ADMIRAL NIMITZ NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Fredericksburg, Texas

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview with Mr. Charles Scheffel
US Army Infantry 1942-1945
Mediterranean and European Theater

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas

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Interviewer: Barry Basden

INTERVIEW
of
Charles Scheffel

Mr. Basden: Today is Wednesday, May 10, 2000. My name is Barry Basden, a volunteer at the Nimitz Museum. We are here in San Antonio, Texas, to talk to Mr. Charles Scheffel about his involvement in World War II.

So if you could, give us a little biographical background so we know how you got into the war.

Mr. Scheffel: Well, I got into the world by being born in 1919, June 17th. My father was an illegal immigrant from Bohemia. Ran away, didn't want to be in the German army, was a stowaway, got as far as Kansas. They were having a parade to get volunteers for the Spanish-American War, and he volunteered. And didn't get married until 1918 when he was about 40. He was a successful oil man in Oklahoma, in Enid Oklahoma until oil hit ten cents a barrel and he died broke in 1930.

I had an athletic scholarship out of high school in Enid, Oklahoma, to go to Oklahoma A&M in Stillwater, 60 miles east of Enid. In 1940 when Congress passed the draft law, I was coming back for my junior year in college; I was an athlete playing basketball. All the coaches knew that the students would all probably volunteer to go into military service if they didn't get drafted.

In ROTC, in advanced military, they had a rule that if you signed up for advanced military to become an officer, you didn't have to sign up for the draft. But if you dropped out of school after signing up, then you were automatically in military service. That was the way they bent the right or the left arm to keep you in.

So I signed up primarily because they'd pay you 25 cents a day. Except they didn't tell me that you had to buy your own officer's uniform. I'd been playing semipro baseball that summer for a dollar a day and I was broke. So I told this Colonel that "No, I can't buy the uniform." And he said, "That's all right, Charlie." And I signed this other agreement and at the end of 2 years at 25 cents a day, you'd have paid off the uniform to the company. So I became an advanced military ROTC student at Oklahoma A&M.

When the war broke out in '41, on December the 7th, we were getting ready to leave Perry, Oklahoma, by train, playing in Madison Square Garden and Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington during Christmas vacation. The coach came out on the floor that Sunday afternoon, said, "How many of you fellows are in advanced military?" I was a senior then, and I think there were 5 members of the 12-man squad, the traveling squad, who were in advanced military.

And Coach Hank Iba said that the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. I'll be honest with you, I hardly knew where Pearl Harbor was. So that night after practice, I got word that I was now a second lieutenant in the infantry. I knew we were supposed to leave on the basketball trip the next morning and we kind of sweated out that evening as to what's going to happen when we wake up tomorrow morning, Monday morning. About 10 o'clock, we got orders from the sergeant that we weren't going to be activated right then and there as lieutenants, but they'd let us take this basketball trip.

So we took the trip, played in Madison Square Garden and around, came back, and they said if you are going to graduate in May, we'll let you stay in school. And I would have graduated in May, so I finished the basketball season.

I was courting a girl from Enid, Oklahoma, through high school. She went to a different college, in Enid, Phillips University. So when we got beat by Kansas in the national finals in Kansas City, I called my girl friend and said, "Do you want to get married next week?" And she said yes. I said OK.

So when we got back to Stillwater, I went over to Enid that next weekend and we got married, March 27th of '42. We got us a little apartment and then in May, about May the 30th, I got my degree, my commission as a second lieutenant in the infantry, and my active duty orders to report to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, the next day.

So the next day, I went to Ft. Sill, walked in, and they said, "You're alive, you're in the military, you're now an officer." That was the physical examination. At the same time I was given orders to report as soon as possible to Camp Robinson, Arkansas. So I went back from Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, to Oklahoma City and called my wife and said I've got to go to Camp Robinson, Arkansas.

So I went over there and was assigned to an infantry training regiment at Camp Robinson, Arkansas, outside Little Rock. I called my wife and told her to get on the train. I'd found a little apartment. She came over and I was there from June, July and August to the latter part of September when I get secret orders. I was teaching bayonet and hand-to-hand combat plus the other infantry training that the draftees were getting. I get orders to report under secret orders to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, an embarkation point.

So a day or so later, I'm on a train of two cars hooked onto a regular train headed for Camp Kilmer. I wound up putting my wife on the same train. When I got off at New Brunswick, New Jersey, which is near Camp Kilmer, I just kissed my wife and said, "Now go on into Picadilly Hotel and get you a room in New York City." She'd never been out of Missouri or Oklahoma. "And get you a room, and I'll see you in a couple of days." Because I figured I'd be there at Camp Kilmer for several days before they shipped me overseas. And so I just reached over and kissed her. I got off the train and, well, it was 3 years later before I saw her again.

Because that night, when I got off, there were also five other lieutenants and also 200 enlisted men got off this train. It was not a train; it was two separate cars, passenger cars that were hooked on trains from Little Rock to Memphis and Memphis to Washington and Washington going to New Brunswick and on to New York City.

They loaded us in trucks, took us to a big warehouse at Camp Kilmer and immediately started issuing rifles to the men, Springfield '03 rifles. They equipped the officers with gas masks and full combat equipment. This took about two hours and a half or three hours. About four o'clock in the morning they said load up on these trucks and we loaded up in trucks, six lieutenants. It turned out that I was the senior lieutenant, having been in the Army from ROTC sign-up two years earlier.

They took us to the New Jersey side of the Hudson River, opposite Manhattan, put us on a ferry boat and that's when I saw the Queen Elizabeth, the Normandy and the Queen Mary that were all tied up at the 50th, 49th, and 48th Street piers. The British and the French had removed those three big liners to New York City when the war broke out in 1939 to keep the Germans from seizing those vessels.

And lo and behold, they boarded all of us on the Queen Elizabeth. And also they boarded all of the 29th Infantry Division, which is 15 thousand men, about 45 hundred Air Corps men and officers, and that evening, we sailed away from that pier out of New York Harbor. I found out later that my wife had gotten a room at the Picadilly Hotel, only five blocks from where I boarded the Queen Elizabeth. And that's when my prayers went out that God would let my wife know that her husband wasn't going to show up.

On the truck, before we got on the ferry boat to cross the Hudson River, I slipped the driver two one-dollar bills, and I said, "Keep one of these yourself, and with the other send a telegram to Mrs. Charles Scheffel, in care of the Picadilly Hotel." Because at that time the German submarines were sinking ships as they exited New York Harbor. It was a dangerous war zone and you weren't supposed to mention anything about troop movements, where you were going or anything.

So I told the driver to just put on this message to Mrs. Charles Scheffel, "Honey, your husband can't make it. I love you. Charlie." And believe it or not, she did get the message. So she knew I wasn't going to show up.

Of the 20 thousand troops on board, I was with these five other officers in a little room that had been a nursery before being converted to bunk beds, three on each side. Being an officer, officers ate in the main dining room of the ship. The Queen Elizabeth was over a thousand feet long, an 80-thousand-ton vessel that normally carried 12 hundred civilian passengers. It had never carried any passengers before, so they had just converted to a troop ship. Enlisted men only ate twice a day. The officers did get to eat off a regular British menu three times a day.

Those of us that were not assigned to a unit, like I was, traveling independently under secret orders, I kind of had the run of the deck and got acquainted with some of the ship's personnel. They told me that it was the first ship equipped with radar. That was a big thing going around on one of the stacks. I asked what does radar do, and he said well, it's kind of a secret thing that's up there.

The ship went across the Atlantic without escort, because it traveled at about 30 knots and no normal convoy could travel that fast. So we zigzagged about every 3 or 4 minutes about 45 degrees to keep the German submarines from tracking us.

On the fourth night when we were down in our room after supper, they sounded a general quarters alarm. They'd had a couple of boat drills and I became a boat captain on a boat that with normal passengers, I think, it was a big lifeboat, maybe carry 40 or 50 people. I had charge of 200 men and my orders were, armed with a .45 automatic, to let no more on board than the capacity of the boat of my 200 men who were also under secret orders. I found out later that I was really in command of but didn't know it.

I was to let the first 50 on and if anybody else tried to get on, I was to use my .45. In October the Atlantic was cold, and we didn't even have life preservers. And the men, except those that got in the lifeboat, and every lifeboat captain or officer like myself of the 20 or 30 lifeboats, I guess, that were on the ship – that would have been the evacuation. The ship would have been a disaster if anything had happened.

When we were about four nights out, getting ready to go to sleep in the evening, they had this general alarm. We were already in our room and then the ship started leaning over in a turn, more so than just the zigzag turns. The ship started shaking and I can tell we're going faster than normal. All of us in the room speculated as to

what was going on. We figured we were running away from something, and that's what was happening.

Then we quit zigzagging and seemed to be going in a straight line. All of a sudden I heard a bunch of pops, like metal hitting metal. I was next to the door to the passageway. So I opened the door up and on one side of the passageway, rivets were popping out of the metal and going across the passageway and hitting the other side of the passageway. That's what was making the popping sound, and I shut the door. I said, "Don't anybody stick your head out. You'll get killed by a rivet." This went on for at least 30 minutes. Finally the ship slowed down.

The next morning, when I went back on deck, I asked one of the ship's officers that I'd become acquainted with, I said, "What in the hell happened last night?" And he said we ran into the battleship Scharnhorst. They detected it on our radar. It was one of the German pocket battleships. It had slipped out of Norway and they tried to intercept the Queen Elizabeth, except we picked it up on radar when it was 20 or 30 miles away from the ship and we immediately headed for Iceland.

It turned out that by now I could see the coast of Iceland in the morning. So they just outran the Scharnhorst to Iceland. That morning I also saw some friendly aircraft.

We had no weapons on the ship except what the men carried. I'm not even sure they had any ammunition, except I did have ammunition for my .45 and I'm sure the other officers did. The ship itself had no heavy weapons on it. I think a .50 caliber machinegun was the biggest weapon on the ship.

So when I get to England, at Greenock, Scotland, all the 15 thousand of the 29th got off and the 45 hundred other people got off and that left just 6 officers and 200 enlisted men standing on the quay after we had walked down the gangplank. Finally a British sergeant came up and asked, "Who's in charge?" The other five lieutenants looked at me and said, "Charlie, you're the senior officer; you're in charge."

So I looked around and I could tell the enlisted men were just standing around disorganized. I had enough presence of mind to know that somebody needs to do something, so I ordered the men to fall in. Then the British sergeant told me to load your men on these trucks.

There must have been 10 or 12 British lorries there. I got in the front seat of the first truck with the driver, and we took off not knowing where we're going. Finally I asked the guy where we going. He said, "I really don't know. I'm going to drive you towards Birmingham." I said, "Where's Birmingham?" And he said it's south of Glasgow, Scotland.

So we drove all night, actually towards Liverpool, not Birmingham. When daylight came, we got to the outskirts of Liverpool and it's a bombed out city. We stopped and another convoy picked us up. Same thing. We hadn't eaten and so when we got on the second convoy, I asked the driver where we were going. He said to Birmingham. I said, "Why are we going to Birmingham? Where's Birmingham?" He said it's east of Liverpool, in the London direction.

So when we got to Birmingham, they unloaded us and there's another convoy. We loaded the men up again, the officers and myself. I asked this guy where we going. He said, "You're going to Whittington Barracks." I said where's Whittington Barracks and he said it's between Lichfield and Coventry. I'd heard of Coventry.

We got to Lichfield and got on some more trucks. They were shuttling us with different British transport outfits, I guess.

We get to Whittington Barracks, which is an old British World War I camp. The men get off. Some sergeant walked up to me and said, "Put your men over in those buildings." By this time, I'd kind of organized the other five lieutenants and picked out one of the lieutenants who'd been a sergeant before the war to be my executive officer [Ozell Smoote, an Indian athlete who had graduated from Capitol Hill High School in Oklahoma City]. And the other four officers, I made them platoon leaders. So each of those guys had about 50 guys. The highest-ranking enlisted man was a corporal named Burke.

I did notice that all the other 5 officers were all athletes and all the 200 enlisted men were 18, 19, maybe the oldest might have been 20, were all athletic looking. I'd gotten acquainted with a couple of them and they were either high school athletes or starting in college. So I'm thinking to myself, this is a pretty unusual group of people – all athletes of one sort or another.

We were there in Whittington Barracks for about 2 days. I finally found out I could send the men over and eat with the British and six of us officers ate with some British officers. The British that were there were from the 51st Highland Division, the people who wore the kilts. Some of these fellows had been in Dunkirk. Some of them had fought in Turkey, some of them in India, Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong, and they were professionals and combat veterans in the British Army.

Then I finally meet a brigadier general of the 51st Highlanders, which is a regiment of about 3,000 men, and these people were something else. They were all combat experienced. So I met this brigadier and he said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "I don't know, sir." And he said, "Well, you're attached to my outfit." I said, "We are? What are we?" He said, "You're a professional company." I said, "OK. What do we do next?" And he said, "Tomorrow you're going to start training your men to integrate with us. But first you've got to turn in your American military rifles."

So the next day, I formed the company up and we gave the British our Springfield '03 American rifles and they gave all the enlisted men the Enfield rifles, which was a British World War I rifle. The reason for the change is that the British caliber shells for an Enfield will not fit an '03 rifle and if we're going to fight with the British, we've got to have common ammunition. They wanted to give me a revolver and I said, "No, I'm charged with this one. I'll keep my .45 and ammunition clip. So anyhow, we trained with the British for several weeks.

Mr. Basden: What was that like?

Mr. Scheffel: That was an experience in itself. First of all, we had to teach the men how to fire an Enfield rifle. An '03 rifle will cock itself when you pull the bolt open and pull it back. And then when you push it forward, it'll load.

The Enfield rifle was just the opposite. It only cocked when you pushed the bolt forward. It took some dexterity and combination of handwork to take the palm of your hand and slam the bolt forward. So we spent a couple of days acquainting the men with that.

And in the evening I would always go over to the NAAFI, which is the Navy Army Air Forces Institute and was kind of like the officers' club. Every night I would go

over there and drink stout, which is nothing but British hot beer. I would go over there and drink beer with those guys and try to find out how you stay alive in combat, because these guys had been in it.

I was able to send my wife a telegram from the camp there that I was somewhere in England. That's all you could say other than "I love you." Canned messages.

Every night I would ask these guys "How do you stay alive." The three things I learned that kept me alive through 3 years of combat.

The first was to get yourself a "bot" man. I said, "How do you spell it?" "B-A-T. Bot." "You mean a batman?" "No, a 'bot' man."

I said, "What does he do?" He said, "Well, you'd call him an orderly." And I said, "You have to be a colonel or above to have an orderly in the American army, so that lets that out." And the answer to me was, "Charlie, do you want to stay alive?" "Yes." "Well, get you a batman."

"What does a batman do?" "He needs to stay alive, too. Survival's the name of the game in combat."

The first thing a batman does when he comes under fire is dig a slit trench. Get his head down to keep from getting killed from artillery or bombs or small arms fire, or whatever. The next thing he does is dig a slit trench for his officer. Because, Charlie, if you're an officer in command of a platoon or company or whatever, and you come under fire, you're going to be so damn busy figuring out what to do next, that you'll never have time to dig your own slit trench. And survival's the name of the game, right? Yes, sir. Well then, Charlie, you get you a batman.

So the second thing a batman does after he's taken care of his own safety is to dig a 2-man slit trench for his officer. Now, Charlie, you've got a slit trench that you can bail into if you have to.

The third thing the batman does is dig a 2-man foxhole. Dig his own slit trench deeper for a foxhole The first thing he does is dig a 2-man foxhole. One for his officer and one for him, a 2-man. And at that point I said we don't teach that in the American army. We only teach 1-man foxholes. And they said, "Well, if you want to stay alive, Charlie, you have your men dig 2-man foxholes, because then one man can support another one. But more importantly, if you're in a foxhole, then you've got two men back to back and you can see 360 degrees. But one man in a one-man foxhole has to go to sleep sometime and can't see but 180 plus degrees, not 360.

So I became convinced that old Charlie's going to have him a batman the next morning and I told the stories to all the officers that night. I said in the morning get you a batman. And all we did was pick out a runner, which normally a platoon leader has and a company commander has. And you tell the runner that he's now your batman. And you explain it to the guy this way: If his life is important, then his officer's life is also important to him. So he takes care of himself first and then he takes care of his officer. That saved me more than once, having my batman have a hole for me or a slit trench for me to bail into.

Another thing I learned was crack and thump. I asked them what was crack and thump, and they said, well we'll show you tomorrow.

So they took me out on the firing range. This major that I'd become acquainted

with had taken a liking to me. He was a professional and a graduate of Sandhurst, probably 28 or 29 years of age. I was what, 21 or 22 at the time. He took me out on the firing range and told me to take this sound powered telephone and walk out exactly 1000 feet, find a foxhole and get in it. So I strung the wire behind me, walked out a thousand feet. In the training area there were a lot of foxholes, so I got in a foxhole.

The next thing I heard was "BANG!" And I'm saying to myself, "He's shooting at me." And then I rang up the telephone, sound-powered telephone, and then I heard "BANG!" again. And I'm talking to him now, and I'm saying to myself, "You S.O.B., you're shooting at me."

He says, "Are you there?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Did you hear anything?" "Yes, you son of a gun, you're shooting at me!" He said, "Well, listen." So I heard another bang. And I said, "Do that again." Then I heard a bang and a crack. And I said, "Do that again." And he said, "You're getting it, Charlie, aren't you?"

And then I realized he was teaching me a lesson. I was hearing crack and thump. What I was hearing was the crack – the bullet going over my head. At that time I'd never heard the term "sonic boom." But what I was hearing was the crack of something going faster than the speed of sound. And what I was hearing was a bullet going through the air at 2,000 feet a second. And I remembered from college, physical science class, that said sound went a thousand and fifty some odd feet a second, and the bullet got there at 2,000 feet a second. So it gets there quicker than the sound.

What you hear when that bullet is breaking the sound barrier is a sonic boom, or a crack. Hear the crack…thump. So you start counting. Crack. "A thousand one." It takes a thousand feet a second for the sound to get there. The bullet's already been there. So if you hear a crack "A thousand one" boom, the guy's a thousand feet away. If you hear a crack and you count, "A thousand one, a thousand two" bang, you know he's two thousand feet away. And if you hear crack-bang or just bang and no crack, you know that guy's right on top of you. That's the thing that kept me alive. More than anything else.

In fact the last time I got hit, I would have probably bled to death in a ditch in Germany 3 years later. After I'd had three men killed around me, lying in the same ditch. Now I'm a company commander, a captain, in '44 instead of '42 when I got the indoctrination about crack and thump.

My company was, I think, the first company to attack the Siegfried Line. Lammersdorf, south of Aachen. I had four tanks attached to me and they were all knocked out. I jumped in a bar ditch next to the road. We were only about four or five hundred feet from the Siegfried Line where they had their emplacements, dragon teeth to stop tanks, and all that.

A big artillery shell hit right in the middle of my command group. I had my communications sergeant, Sergeant [Thaddeus J.] Kaminski. I had my batman, my runner, Hoyt, PFC [Thomas A.] Hoyt, and a walkie-talkie operator named Christy. [PFC Alfred B.]

Kaminski was lying on my left side with his radio backpack and a French phone. I had it in my left hand. Hoyt was lying at my feet, protecting from the Germans advancing down towards us. Christy, the walkie-talkie operator had handed me the walkie-talkie. I've got the walkie-talkie in my right hand and the French phone in my left hand, yelling for whatever help I can get, artillery fire or mortar fire or

anything.

The four tanks I had on the road that we'd been following, and my men had been following, had all been knocked out. As I recall, all four of them were in flames. There were probably 50 feet between them.

We were just attacking down this road, and when you're in an attack, you keep attacking until somebody starts shooting at you. You keep advancing until somebody fires at you. That way you know where the enemy is and he knows where you are. So a big fat loser, probably an artillery shell, maybe mortar, hit right in the middle of us.

When I came to, I couldn't see out of my right eye, lost part of my right eyesight. The walkie-talkie I'd had in my right hand was just a shambles and I could see my right index finger was kind of lying on one side of my hand. And my left hand, I had it, and I turned to my left and Kaminski had had his leg partly blown off and was dead.

Then I turned my head to my right so my left eye would see, and Christy, his head had been almost severed off. It was just lying on one side almost. And I looked at my feet where Hoyt was lying at my feet, and he had a big sliver of steel, probably a part of a fragment of the shell, in his stomach, and he was dead.

I'll be honest with you, when I saw that, I said to myself – and I wasn't hurting; I wasn't feeling anything – and I said to myself, "Charlie, you're dead."

I remember saying a prayer for my wife, my mother, and my brother. Probably the only time in my life that I really just utterly forgot about myself, and I honestly believe today, if I'm a Christian at all, that probably helped save my life. Just to surrender. Then I'm saying to myself, well, I guess I'm going to go to heaven or hell.

As I lay there, I looked again at Kaminski, and I thought, you know, God's awful busy taking care of everybody, with everybody getting shot up. Because I realized that it just isn't the four of us, and I guess I'm just going to have to wait for heaven or hell when it comes.

And I probably would have died there, except, I heard a crack and a thump. I heard crack and automatically I started counting. I got the crack and maybe got "th-" of a "thousand." And I'm saying to myself, that guy's only a couple hundred yards away. Then I remembered that we were that close to the pillboxes. Then I thought to myself, you know, Charlie, if you can hear a crack and a thump, that guy had to be alive to shoot at you, then I must still be alive to hear it.

So crack and thump saved my life. I believe if I hadn't heard that crack and thump, I honestly don't believe I'd have been here speaking of it today. I'd have laid there and bled to death.

So then I realized I need to do something, and I knew there weren't any other men close by. I tried to get my sulfa pills out. Sulfa pills are to keep from getting gangrene. Officers normally carry them on their pistol belts and I couldn't get my left arm around to the back.

I finally got the sulfa pills out and I always carried my canteen on the right side, next to my .45, kind of in back. But I almost couldn't get to it. So I ripped the packet open with my teeth. I could only use one hand; my right hand was bad. I

think, maybe I laid down what was left of the walkie-talkie. It was looking more like spaghetti than a walkie-talkie. I realized that had I not had that walkie-talkie up to my head yelling for help, that I'd probably have been severely head wounded and died. But anyhow.

Then I realized that if I lie here, I'm going to bleed to death, because I was bleeding all over, in the head and in the arm and leg, in pretty bad shape. So I realize, if I lie here, I'm going to bleed to death.

So I climbed over Kaminski on the left to head back towards the little village of Lammersdorf that I'd left my executive officer at that morning at the company rear headquarters when we started the attack.

To start that morning I went with the tanks with one platoon. I had another platoon of Lt. Nolan's on the left flank, another platoon kind of following us and then I kept one in this little town of Lammersdorf because I didn't know what was going on south of Lammersdorf. We were attacking east and really nobody knew anything about it. We had no intelligence except just what you could see and what you could experience.

And so I started crawling back along this bar ditch, which was a drainage ditch next to the road. It was an improved road, 2-lane road. I must have crawled as near as I could tell, and I've been back there a couple of times myself since 1944, I must have crawled back about, oh maybe, three or four hundred feet. I ran into a medic.

Believe it or not, he was from San Antonio, Texas, where I'm sitting right now. His name was "Hay-Sue," spelled J-e-s-u-s; last name was Flores, F-l-o-r-e-s. And old Hay-Sue caught all kinds of trouble from the other enlisted men. He was the medic, PFC, I think. But I always called him, with great respect, PFC Flores, and he acknowledged that respect back to me.

So I ran into Hay-Sue Flores, and he said, "you're badly hit." And I said, "Yeah." Now I'm really hurting, and I asked for a shot of morphine. He gave me a shot of morphine and he said, "I'm going to get you out of here, Captain." And I said, "You'll get killed trying to help me." And he started yelling, "The old man is hit! The old man is hit!" The old man is always the company commander.

Then I guess a few minutes later, here comes a jeep down this road, and the war stopped.

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He yelled back, because the rear company headquarters I'd left with Lt. [Victor M.] Marotti, my executive officer, and my first sergeant. The kitchen truck and the 15 or 20 men in the kitchen detail and the supply sergeant were probably still back on the border at a little town called Roetgen, which was about 4 or 5 kilometers further back west and northwest, just inside the German border.

We had advanced without any opposition that morning with the tanks and an infantry platoon leading. I decided that I needed to stay up there to command what was going on, you know. I knew we were going to hit the German Siegfried Line, because it was on my map. I didn't figure the Germans would give us much trouble when we started out that morning until we got to the Siegfried Line.

And sure enough, that's when all hell broke loose, when we got within their firing range. And they let us get just as close as they could so they could increase the

effectiveness of their fire – and we got close, believe me.

Well, just a story on that. Three months later, the American forces finally took the town that was my objective that morning. And during that period of time, all the Battle of Bastogne had taken place. My objective that morning was the town of Dueren, Germany, which was 20 or so kilometers away. And I told the fellows that morning, I said, "Fellows, this is going to be a rough day, because I don't think the Germans are going to let us walk right through to Dueren. No way."

So anyhow, after Flores yelled, "The old man's hit," I'm lying there, feeling a little better now with this morphine. I'd been hit a couple times before and gotten some shots to ease the pain.

Then here comes this jeep. I can see it coming out of my good eye, the direction I was looking, the way he had me propped up. We're still in the bar ditch. The red cross flag was flying on the front; it was a litter jeep, with a litter on top of four poles. And the war stopped. Shells stopped coming in towards our direction, and whatever small amount of fire that we could get, either machine guns in the company, or the mortars, stopped also.

And the jeep, when it pulled up on the road above my head, the driver and assistant driver got out. They threw the stretcher next to me. One of them grabbed my feet, the other one grabbed my arms, and they lifted me on the stretcher. They got hold of the stretcher and put me up on the top of the jeep. The windshield was down, which was always in combat, and I'm saying to myself as they're laying me on top there, "Well, Charlie, you haven't been killed yet, but your chance of getting killed now is pretty good."

And the jeep turned around, the war was still not going on. The Germans undoubtedly saw the red cross flag, they had to, and I guess they just let them evacuate me. But I'll tell you, the minute that jeep went around the corner outside that little town of Lammersdorf, the war started all over again. I mean, we started firing and so did the Germans. And then I passed out, I guess.

Next thing I knew, I opened my eyes, and I'm lying on a table. I looked up, and there's a chandelier, and I realized, I'm in a house. I turned my head. I guess by now they had my right eye bandaged up. I turned my head and Captain Kohlmoos was standing above me.

I forget what he said, but the general conversation was "How're you feeling?" I do remember asking him, "Am I going to live? Am I going to make it?" I knew I was hit pretty bad. I still couldn't get out of the idea that I was the only one of the four guys that were hit still alive. I knew they were dead.

He said, "Do you want a drink?" And I said to myself, well, if I'm going to make it, I don't want a drink. I'll let him save it for somebody else. But if I'm not going to make it, yeah, I'll take a drink. So then I think I said, "Am I going to make it, Doc?" And he knew me, because I'd been in 3 years of combat around him. He was in the battalion, a doctor. But at one time I was on the battalion staff, so I knew him. And he said, "Yeah, you're going to make it." I said, "I don't want a drink." Then I passed out again.

The next thing I remember, I hear some German machine gun fire. American machine guns go "dut-dut-dut-dut-dut." German machine guns go "Brrrrippp," a faster fire rate. And I hear, "Brrrrippp. Brrrrippp."

I opened my eyes and I can tell I'm in an ambulance. There was a guy on my left, a guy above on my left, and a guy above me. I looked at the guy on the left, and I said, "What's going on?"

And I guess they knew me, because I'd been in this same battalion, and commanded most of the platoons and companies over the years. And one of them says, "They bailed out." Then I realized this ambulance I'm in has come under fire, and the driver and assistant driver who normally man an ambulance, had bailed out.

So I just yelled out loud, "You SOBs get back in here or I'm going to come out and get you myself." I ain't about to move, but I wanted to let them know that somebody was concerned about being abandoned inside. And I heard one of the guys yell, "Captain, we're getting back in." And then the ambulance started rolling again, no more "Brrrrippp," no more German fire. Then I must have passed out again.

Then next time I wake up, my left arm had rolled onto some grass. I looked up, lying on my back; I was on a litter on the ground. I looked up and I'm in a tent. And I thought, well, I must be in a hospital. I looked to my left, and on the stretcher next to me, not two feet away, was a German soldier. And I'm saying to myself, Oh hell. That German fire, the Germans that were firing at that ambulance – I got captured. I'm in a German hospital. I couldn't see to my right if there was a stretcher next to me, but I could see across the aisle in the tent, some other stretchers.

I didn't say anything to the German, but about that time, down the aisle, walking from the left side, I guess the entrance to the tent, a nurse strolled by, came walking down. She had on white, and as I recall, the only thing else I recognized was a red cross, I think. And when she got to the foot of my stretcher, she saw that I was, you know, awake, and I said to her, "What language do you speak?" And she looked down at me and said, I never will forget it, she said, "What in the hell do you think I talk?" And then I realized that I wasn't in a German hospital.

And I said, "Where in the hell are we?" And she said, "You're in an evacuation hospital just south of Liege, Belgium. Do you where that is?" Yes I did because the battalion had captured the south side of Liege about 10 or 15 days before that. So I knew that now I'm about 20 miles behind the front, where the action is.

And she said, "How do you feel?" I'm wondering how should I be feeling? I said, "What time is it?" She said about eleven o'clock or something like that. I said, "What day is it?" And she said, "Wednesday, September the 17th." And then I remembered I got hit on the 14th, and I'm saying to myself, what the hell happened to the 15th, 16th, and now the morning of the 17th? That's a blank in my life.

And then she looked at me, she says, "You know, Captain, we didn't think you were going to make it." And I said again, "I was concerned about survival." That's the name of the game. One game, anyhow. And she says, "Well, I think you're going to make it. I'd better get the major." Then she ran back down the passageway.

So I realized that I was in an American evacuation hospital and this German was just a PW, wounded. He never did say anything. I don't know whether he was dead or out of it or what. Then this major came by and said, "How are you feeling?" I said, "I guess, OK." I wasn't hurting. He said, "Do you think you can stand to be flown back to England?" And I realized this tent is pitched on a field of grass, and I'm saying to myself, how are they going to get me on an airplane back to England? And he said, "We've just had an air drop this morning at Nijmegen, somewhere in

Holland. We have radioed and got orders to have one of the C-47s that dropped the airdrop to land here in the field and evacuate some of you more seriously wounded guys back to England. Do you feel like going?" And I said, "Get me out of here as soon as you can."

About a half-hour later, I hear a plane landing. Then I heard it taxiing up. They cut the engines off, and a couple of guys came in. One of them threw my field jacket on my feet, and maybe something else, I don't recall. And I'm saying to myself, well, guess that's part of the equipment they took off of me. They carried me out through the tent and there's a C-47 parked not over a hundred feet from the tent. They carried me out and laid me near the cargo door.

I looked up and on the tail assembly, had to be Col. Ralph Lear's squadron. Ralph and I played semi-pro baseball back in Oklahoma in the '40s, '39 and '40. Ralph had gone into the military in 1940-41, became a pilot, and his wife Mary Anne Scrivener and my wife Ruth lived about two blocks away from each other in Enid, Oklahoma.

Before D-Day, in June of '44, from Barton Stacey in England where the 9th Division - I've skipped a lot of my life in here. But after arriving in England with the British, I made the Algerian invasion, went to Algeria with the British. Our ship got torpedoed off of Algiers, which is a story in itself.

I landed with the British and finally told this brigadier – and you can imagine the jobs my company was getting as a second lieutenant company commander, what kind of jobs we were getting from the British - all the tough ones. Keep in mind we were primarily engaged against the French Foreign Legion in Algiers. One day they would be shooting at us and the next day we'd be drinking wine with them. They didn't know who to fight for, because they were the Free French and they didn't know whether to join the Allies or stay free and not fight in the war.

Anyhow, I went back to the British and asked this brigadier one day, I said, "This is not working out for me and my men." He said, "What do you want to do, son?" And I said, "I want to go back to the American army." I knew that the 39th Regiment of the 9th Division was nearby, and part of the 1st Infantry Division. They'd landed at Algiers, but on either side of the main harbor where the British went in. I said, "Go back to the American Army." The brigadier said, "Take off."

I saluted him and ran back to the company where I had an outpost, a tunnel guard, and a few other things. I split the company up, half of them went to the 1st Division and the other half went to the 9th Division. My executive officer flipped a coin and he called heads and he said, "I'll take the 1st." So I said I'd go to the 9th, and said, "You go to the 1st, you the 9th, you the 1st, you the 9th." That's the way we split the other four officers up. So I joined the 9th Division at that time. Got assigned to Company A, 39th Infantry Regiment just east of Algiers in February 1943.

I went into Tunisia, just at the end of Kasserine Pass. The 39th landed without any artillery support, just what they could carry. No tanks, no artillery, so they didn't send the 39th into combat. We just guarded bridges until the Kasserine Pass. And then they did send one of our battalions from the 39th into Kasserine Pass and I think they lost all 800 of the men when Rommel was attacked at the Kasserine Pass. So I got a taste of combat with the American forces in Southern Tunisia.

At one time I was the only officer in the company, and I met an artillery officer by the name of Westmoreland, who later became Army Chief of Staff and commanded all the action in Vietnam later. That's a story in itself.

Then, when the southern Tunisian campaign was over, I got a promotion to first lieutenant. General Eddy called me into his tent outside of Gafsa and said, "Well, you're now a first lieutenant. That's good news. The bad news is I've got to send one exchange officer from the 9th Division to the British 18th Army Group."

The British 18th Army Group was composed of the 1st British Army, which landed in Algeria that I went in with, with the 51st Highlanders, and General Montgomery's 8th Army. They had joined up in Southern Tunisia to form the British 18th Army Group, meaning the 1st Army and the 8th Army, under General Alexander.

So General Eddy said, "I've got to send one exchange officer to the 18th Army Group, and I've been told that you've had experience with the British, so you're it."

So I went back and spent about a month with the British. I met General Alexander, who was Montgomery's counterpart. I did some mostly night patrolling with the British and we spent a heck of a lot of time opening mine fields up, which is a lot of fun at night probing with a bayonet trying to find a mine.

Mr. Basden: You had no mine detectors?

Mr. Scheffel: Just a bayonet and a trench knife.

And then after that month I went back to the 9th Division up in Northern Tunisia, where they'd moved the 1st and 9th Divisions. I fought with them there until the campaign was over in Northern Tunisia.

The Americans did not expect that all the Germans in the Africa Corps would surrender to the Americans. The British had no love for the Germans. And the Germans knew that if they surrendered to the British, maybe their treatment might have been like it was in the Japanese Asiatic theater. You know, not so much love between enemies. So all the Germans surrendered to the American forces, all 175 thousand of them.

What do you do with 175 thousand of the enemy that you don't expect to capture? No food, nothing. So we get orders for half rations. We have to give half of our rations to feed the Germans.

And I had the experience of taking 700 German PWs [Prisoners of War] on a 5-day train ride from Bizerte, Tunisia, back to Oran, Algeria, so they could be put on ships to be sent back to the States. Not to England, because if they sent them to England, which would be the closest, they'd have to feed them, and you'd have to ship food in. So they sent them back – this is how all the Germans wound up in the United States.

And then I made the Sicilian invasion…

Mr. Basden: Well, how did you get these 700 prisoners back? Any trouble with that?

Mr. Scheffel: Well, we were on a narrow-gauge railway that ran right along the Mediterranean coast from Bizerte, Tunisia, to Oran, Algeria. Our company strength was about half of the 200 men it had at full strength. I was a platoon leader then, and I was assigned narrow-gauge 48 boxcars. About 20 or 25 of them hooked onto a train and we had one passenger coach that was about 1890 vintage hooked in on the back of the train. And they gave me these 700 PWs.

I found out who the ranking officer was. He was a full colonel in the Africa Corps. Spoke good English. So I found out who he was and called him up to my car. I said, "Colonel." I said, "There's 700 of you people and there's me and 20 men with one machine gun and our hand weapons." I said, "We're going to take you from here to Oran, and put you on a ship, and I guess they'll send you back to the States." I said, "If you'll not cause my men any trouble, or not try to escape, or cause us any trouble at all – and it'll take us 5 days I found out to go from Bizerte to Oran on this narrow-gauge railway – I'll stop every time we see water, like fresh water, and let your men take a break, bathe, take a leak or whatever. Is it a deal?"

So he stuck out his hand and it took us 5 days and 5 nights. That's about a 700-mile jaunt on narrow-gauge railway, and we're stopping every time we saw water. Quite an experience.

Mr. Basden: So he did live up to his word, then.

Mr. Scheffel: He lived up to his – well, what would they have done if they'd escaped? The Mediterranean's on the right side of the railway and desert or mountains on the left. They'd been whipped. They knew it.

So back to when I looked at this airplane, being evacuated back, now we're back in Belgium. I looked up and the cargo sergeant was standing there. I said, "This is Col. Lear's outfit isn't it?"

I had visited Ralph when we were at…well, the 9th made the Normandy invasion after Tunisia and Sicily. After the Sicilian campaign, instead of going into Italy, like we were alerted to do - that's another story in itself – they shipped the 1st and 9th back to England so they'd have two experienced divisions to go into whatever part of Europe we were going to invade. This turned out to be Normandy, but none of us knew it at the time, although you could certainly figure it out by looking at a map. It had to be Normandy or in that area.

So I'd visited Ralph at Salisbury Plains, which is near Stonehenge, which is a famous place in England. Our British camp was about 20 miles north of Stonehenge, Salisbury Plains. I got a break when we shipped back from Sicily to England. A full colonel, Paddy Flint, who by the way, probably was the oldest full colonel in the army. He outranked Patton as a full colonel. This Paddy Flint is a legend in itself, the story about Paddy Flint. Col. Flint called me in when we got to England and said, he always called me "Son," he said, "Son, I notice you've been with the British a couple times before." He'd gone to Sandhurst as an exchange officer after World War I. He made colonel in 1919 or 1920, graduated from West Point about 1912, I guess, somewhere about that time. He's too old to be a regimental commander. That's a story in itself, why Paddy Flint never became a general like General Marshall, Patton, Bradley, and all the guys that he was an older full colonel to.

So he said, "Charlie, I'm going to give you a break when we get to England." I said, "How's that?" He said, "I'll need to have a fire marshal to work the camp we'll be in with the local fire people." England was still getting bombed. Not as frequently as it was in '42 when I was there, but on the coast. So he said, "You're going to be the fire marshal and the police and prison officer." So I had a nice cushy job for the 5 or 6 months we were in England, from December until D-Day.

So I got to visit Ralph Lear when I found out his outfit was down south, just south of us. I went down to visit him one day. I had my own jeep, and went down and

spent a day with him.

So when they carried me out on this stretcher from the evacuation hospital in Belgium, I noticed that this has to be one of Ralph's squadron's planes. I don't know whether it was a 4-leaf clover or some insignia on it. I asked the cargo sergeant, I said, "Sergeant, this is Col. Lear's outfit, isn't it?" And he just walked away from me. And I yelled at him, I said, "Sergeant, I asked you a question," and he just kept walking, underneath the wing.

And a couple minutes later, why, a lieutenant came, stood over me where I was lying on the stretcher on the ground. And he said, "Can I do something for you, Captain?" I said, "Yeah, I asked your sergeant a simple question, and he just walked away. I'll ask you the same question." And he said, "What is it?" I said, "Is this Col. Lear's outfit?" And he said, "You know him?" I said, "Yes, I know him." And he said, "How well do you know him?" And I'm trying to figure out what in the hell's going on here. And he said, "How well do you know him?" And I said, "My wife and his wife only live a couple of blocks away from each other in Enid, Oklahoma." And he said, "What is his wife's name?" And I said, "Mary Anne." He said, "Captain, you know him, don't you." And I said, "Sure, I do, you know."

And he said, "I've got sad news for you." He said, "This morning, I saw the colonel in front of my plane get shot down and crash, head on in." His squadron had just dropped the airdrop at Nijmegen, Holland. I think there was a movie several years ago about this air drop called "A Bridge Too Far?"

So I was being evacuated back on one of those air drop aircraft that they had landed to evacuate the wounded. They put me on Ralph Lear's airplane, evacuated me back to England, and I stayed there until December, about two and a half, three months. Got my weight back, my feeling back, my ability to walk, a few other things. Then came back to the States. It's a hell of a story, isn't it?

Mr. Basden: You came back to the States and mustered out?

Mr. Scheffel: Believe it or not, I spent the summer of 1941, when I was in ROTC before the war broke out in '41, summer camp at Camp Robinson, Arkansas, ROTC camp. They had the ROTC, advanced students from Oklahoma A&M and Texas A&M. They split the 6-man tent up at Camp Bulis between students from Oklahoma A&M, Texas A&M, Louisiana State, and I believe New Mexico Military Academy, or maybe New Mexico University, one of the ROTC groups. One of my roommates at Camp Bulis was John Kimbrough, the All-American football player from Texas A&M.

So when I got to New York, they evacuated us back…they asked me one day at general hospital at Bournemouth, did I want to fly back to the States or did I want to take a ship back. Well, I thought of all the things that had happened to me every time I got on a ship: the Queen Elizabeth getting intercepted by the Scharnhorst. On the British ship Scythia, that sailed from Liverpool to make the North African invasion and get torpedoed…

Mr. Basden: I'd like to go back to that a little bit. We jumped from crack-thump to how it saved your life and never finished the training and how you got to Africa.

Mr. Scheffel: After we trained with the British, they equipped us with British winter outfits. They

did let us keep our American uniforms, but we were furnished British shoes, British armaments, and small arms. They took us one day from Whittington Barracks to Liverpool.

By the way, while I was in Whittington Barracks, for that month that I was there, roughly, I got to go into London a couple times. That's when I first saw war that was a no-rule war. I saw kids living in subways, because that was a bomb shelter, and at night the Germans were still coming over and bombing. I realized that war is not a gentleman's game. It's a dirty game. People get hurt, and mostly civilians.

So we get to Liverpool, board a ship, and the scuttlebutt is, some of the British said, "Well, they're going to send us to Canada." I said, "What makes you think they're going to send us to Canada?" Well, to protect that British territory. At that time in '42, the Allies were losing the war. And I said, "Well, I don't think the Eskimos are going to invade Canada, so I don't think we're going over there."

So we formed a pool. I think I put a couple pounds in; the pound was worth about two bucks then. I bet that we were going to land at Narvik, Norway, because of the winter clothing we had. Some of the guys said no, and the Dieppe [France] raid had been made that summer. I had a sneaking suspicion that if there had been enough transportation, that instead of just about four or five American officers being in on the Dieppe raid, which occurred in August, as I recall, of '42. And I'm not for certain but this group of 200 athletic young guys might have also been in on that Dieppe raid. Just a thought. No proof, but I'll put it this way, I'm glad they didn't get us over that soon, because that was a disaster. So some of the fellows bet that we would land at Dieppe. Others, at Dunkerque, France. One of them said, "No, we're going to go to Murmansk, up in Russia." And I thought, no that's too far. They're having to ship food in there, you know. So I put my money on Narvik.

After we'd been afloat, headed back west, towards the United States, by the way, I asked this brigadier the second day out, I said, "I've got to know, sir, where we're going. My men would like to know, and can't you tell me?" He said, "This evening, you can open the secret orders." So I did. Welcome to North Africa.

So we sailed clear around south of the Azores. We sailed half way back to the United States, then headed down towards the Azores. We came in through Gibraltar. That's how I got down to North Africa.

On the way in, after we'd gone through Gibraltar – this is a Cunard liner, pre-World War I, named The Scythia. About a 30,000 ton vessel. We had all the 51st Highlanders on board, plus the several hundred of us. Going through Gibraltar. In England, everything was blacked out. When we went through Gibraltar at night, the Straits of Gibraltar, you could look across on the Spanish side and see lights. You could look across on the African side at Tangiers and see lights. Lights on both sides, because the strait's only about 20 miles wide and if you're in the middle of it, you can see lights on both sides. German submarines attacking the convoy, depth charges going up, quite spectacular.

The French at Algiers had erected a submarine net from the breakwater over to the land to keep submarines out of the harbor at Algiers. The poop was that the job of this ship, being big and heavy – 25 or 30,000 tons - was to ram that submarine net and get into the harbor area. The 51st Highlanders would then jump off and do whatever they had to do, hoping that the French didn't fight them, because there were no Germans, combat forces at least, in Algiers. That's why Operation Torch was held.

Torch involved forces landing near Casablanca on the Atlantic side, all American, and an American force landing at Oran, which is just inside Gibraltar, south side of the Mediterranean, and then the British and Americans landing at Algiers. There were three main attacks. Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers. It was made because the Germans were about to capture Cairo, and had they done that, they would have gotten the Suez Canal, and probably sealed up the Mediterranean. Particularly Malta, which was holding out, British-wise, to the southeast of Sicily.

The ship I was on got hit by an aerial torpedo at night, just off Algiers, and we were up on deck abandoning ship when they finally got the ship's bulkheads sealed off, and the ship, at a 30 degree angle, stopped sinking. And then the Germans strafed the ship. That was first time I saw an American casualty. One of my men, either from a stray shell or, got wounded in the leg. That was the first time I'd seen an American casualty. That's how we got into Algiers. Limping.

So when they told me, do you want to fly back from England to the States, or do you want to go by ship, I thought about the Queen Elizabeth running into the Scharnhorst, getting torpedoed on the Scythia. And then when we made the invasion of Sicily, I was on a landing ship infantry (LSI), which is a bow ship with two ramps on each side – not an LST, a landing ship tank that has a ramp in the front.

An LSI carries 200 men and I was the S-3 Operations Officer for that operation for our battalion. I knew there was a sandbar just off the shore of southern Sicily and the water between the sandbar and high tide – and the tide isn't very high in the Mediterranean – couple of feet, maybe, the water was about four or five feet deep. If we discharged the troops at the sandbar, it would be too deep of water. We decided to be sure and have all the LSIs landing us to clear that sandbar, not stop when they hit the sandbar.

Well, sure enough, the minute this LSI I was on hit this sandbar, the ensign in charge of the ship cut the power. We didn't have anybody drown going on in, but many were carrying others in. At 6'2", I had a couple of guys hanging onto my arms that were only 5'2" or 5'3". So I remember that.

And then when we invaded Normandy, I was on an assault ship. When we sailed from Southampton in southern England, they lowered the assault boats over the side of the ship – it was the Empire Lance, a British ship that we were on. And as we left Southampton to assemble for the invasion, our ship got sideswiped and all the assault boats that were swung over in case of an emergency got wiped off when we got sideswiped by something bigger than the Empire Lance. The Empire Lance was a 300-foot ship, about 10 thousand tons. So whatever swiped us at night on the port side was way bigger than the ship we were on.

[end of tape 1, side 2]

Mr. Basden: Do you want to talk about the airplane again?

Mr. Scheffel: Well, let's see. We've hopped from America to England to Algeria to Tunisia to Sicily to England to Normandy, back to England, to Normandy, France, Belgium, Germany, back to England, and I better get back to the States here pretty soon.

Mr. Basden: At lunch you mentioned a little anecdote about the first use of penicillin. Can you tell me the circumstances of that?

Mr. Scheffel: All right. When they moved the 1st and 9th Divisions back to Algeria [from Tunisia],

because the ports were at Algiers and Oran and on the Atlantic side of Morocco, because the port at Bizerte had just been devastated so you can't get ships in, which means you can't feed your men. So it's better to move the men. So they move the 1st and 9th Divisions back south of Oran, about 20 miles south of Sidi-bel-Abbes, which was the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion.

After I delivered my 700 prisoners to Oran, by the way, when I returned to the States on the airplane from England, when they said, do you want to go by ship or air. I chose by air. On the way back, the flight before us left Prestridge, Scotland, to go through Iceland and that way. It was shot down in December of '44 by German planes that came out of Norway. So they diverted the C-54 that I was on to the southern route.

And as we were going south in the Irish Sea instead of going north to Iceland, some how or other they failed to notify a big convoy between the Azores and England that friendly aircraft would be flying over. And so this hospital plane that I was on, a C-54 flying at 10,000 feet because it wasn't pressurized, we got fired on. It was a Pan American chartered airplane, with a red cross, and we got fired on, being evacuated back, after we left the Irish Sea. And the airplane had to take evasive action until he passed over the convoy. Because the convoy didn't have notice and they had to assume it was an enemy aircraft.

We landed in the Azores, then Bermuda, and finally Mitchell Field on Long Island, New York. I was there a day and a night. Then they moved me by airplane to Brooke General Hospital, which is about five blocks from where we're sitting right now. And I called my wife, after 3 years of being away, and I said, "Your husband is home, come on down, quit your job." And my wife got pregnant with our first child who was born 9 months to the day and hour after I saw her in the St. Anthony's Hotel after she got off the train. And we had two more children after that.

But anyhow, back to Sidi-bel-Abbes and the penicillin. They moved the 9th Division, after I got off the train at Oran, I had to find out where the Division was. And they said, well, it's south of Sidi-bel-Abbes at Magenta, an oasis. I had about 20 men with me, half a platoon, I guess, and myself, so we somehow got down to Magenta.

When we get down there, they said, Charlie, we want you to instruct the whole regiment on crack and thump. Are you with me? Because by this time, I had passed that idea on to everybody I could. All the officers that I ever associated with or had under me. I would say, you get yourself a batman, tell him what he's to do. He's not a dog robber. He's not your right and left hand and servant. He's a guy who wants to keep his commander alive, unless it's a commander you want to get rid of. So we get down to Magenta and I became a guy that demonstrated crack and thump to all the regiment.

And also I learned from the British that they had a little old drill field maneuver for a squad. What does a squad do when it comes under fire? What do you do when you come under fire? You better do something, because if you stay right where you are, getting shot, you're going to get shot up. The British had a little old maneuver, just like about face, left flank, right flank, squad right, squad left. You know, close order drill, except they did it on an informal basis.

They would have a squad in line, and a sergeant would yell out, "You're under fire!" Automatically, this squad of men had certain things to do. First of all, they'd all hit the ground. Then they would crawl, and they would establish a base of fire, which would be, they called it their "Bren gun." We would call it a BAR or a Thompson submachine gun, whatever automatic weapon you had. That's your base of fire. And

you put two or three men around your base of fire. The other guys, you decide to flank the enemy. That was a little old drill that the British used to let an individual squad have something to do to survive when you come under fire. Are you with me?

I did that with all my platoons that I ever commanded. So we get back to Magenta and General called me in and he said, "I've heard about the stuff you're doing with the companies that you've been in, and I want you to do this to your regiment." So that became my job, to demonstrate crack and thump, 2-man foxholes, why, to the officers, what a batman is, and just little stuff that somebody else had taught me. Survival.

One day, I get orders to go down to the colonel's tent. The 9th Division was 20 miles south of Sidi-bel-Abbes, which was the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion, a town of about 20 or 30 thousand. You can imagine the number of prostitutes in that city. And the French Foreign Legion was not moved back from Tunisia. That's where they sent them when the Free French decided to fight with the Allies.

So all these prostitutes were in Sidi-bel-Abbes. The entire French Foreign Legion was in Tunisia. All the Americans were 20 miles south of Sidi-bel-Abbes, in an oasis called Magenta, on the edge of the Sahara Desert.

In the morning, you'd go to your company and say, "First Sergeant, what's the strength today?" "Well, Sir, you know we've all got diarrhea." "I know it. You've got it and I've got it. I know that. What's the strength?" "Well, we've still only got 160 men; we still haven't got enough replacements for 200. Sir, forty of the men are here in the camp with diarrhea. Forty of the men are AWOL, walking to Sidi-bel-Abbes. Forty of the men, excuse the language, are whoring around Sidi-bel-Abbes, or getting drunk, or just looking. And the other forty are walking back. And Sir, the last time you saw a short-arm inspection, (which is where you inspect the genital area of a soldier to see if he's combat ready) you know what kind of venereal disease you're seeing."

And honestly, in a short-arm inspection, we were seeing venereal diseases that even the doctors with the outfit had never seen at home. Gonorrhea, you name it. I think it was the first evidence that I ever saw of AIDS, whatever AIDS is.

So, I get called down by the colonel. Pretty soon Bill Butler came in. Bill was a married officer also, graduated from University of Michigan. Went overseas with the 9th. I met him in Algeria. Bill was a young married man. He comes into the tent, said, "What are you doing here, Charlie?" I said, "I don't know. I was ordered to come down here." He said, "Well, I was, too."

About that time Major Jay Roller came in. He was the battalion surgeon. "Hi, Major." "Hi, fellows. What are you guys doing here?" "I don't know." "I don't know, either." About that time the colonel came in, in this private little tent, in this oasis. The temperature is 115 degrees. Flies everywhere. The colonel's got diarrhea, too, believe me.

And he looked at Jay and he said, "Jay, I want you to take a two and a half ton truck right now, go to Oran." Oran is on the Mediterranean, north, which would be about eighty or a hundred miles from where we were, "and get a load of that new miracle medicine that, I understand, just arrived in Oran. And I think it might be called penicillin. And I want you to get a load of it." The major saluted the colonel and walked out.

Then he looked at me and Bill. I never will forget it. He knew we were both married

men. And he said, "Lieutenant, do you think you could look at a naked woman without going crazy?" And I think I said, "Barely." And he asked the same question of Bill Butler, who'd just been married before he went overseas. And he asked him the same question. Bill said, "If Charlie's in bad shape, I'm in worse."

And he said, "Fine. I want you guys to establish our own whorehouse. Charlie, you go collect $200 from every company. Right now. And Bill, you and Charlie go to Sidi-bel-Abbes, and we're going to run our own whorehouse."

So I did. I walked around and I knew most of the company commanders in the 39th, certainly all the 1st Battalion. "Captain Floriano, or Dana, Buck Fuller, or whoever the company commander it was I talked to, I want $200." "What do you want $200 for, Charlie?" "Well, the colonel said we're going to have our own whorehouse." "Is it going to be for officers, too?" "Nope. You officers ought to have more sense than to fool around in this kind of stuff. No. It's just for the enlisted men."

So I collected about $5,000. Each company has a company fund for beer busts, softball equipment, or whatever. Recreation stuff. It's the company commander's fund, carried in a safe that's on the kitchen truck. So I collect $5,000, about that, in a musette bag.

And then Bill and I went to Sidi-bel-Abbes. I knew where all the houses of prostitution were, because I'd walked around the town a couple of times that I had a chance to get in. Didn't fool around; I stayed a pretty good married man. And Donza drove us up there, the driver. And I said, "Donza, how are we going to work this thing?" Now this has got nothing to do with combat directly, but indirectly it's the most important side of combat – getting men able to fight.

And I said, "How're we going to do this?" And Donza said, "Well, you know, there's a lot of other outfits around here. The 1st Division, and 9th, the 47th Regiment. We ought to have some cards for our own house." So I said, "OK." And we had some cards printed up at a little printing shop we found. Little red cards. With a cart on it, without a horse. A plate that the printer had that couldn't be duplicated, and we had those printed up. It took several days to organize this thing.

So we went back and unloaded all the kitchen trucks. All the battalion's kitchen trucks. Took the field ranges off, water cans, everything. Took twenty trucks, and that became the shuttle to go from Magenta, the oasis, to Sidi-bel-Abbes. Instead of the men being AWOL, we're going to take them there ourselves, and bring them back

But Bill and I, as two smart young married men, figured we can take twenty men in each truck. That's four hundred men. But we've only got the house of prostitution with a hundred women. By the way, we did rent the officers' house of prostitution, which was on the east side of the plaza square of Sidi-bel-Abbes. So we had the best house and probably the prettiest women, about a hundred of them.

So Major Roller gets this miracle medicine, and they don't know how much penicillin to give each soldier. So Bill goes into the house of prostitution and sets up a first aid station in the hotel, about a four or five story hotel. Nice, French built, you know, nice hotel, really. Except there hadn't been any soldiers around there. Now there was a bunch of soldiers back there. With a lot of money.

So we figured out as young married men, that we've got a hundred women, and we've got twenty trucks, twenty men to each truck, that's four hundred men. Takes about an hour to drive up. Bill and I figured about an hour of sexual activity should

be enough even for a fellow that hasn't been around a woman for a long time, or if it was an old time married man. We figured, being smart young married men of about a year plus, that an hour of sexual activity would be sufficient for most humans.

But now we've only got a hundred women and four hundred men dumped in at one time. So we had a system where I was the straw man. Having grown up on a farm in Oklahoma, I would count men out, out of the four hundred that were to get a pass for that shift. I think we figured an hour to drive up, an hour in the house, an hour to fool around the town, and an hour to drive back. That's 4 hours. And we figured in a 12-hour day, we could take three shifts, three shuttle trips a day.

And we found out from the madam, that any one of their women could take care of ten or twelve guys a day. So we got that supply problem taken care of. Except we got too many customers, so my job was to distribute the one ticket for every four men. So we did it by drawing straws. I would have guys count off. One, two, three, four, and if you drew the long straw, you got the ticket. Also, every man that went on the bus got a shot of penicillin. Every man that got on the bus got what we called a pro kit, which had a condom and some salve in it that was supposed to cure everything else that man could get from sexual intercourse. And of course, all the women were already jabbed with penicillin up at our house.

And that's what Bill Butler and Charlie Scheffel did. Other officers of other regiments did the same thing. That went on for about a month before we moved back to Bizerte, Tunisia, to make the Sicilian invasion. After this went on for about 3 weeks, Bill Butler was up at the house in Sidi-bel-Abbes, and I ran the operation from the bivouac area. That was my job. In fact my nickname – you can imagine all the nicknames that both of us got – that I prided the most, I was called the straw man. I was the guy that held the straws; I was the straw man

So this went on for a little over a month until we left the area to go back into combat. Our venereal disease rate went down. That miracle medicine called penicillin did the job, or so the doctors told me. And the men believed in it, which was more important. I had one man that, after he drew the ticket, threw the ticket back in my face. It offended his religious beliefs. But other than that, you could sell your ticket, you could give it away, you could use it. It was your ticket. That was the operation.

But anyhow, after about 3 weeks, I get orders one day to report down to the colonel's office, a tent really. So I did. Pretty soon three civilians came in. "Lt. Scheffel, this is Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Robinson. They're from London. They are executives from the Red Cross, and they are down here, Lt. Scheffel, to find out what you're doing to corrupt the morals of American service people who are fighting in North Africa. Lieutenant, you explain to these officials what you're doing." Paraphrased a little bit.

What had happened, they told me, even though mail was censored during the war, was that word had gotten back to the States one way or the other, that American military services were operating their own house of prostitution. And some congressman, or somebody or another, maybe a wife or a girl friend passed it on to the Red Cross, and the Red Cross was down here investigating it.

I never will forget this one official was a past president or executive with Bethlehem Steel, I do remember. Another had been an executive with Heinz Pickle, in Pittsburgh, and I forget where the other gentleman was from. All men in their 60s, 70s, or 80s, executives. Red Cross officials coming down, sent on a mission to find out what's going on.

So I told them. And one of them looked at me and said, "That is an incredible story, Lieutenant." And I thought, I think I'll just "yes, but" this old man. And I said, "Yes, sir, it sure is. But, sir, if you'd have been sitting in my shoes, with the colonel here, what would you have done?" And he said, "Same as you did. Forget this visit." And they walked out of the tent.

I don't know whether the word ever got back that the straw man was corrupting the morals of American youth - and the Red Cross – but I've wondered about that. I thought about it at the time, and I thought, well maybe discretion is the better part of valor.

But the funny part about it was I sent one of those cards back to my wife in the mail, and I said when I get back I'll tell you what this card means. I never wrote a V letter or a personal letter. I didn't get mail, by the way, for 6 months. I didn't get mail from the time I left the States until March of '43. Because I'd been going from British to American to American company to company to company, back to the British, back to Tunisia. Mail just never caught up with me. By the time I'd write my wife where I am, I'm in a different outfit, and quite frankly, if any food was sent, cigars, or anything like that, that kind of got shortstopped before it ever got to the person it was addressed to. It was probably good that it was. Somebody used it. I often wondered about that.

But I sent one of these cards back to my wife, and I said, when I get back – I never wrote *if* I get back – I'll tell you what this is. So when I met my wife here in San Antonio in 1944, when I got back in December, that's the first thing I told her. I said, "You know that card I sent you?" And she said, "Yes, I remember. It's at home." And I said, "Well, I want you to know that your husband ran a whorehouse." And she said, "Well, did you just run it?" "Yes, I just ran it."

So I visited Bill, the doctor several years later. I lost track of him for 20 years, until one day I heard that he was up in Kalamazoo, Michigan. So I called Bill, and said "Bill, I want to see you." Because we were good friends. He was in the same room when this Dr. Kohlmoos told me I was going to live. Bill remembers me coming into the aid station, but I don't remember seeing Bill. I do remember Dr. Kohlmoos, who last I heard, was a retired doctor out in San Francisco.

So I went up to see Bill 20 years after the war, probably in the '70s sometime, and he took us out to dinner. He's a urologist, by the way. Got into urology, which I guess is a connection. He took us out to dinner in a nice dining place in Kalamazoo, and he introduced my wife and myself to some of his friends that came in. "Hi, Bill. Hi, Doctor." And the doctor would introduce my wife and me to some of his good friends.

And we were sitting talking at this table, talking about different things. Finally, I said, "You know, Bill, operating that house of prostitution in Sidi-bel-Abbes, I'll never forget that." And his wife, who was sitting across from my wife, looked at Bill and said, "You did what?" And then I realized that Bill had never told his wife And of course in a small dining room, even in a nice club, conversations from one table can be heard at another table if you want to listen. And when the dining room heard Dr. Butler's wife say, "You did what?" it came out, and Bill had to tell his wife right then and there. And I said, "Bill, I'm not going to tell your story, I've already told it to Ruth, you tell your own story." And he did.

Bill, the last time I heard, is not in such good shape where he lives. Probably dying of leukemia. His wife died about 3 years ago. My wife died in August [1999], so old

Bill and Charlie are some of the few guys left that can tell the story. Not about combat.

Mr. Basden: It is about combat. It's about the whole combat story. I'd love to see one of those tickets now.

Mr. Scheffel: I might be able to find you one. The red ticket is over there in that scrapbook [at the BAMC Medical Museum].

Mr. Basden: You gave that to the BAMC Museum?

Mr. Scheffel: Yes. Except you know what he said, the director? He said, "You know, Charlie, we're a little concerned about putting anything about sexual activity in the museum." That's an honest statement on his – and I can see that.

Mr. Basden: Well, I believe the whole story needs to be told, and I certainly appreciate your sharing these stories with us.

We haven't talked much about the campaign in Sicily other that the difficulty of getting ashore there. Is there anything about that that you'd like to relate?

Mr. Scheffel: I became the battalion S-3 as a first lieutenant. I should have been a major. I guess somebody got impressed with something and said, OK, you're a battalion S-3 now, which is plans, training, and operations officer. As a result, from my perspective, things were a little different.

My thoughts are now turning to the Sicilian Campaign. When we moved from Algeria, Magenta, back to Bizerte for the Sicilian Campaign, General Patton came to talk to the regimental officers of the 39th Infantry Regiment. We were to go in as a separate combat team, without any artillery. Patton was in the 7th Army. He'd taken over the 2nd Corps in southern Tunisia when General Fredendall, after Kasserine Pass, had apparently gotten sacked.

So Patton comes to our regiment and talks to the officers. I never will forget it. He stood on the back of a tank carrier with General Eddy. The first time I'd ever seen him. I do remember that his effect on me was that when he took over in combat, officers had to wear ties. Officers had to shave every day. We're short on water, and we're in the desert, and it's a fine if an officer doesn't wear a tie and is clean-shaven. You've got to sleep with your helmet on at night, which is kind of difficult to do if you can find a place to sleep at night, and you must always were leggings. We didn't have combat boots then; we had leggings. And I thought to myself, this is a stupid order. Not practical.

So there at Bizerte, I formed some opinion of General Patton, on the beach. He's standing on this tank carrier and said, "And gentlemen, when we land on the beaches of Sicily, there will be no prisoners taken." And I'm saying to myself, hey, this is a 2-way street. And General Eddy, sitting next to him, reached up, pulled his shirtsleeve, and I'm sitting 10 feet away from him in the first row of the officers on the sand. And General Eddy said, "General, I'd rethink what you just said." And Patton turned around and, didn't look directly at me, but looked at the officers, and probably, oh there might have been 30 or 40 officers there, a small group. "Forget what I just said." Well, you don't forget those things.

So when we land at Licata, our job was to advance west along the coastline. That

was the 39th. Of course, we only have three battalions. The 1st Battalion led the march, or advance. On about the second or third day, we ran across a lot of airborne, and in particular, I think it was General Ridgeway who had been dropped over there. Some of the Navy ships, when the airborne flew over them, thought they were Germans, and as a result, they dropped the airborne about every place except where they should have been. They shot down a few of them.

So when we ran across General, I believe it was Ridgeway, one of the generals out of the airborne, he assigned us as part of his command, and so the 39th came under the airborne command there for awhile. Being the S-3, I said, "Well, are we going to have any artillery support from anybody?" Because they do have some artillery in the airborne, even. And he said no.

So we still don't have any heavy artillery, except just as we got short of a town called Agrigento, one of my drivers said, "Hey, there's a Navy jeep behind us." I said, "Navy? Are you sure?" So I got out of my jeep. This other jeep got closer and, sure enough, it's a Navy jeep. A young naval officer got out, said, "I'm looking for the operations officer." I said, "Well, you found him." He said, "I thought I was supposed to find a major." And I said, "Well, I'm just a lieutenant, but I'm still the operations officer."

It turned out that he was about my age. His name was Smith, by the way, and it was his first time in combat. And I said, "Well, what can I do for you?" He said, "Well, I'm support you." And I said, "The Navy?" And he said, "Yes. I've got two cruisers laying off the shore." I said, "Where are they?" Because I just turned left, could see the Mediterranean, and I don't see any cruisers out there. He said, "There about 10 miles from here, and you can't see them." I said, "Well, what are you going to do." And he said, "Well, I can control the fire from the ships." And I said, "Fine. Have you ever done this before?" He said, "No." And I said, "Well, what will it do?" He said, "You'd like to see it?" And I said, "Yes, I'd like to know what kind of support I've got." And he said, "Well, what do you want me to shoot at?" I said, "Just shoot one round." You know, one time.

So he got on the radio, and I didn't know what was in front of us or to the right flank. I knew it wasn't any of us. So he got on his radio. A few minutes later I hear this freight train going over our heads, and it hit about a half a mile to my right up the hill, and I said, "Fine. You stick around. You're going to be a great help."

So he stayed with us, and when we got a little further in, we came under some fire. Most of western Sicily was occupied by Italian troops, and normally, if we could convince them that there were Americans in front of them, they would surrender.

This one town of Agrigento – somehow we sent in a civilian or Italian PW – and the town didn't show any white flags, and we got some fire. I rationalized that it had to come from a high hill, with a big structure on top of it. So I got in touch with the [Navy] lieutenant and he came up. I said, "You see that high hill with that big structure on it? Let's knock that thing down. Let's have all your guns at one time do what they call "time on target. Fire at that thing." He says, "I can't." I said, "Why can't you?" And he says, "My map shows that that's a historical structure and we're not supposed to destroy historical structures."

My map didn't show anything like that. In fact my map was just more of a road map. He said, "This is a temple up there that you see that's equivalent to the Acropolis in Athens." And I said, "Well, I still want to see what you can do." Because I'd only seen one round. I said, "Do you see about half way up the slope?" It was probably 15 hundred feet high. I said, "I think that's nothing but olive groves

and vineyards and almond trees." I said, "Fire all your weapons at one time." He said, "It'll take me a couple of minutes to get the ships where they can fire at one time."

The cruisers were the Philadelphia and the Brooklyn. I think they had either 8-inch or 12-inch guns. And each cruiser had either eight or twelve big guns. So I guess they had to maneuver the ships around where they could fire broadside or something. But pretty soon he said, "They're on their way." And I've heard a lot of freight trains come by in the town that I grew up in, in Enid, but this is all the freight trains in the world roaring over my head.

And when that barrage hit halfway up that hill, the whole side of that hill just went up. And when that happened, all the white flags in Agrigento went up. Believe me, I mean I never saw so many sheets and pillowcases flying up out of buildings in all my life. And we were only about, maybe two kilometers from the edge of the town.

We walked on in, advanced the next day or so, and there was a big air field called Castelvetrano where the Germans had these big Gotha airplanes that were made out of plywood, transports that had evacuated a lot of troops out of Tunisia to Sicily. Intelligence told us that we needed to capture that airport.

There was another town called Marsala, right on the coast. There was a kind of river or creek that emptied into the Mediterranean, and the bridge had been blown. I didn't want the troops crossing the river until I could get some support across the bridge, because it doesn't do any good to put men over there if you can't get ammunition, evacuate the wounded, and all the stuff that goes with war.

So I had a bunch of Italian prisoners in there filling in rubble to make a crossing on this river. It wasn't over 20 feet wide, but I couldn't get any of my vehicles across without it being a ford. We'd been under a little bit of fire, so I just told the battalion to take a break and go swimming in the Mediterranean. We had these Italians filling in the rubble on the road so we can cross.

About that time one of my men said, "Hey, there's a jeep coming up behind us with some tanks." I said, "Tanks? We haven't got any tanks attached to us." So I got my field glasses out and looked down the road about a couple hundred yards, and I could see a jeep leading these four tanks. They came up and when the jeep got about a hundred yards away, I could tell it was General Patton. So I had one of my men run back and stop them from getting any closer to us. The guy ran back, stopped the jeep, and the general got out, walked up.

[end of tape 2, side 1]

Anyhow, Patton is standing there and he said, "Who's in charge here?" I said, "I guess I am, sir, I'm the operations officer." And he kind of looked at me being a first lieutenant, expecting a colonel or a major or something, you know. He said – I can almost remember the conversation – I'll paraphrase it. He said, "What are you doing here, son?" I told him, I said, "We came under fire." I said, "We don't want to make any further advance until I can support the battalion, you know, and we don't have any tanks or anything, so I've got these PW Italians filling this ford in, and the battalion is taking a break." So he says, "Well, we're going to cross here. Let the armor through."

This is a famous phrase that you'll run into. This is where it started to my knowledge. Maybe he used it again before, but he used it in my presence. "Let the armor through." And I'm saying to myself, anybody that wants to fight in front of

me is welcome to it. If you think you're the man to do it, be my guest.

I said, "General," I said, "Could I make a suggestion?" I said, "I'd like to talk to your tank commander." Because I knew damn good and well that Patton wasn't going to be riding in one of those tanks that was going to cross this river. I know they're going to get fired on.

So I walked back. I guess by this time maybe the lieutenant had gotten out of his tank. I introduced myself to him. I don't know where he was from. Anyhow we had a little connection some way or another, maybe he was Missouri or ROTC or something. And I said, "Would you mind, instead of crossing right here where a lot of return fire might come in on my outfit, would you mind going upstream here about a couple hundred yards and crossing up there on your own?" He said, "Oh, I can do that."

So he walked back, and I guess on the radio he told these other three tanks what to do, and Patton's standing there. We're just kind of looking at each other, and I'm kind of thinking, you know, General, I haven't forgotten what you told us about those prisoners. I wonder if you want us to start shooting all these Italians right now. I mean, really, I came real close to asking him that question, but I had enough sense not to do it. But believe me, I thought about it.

The more I thought about it, the more teed off I'm getting. Then I looked at Donza, my driver. He was my batman, by the way, the driver, whenever I had a jeep and wasn't on foot. Donza had already gotten us our 2-man foxhole. I said, "Donza, dig one for the general here. So Donza gets down, and we're in sand. From where the water was, we're not over two hundred feet, in sand. So Donza is down there throwing dirt, you know.

By this time the tanks had moved off the road, and the first tank had just gone down the smaller bank on the east side of the creek to go up the sharper bank on the other. Just as the guy got up, and I could see the bow of his tank pointing up, bang! He drew fire. And I don't know if I had already hunched down, closer to my hole, when I saw that tank get ready to cross. Because I pretty well thought that if there's anything over there, it's going to start firing now. And sure enough, they caught it.

And Patton hadn't bailed into his hole, but he sure had one foot headed that way. And he looked at me, and he said, "Lieutenant, go ahead and do what you're doing," and he didn't run back to his jeep, but he went back.

And I thought to myself, this guy's got no business, wearing three stars, being up here talking to a first lieutenant in combat. And so the word went around our outfit, "Let the armor through." That was our famous motto.

So we get up here to Marsala and took this little town, a coastal town. An Italian admiral, admiral of the port, was in charge. We got him out of his house in the morning. As I recall, he still had a nightcap on, like old people used to wear, and a nightgown or housecoat or something. Through an interpreter, one of the guys that could speak Italian, he said he wanted to give himself up in proper dress. We were outside the city hall or naval office, some building. So I said, "Sure, go ahead."

So I sat down on the curb with some men, and the old man, he must have been my age now, in his 80s, 70 maybe. And he didn't come down. I waited a half-hour and thought well, the old man ought to be down by now. And I hadn't sent anybody in the building, because I just had the feeling that nobody was going to give us any trouble in this town. So we just kind of went loosy-goosy.

So I decided, I think I'll just take a look, see what happened to the old man. So I went in the door. It had kind of a little rotunda with two steps that went up and then turned around and went back up to a higher level. The old man had gotten into his uniform, all right. He'd taken a rope and hanged himself there, in style, in uniform. He was a patriot and didn't want to surrender. And I thought what a waste of a fine old gentleman.

Then we went on up the coast to a place called Trapani and there was no fight there. Then we turned around and went, and actually could have walked into Palermo, but that wasn't our job. Our job, the way I figured it out, was to chase Germans and cut them off. But Patton wheeled across [to the north] instead of toward [Messina].

And when we got to Troina, the Germans realized that the 39th is going to cut them off, because the 1st Division was coming up [along the eastern coast] and the 39th is coming across the only road heading east from Troina to Mt. Etna. We were on the only road below the northern coast coming across this area heading east from Troina to Etna.

We had a heck of a fight at Troina. We'd spent 3 or 4 days there. We got attached to the 1st Infantry Division, because we're in there by ourselves. The Germans held us off, because had we been able to get on through, we would have cut off all the Germans down here [coming up the eastern coast]. They're trying to get out of here, so they fought real tough for 4 or 5 days, and this is where I met General Roosevelt, General Teddy Roosevelt, son of Teddy, the former President. He was the Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Division. I got acquainted with him for two days, trying to take that town, and that's a story in itself.

Then we took Troina and Randazzo right on the western slope of Mt. Etna. When the Germans realized we were going to capture this town of Randazzo, they pulled out and evacuated. So we didn't even go into Messina. The British went in there and we went back and bivouacked at Cefalu until they returned us to England in November.

It was in this area where General Patton went to visit a hospital. I had a couple of men that I knew who were hospitalized in the hospital where Patton was. We heard about this slapping incident, probably the day it happened. I talked to one of the men that I knew, who was in there where it happened. So he says. There isn't any doubt that it happened.

And there is such a thing as combat fatigue, believe me. I think I had it, I would say at least once, when I just was dysfunctional. I just went to pieces in combat. This was where we got cut off for four days and four nights that I talked about earlier. I hadn't slept for four days and four nights. I was just out of it and was trying to get a tank to move, pounding on the front end of it at night. A shell hit the tank and knocked me down and I got – never even reported on any records, but I'll tell you, my soul and whatever makes a guy tick just went to pieces.

When I fell down I thought I was badly hit. My ears were ringing. I think that's when I lost some of my hearing. That's why I have to wear hearing aids now.

A shell had hit the front of the tank I was beating on for the guy to open up so I could get him to move to help us on another part of the perimeter. This shell hit and knocked me down.

Mr. Basden: You were at the front of the tank?

Mr. Scheffel: I was at the front of the tank, banging on it with the butt of my '03 rifle. My CP [Command Post] was only forty or fifty feet from where the tank was parked, but I wanted it to move so we could protect my left flank. There was just a certain amount of visibility has. He can't see 360 degrees. He can only see what he's looking through, which is either his own eyes with his head out of the tank or else the view from inside the tank through a very small opening that can be closed. He's restricted.

So this shell hit and when I came to, my head was ringing and I still had my rifle in my hand. I'm lying on the ground and if this tank moves, I'm dead. I was just unable to – and then I looked. I was lying on my back. I looked down and the sleeve of my combat jacket was just missing. We always kept some flares going at night so we could see what was going on. Of course, the Germans couldn't see us because we're holed in. We could see them moving into us.

And I didn't have any part of my sleeve left. I thought, I'm hit somewhere. Where am I hit? I don't feel anything, and I look down – at this time I had my trench shovel hooked because I'd picked one up knowing that this was going to be a place where I might need one, so I picked one up. I looked down there and I moved and my trench shovel had just been severed off of my web belt. You hook them on with little hooks, and it had just been severed off. And then I looked to my right, and I thought, well, I've got to be hit somewhere. You know, where am I bleeding? What am I going to die from? Then I looked at my rifle, and the sling was missing. And I'm saying, I know I'm hit somewhere. Where? And then I started shaking.

And then one of my men, I guess, saw me; only one came up, grabbed me. I think I'm still a first lieutenant then, hadn't been promoted to captain yet. That came a couple days later. And he got me up, and he says, "Lieutenant, I've got to get you out of here." And honestly, I was just shaking. I'd just had it. I said, "Where you taking me?" And he says, "Back," and he started moving me back to where I thought I had a first aid station set up, with a medic, you know.

I guess we'd moved just to the backside of the tank, and all of a sudden I realized that some men were running past me, going to the rear. And I said to myself, Charlie, your job is not to be evacuated. Your job is to keep these men from running. So I kind of shook him off and yelled at the next guy that was running past me, "Stop! We're not leaving!" You know. And I guess I talked myself into something. So I snapped out of it, and the men stopped abandoning their holes. When they saw the old man's going to stick around...that's what makes men.

Mr. Basden: It makes leaders.

Mr. Scheffel: Well, no. That's your job anyhow. You were assigned that before it started. So anyhow, I know what combat fatigue is. And I can understand what – If Patton's three incidences I have observed personally, closest, not the slapping incident, except from one of my men that was there...

Mr Basden: This was in Sicily?

Mr. Scheffel: Yeah. America needs heroes. Every country needs its heroes. Why, I don't know. I guess for the same reason a basketball team needs a captain, or a nation needs a president. You just hope you get somebody that can function. But there are going to be times when they're going to be dysfunctional, if that's the right word.

I found out, after being tutored, you might say, by the British, that an officer's job is

not to kill, but to command other people to kill. And the hardest thing in the world for one man to do, unless he's enraged or insane, is to deliberately kill another person. The simple reason is that it's a 2-way street. If you're capable of killing the other person, the other person is capable of killing you. And you've got to be crazy to want to be killed. Or you've got to be crazy to kill unless it's your job.

If you're a soldier carrying a rifle, or flying a plane, an aviator, or an artilleryman, your job is to pull the trigger or drop the bomb. The toughest thing for an infantry soldier - I'm talking about at the private level, not the sergeant level, where there might be some responsibility, but at the GI or the grunt level as the marines would say - the hardest thing in the world is for one man to point his rifle or pistol at another man and deliberately pull the trigger. The reason why is because they know that if the other guy is looking at you the same way, he just might pull the trigger first. So the tendency is leave well enough alone. If you don't shoot me, I won't shoot you.

That's what I was faced with on hill 772 in southern Tunisia one night that I mentioned earlier. Because I knew pretty well that if I kill this German, the next guy to get killed ain't going to be another German, it's going to be Charlie Scheffel. So the hardest thing to do is to pull that trigger.

In Tunisia, we got some recruits in one time, replacements. I always tried to go around and meet replacements, because I might get it that afternoon or in the next 20 minutes, or the guy that's new might get it. I've seen that happen. I've seen men join me one minute, join the company or platoon, and within an hour, I have to say, "Well, we need another one." So and so just got killed or stepped on a mine or whatever.

So we got some replacements in Tunisia, northern Tunisia, and I was crawling around to meet these guys. We were in one position on a slope, a real foggy morning. You couldn't see 20 or 30 feet ahead of you. I knew across that little valley, maybe a hundred, two hundred feet away, going up the other slope, that's where the Germans were. That I knew from having been there a day or so.

So I was crawling around and found this new replacement. He was a rifleman. We'd gotten rid of our '03 rifles in southern Tunisia, and just gotten the M-1 rifle issued. I assumed this kid had enough training to know how to fire.

So I found him in his foxhole, by himself. Then I realized I hadn't done a very good job. I should have told all the sergeants that when a new man comes in, the first thing you do is tell him to always dig a 2-man foxhole. This kid only had a 1-man foxhole. So then I realized that somebody didn't do a job. It might be me, because I wanted all my men to have 2-man foxholes. Sometimes you couldn't do that because of the terrain. You were digging in soil where you could get one foxhole, but you couldn't dig another one.

But anyhow, this kid was in a 1-man foxhole. I crawled up to him, got down as close as I could so I wouldn't be exposed in case an artillery shell came in, or a mortar, and introduced myself to him. I asked him where he was from and he told me. How old are you; we're just chatting. All the time I'm looking towards the Germans to be sure that the fog didn't lift, because the fog could disappear sometimes as fast as it gets there.

And sure enough, just as I was looking, the fog started clearing. And I told him, the new man, I said, "You want to watch now, because the Germans are just across the way here." And sure enough, the fog lifted and there about – oh, maybe 2 or 3

hundred feet, if it was that far – on the forward slope, were the Germans. They must have thought they were on the reverse slope instead of the forward slope of this hill, because there they are, setting up a machine gun right in our sight. Maybe they thought that we weren't where we were, looking right down on them.

So I looked at the soldier and I can tell that they hadn't gotten it set up yet. It takes a little bit of time to set up even yourself, to decide where you are, and I could tell they were trying to dig in. So I said, "What are you going to do?" And he says, "I don't know." I said, "What should you do?" He said, "I guess I should start shooting." I remember saying, "Well, why aren't you shooting, soldier?" I never will forget what he said. "Sir, if I shoot at them, they'll shoot back." And I said, "Well, are you going to wait until they get set up?"

And I'm still watching the Germans to make sure they haven't gotten behind their weapon, because I was going to unload my '03, and I thought that maybe that there should be some other guys that could see. We were in kind of scrub oak, 10 or 12-foot tall stuff that you could hardly crawl through. Real tough terrain to be fighting in. And I said, "Do you know what's going to happen if you don't start shooting? They're going to knock you off." And I said, "What are you going to do now?" And he said, "I guess I'm going to start shooting, sir."

And he put his gun up to his shoulder, squeezed one off, and I'm looking, and sure enough, one of the three or four Germans there, not over that, went down. I said, "You got him!" He said, "I did! I did! I did! I did!" Then he just unloaded the whole clip, and of course the Germans took off. And of course everybody around that was within sight of what we were seeing, opened fire, too, you know. But that first time to kill a man is a tough one.

And a couple of days later, I was telling this to Stan Downs, who lives at Midland, Texas, one of the better lieutenants that I ever met. We had finished an attack that day and gotten into our position and they told us to hold on this high ground because we'd outrun our supply, communication and everything else. It doesn't do any good to just keep advancing and get lost in nowhere.

So Stan and I are just chatting, and he said, "I understand you had a hard time getting one of your men to fire the other day." And I said, "Yeah, I sure did." I said, "You know, Stan, killing that first man is tough, isn't it?" He said, "Yeah, I know what you're talking about, Charlie."

And as we were looking, there was a road that must have been about a mile away. And a truck came down this road. It ain't ours, I know, because it's coming this way. I got my field glasses out and I can tell it's a German truck. It pulled off the road just short of a bridge. And Stan's looking at it, too, except Stan didn't have field glasses to see what I could see. And at a mile away, you can't tell one guy from another. Maybe not even one truck from another. But I had my field glasses there.

I said, "Stan, they're Germans." I said, "I think they're pulling a weapon." And sure enough, when they turned off, I could see this towed weapon, and I said, "Let's see what in the hell they're going to do." You know, because I knew they couldn't see us. We're up in the woods, I think, pine trees around there, maybe. Some sort of evergreen. I said, "Let's see what they're going to do."

Because I knew they were more interested in defending that road they'd driven off of than some guys up on a hill. So I said, "They're setting up a gun." And he said, "We sure ought to have some artillery up here with us," but we didn't have it, you know. We couldn't even get in touch with our mortars, so we're just sitting there

watching the enemy set up a gun.

I had this '03 with a leaf sight, and to make it shoot at that range, you had to raise the sight up. Then when you sight over the front sight through the rear sight, it puts the rifle at about an 8 or 9-degree angle, which means that the shell's going to arc. It won't be no straight line. I said, "Stan, I've never shot at a man this far away, but let's see if these sights are any good."

So I raised the sight up, took a bead, squeezed one off, and I'd given Stan my binoculars, you know, because I couldn't use them. You know, at a mile away, I hit him. Just by accident. And the Germans quit when this soldier went down. The Germans just left the gun sitting there, and the truck, and took off.

Mr. Basden: They probably never heard the shot.

Mr. Scheffel: Oh, no way. They never heard the crack, because I hit the guy, and I know they didn't hear the bang, not a mile away. If they did, it would have sounded like somebody stepping on a stick.

But war is stupid. Stupid.

Mr. Basden: What did you think then, when you knew you had hit that man?

Mr. Scheffel: Well, I thought this is my job. If I'd had artillery, I'd have called artillery on them. But I didn't. I just thought they might be discouraged from setting that weapon up if they knew that small arms fire was near by. It ain't so near; it's a mile away.

Mr. Basden: Did you ever trade your '03 in for an M-1?

Mr. Scheffel: Ah, no. I always carried an '03, because an M-1, you have to clean it, and it's pretty mechanical, so you can't let it get dirty. An '03, you never have to clean it. Now you're supposed to clean your rifle now and then. I'll be honest with you, I never cleaned that '03 one time, because my job was not to shoot, and I didn't. But Stan, even today, says, "Charlie, you're the crack shot in the military." I said, "No, the German was just unlucky." It's tough.

I thought that war was like the basketball and the football and the baseball and tennis games that I played as a young man. And I played in Madison Square Garden. I played with two All-Americans in basketball, and I played against Kansas University in the National Finals in 1942. I'm not an All-American, but I was good enough to play with some All-Americans, which I'm quite proud of. In fact, one of them captained the Olympic Team in 1948, Cab Rennick. He was the Jim Thorpe of my time. Cab was an exceptional athlete and individual.

I thought up to that time, when I was in ROTC, being my father having fought in the Spanish-American War, uncles that were in World War I, I thought that war was fought like a game. That you had two competing enemies, you had some rules of war, like don't shoot prisoners, that you tried to kill the enemy, not the civilians. That if the war got so vicious that people got hurt, that you could fly a red cross flag, and the war would stop until they evacuated the wounded, which happened to me. So it does happen periodically.

That's the way I thought war was. And I thought that it had competitors, you had spectators, the people at home, the rest of the world. You had a referee and equipment and so forth. Until I got to England and went into London one time. I had seen subways in New York City, playing basketball up there. The other guys that I

went in with from my company there in England in '42 had never seen a subway.

So I took them into London on a weekend, being that I could issue a pass, as the company commander. I took two of the other five guys. So three would be at the company and three in town, and I let the other guys go in the next week. First time I'd been into London, and London is still being bombed in '42. The blitzkrieg, being the Battle of Britain, is pretty much over, but the Germans were coming in there at night and people were still fearful.

So anyhow, I took these guys on the train from near Coventry. We went through Coventry and saw how it was bombed out. We'd already seen Liverpool and Birmingham. When we got off the train in London, one of the guys said, "OK, show us the subway." So I said, "OK. See where it says 'Underground'?"

So we went over there where the Underground sign was, walked down, and that's when I decided that war was not a game. Because all the children in that area were filling up the subway. Children 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 years of age. And I thought, these people got nothing to do with the war, but they're the ones that are the victims. If a bomb falls in this area, they are the victims. And that's when I decided that war was not a game. It's a deadly thing.

And I'll get this pitch in on why we need a United Nations. We've got to have rule by law, an international court to interpret the law, and a peace keeping, a police force, to enforce it. Have a game out of it, and let the rest of the world just be what – spectators. Maybe finance it by their admission, taxes.

Mr. Basden: I certainly want to thank you, Charlie, for taking the time to tell us this.

Mr. Scheffel: It was your time. I wasn't doing anything.

Mr. Basden: Well, we certainly appreciate it.

[end of tape 2, side 2]