you can because they have to. You train and you train and you train and you get it down. But in the so-called free-wheeling situation of the infantry . . . S. L. A. Marshall has written about this to a great extent. And this type of thing that he has written really has to be as much of a textbook as anybody's who is going to be involved in this activity. As a field manual, it was technical, but the feeling is the type of thing that Marshall described. What can happen when a few men with initiative will move? They can influence the whole battle line. I've seen it happen in cases in Italy where somebody went out and did something. And until somebody did something, enormous quantities of men and material come to a halt.