

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

PRESENTS

AN ORAL HISTORY BY

ALVA B. SAMPSON

TAPE # 773

THIS IS FOREST REES. I AM IN HUACHUCA CITY, ARIZONA INTERVIEWING MR. ALVA B. SAMPSON, BETTER KNOWN AS ABE. THE PURPOSE OF THIS INTERVIEW IS FOR THE ARCHIVES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR ON BEHALF OF THE TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT. THIS INTERVIEW IS TAKING PLACE ON OCTOBER 26, 2002.

FOREST

OK, IF YOU DON'T MIND I'LL, AS ALWAYS, CALL YOU ABE. COULD YOU TELL US WHERE YOU WERE BORN AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN ABE?

ABE

I WAS BORN IN COLUMBUS, OHIO ON MAY 5, 1926 AND RESIDED IN OHIO UNTIL 25 YEARS AGO AT WHICH TIME I MOVED TO ARIZONA.

FOREST

COULD YOU GIVE US YOUR MOTHER AND DAD'S NAMES?

ABE

MY DAD'S NAME WAS POVALL TAYLOR SAMPSON AND MOTHER'S NAME WAS DAISY BELLE SAMPSON. DAISY BELLE WALKER WAS HER MAIDEN NAME.

FOREST

GOOD, GOOD, AND THAT WAS IN 1926. DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL IN COULUMBUS?

ABE

I WENT TO SCHOOL IN HILLIARD OHIO AND GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL THERE IN 1944 IN MAY, AT WHICH TIME I WAS CLASSIFIED 1-A IN THE DRAFT AND BECAUSE I WAS IN FARMING FOR AN OCCUPATION, I HAD A THREE MONTH DEFERRMENT AND DIDN'T GO INTO THE SERVICE UNTIL SEPTEMBER OF 1944.

FOREST

WHERE DID YOU TAKE YOUR TRAINING?

ABE

BASIC TRAINING WAS AT FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY IN THE ARMORED SCHOOL THERE. SINCE BY MY RECORDS, THEY KNEW I WAS A FARM BOY. I DIDN'T DO MUCH IN FORT KNOX EXCEPT DRIVE 6 X 6 TRUCKS TRANSPORTING AMMUNITION OUT TO THE RANGE OR TO MANOEUVRES OUT IN THE FIELD. THAT WAS BASICALLY MY BASIC TRAINING WAS DRIVING 6 X 6 TRUCKS. I NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO REALLY TRAIN IN TANKS.

FOREST

BUT YOU ENDED UP IN TANKS?

ABE

THAT'S WHAT THEY NEEDED AT THE TIME. (LAUGHTER)

FOREST

HOW LONG DID YOUR SO CALLED BASIC TRAINING LAST?

ABE

IT LASTED FOR 16 WEEKS. AT THAT TIME I WAS AWARDED A 7- DAY DELAY IN ROUTE AT HOME. THEN I REPORTED TO FORT GEORGE MEAD, MARYLAND AND FROM THERE TO CAMP SHANKS, NEW YORK AND FROM THERE, OVERSEAS.

FOREST

HOW DID YOU GET OVER SEAS?

ABE

THAT'S A LONG STORY. WE WENT OVER ON THE *QUEEN MARY*, WHICH WAS DOUBLE LOADED AT THE TIME. THEY HAD TWICE AS MANY TROOPS ON BOARD AS THEY HAD ACCOMIDATIONS FOR, WHICH MEANT EACH SOLDIER HAD A TICKET WHEN HE WENT ON BOARD AND ANOTHER SOLDIER HAD THAT SAME TICKET. YOU SLEPT DOWN IN

THE BUNK ONE NIGHT AND UP ON DECK THE SECOND NIGHT. THAT FIRST NIGHT, IT SO HAPPENED I DREW THE BUNK AND IN A STATEROOM THAT WAS ORIGINALLY BUILT FOR 2 PEOPLE, THERE WERE 6 BUNKS FROM 4 INCHES FROM THE FLOOR CLEAR TO THE CEILING, WHICH YOU HAD TO GET IN WITH ALL YOUR BAGS, BARRACKS BAG, AND ALL OF YOUR BELONGINGS HAD TO BE IN THAT BUNK BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM OTHERWISE FOR IT. LUCKY ME, I DREW THE BOTTOM BUNK. WE GOT ON BOARD ABOUT 3 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING. I WENT DOWN AND GOT IN THE BOTTOM BUNK AND FIVE GUYS CRAWLED IN ABOVE ME. I BELIEVE BEFORE THEY UNTIED THAT SHIP FROM THE DOCK, ALL FIVE OF THEM WERE SEASICK WITH THEIR HEADS HANGING OVER THE SIDE. THE NEXT MORNING, AFTER SPENDING A SLEEPLESS NIGHT, CURLED UP AGAINST THE WALL TRYING TO STAY OF THE LINE OF WHAT WAS COMING OVER THE SIDE, I STAYED ON DECK FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP, WHICH WAS 3 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS.

AT THAT TIME, WE LANDED IN GLASGOW, SCOTLAND, GOT OFF THE BOAT, WENT UP TO THE TOP OF THE HILL AND SPENT THE NIGHT IN A CAMP UP THERE. THE NEXT MORNING, WE BOARDED A TRAIN IN GLASGOW AND WENT TO SOUTHAMPTON, ENGLAND. THERE, WE GOT OFF THE TRAIN; GOT ON A POLISH CATTLE BOAT, I THINK IT WAS. AT THAT TIME, THEY GAVE US LIFE PRESERVERS, WHICH WE DIDN'T HAVE ON THE *QUEEN MARY*. THEY GAVE US LIFE PRESERVERS AND HANDED US HAMMOCKS WHEN WE GOT ON BOARD. YOU FOUND TWO HOOKS TO HANG YOUR HAMMOCK UP AND OVERNIGHT, WE LANDED AT LE HAVRE, FRANCE WHERE THE CHANNEL WAS SO FULL OF SUNKEN SHIPS AND DEBRIS THE BOAT COULDN'T EVEN GET TO THE DOCK. THEY UNLOADED US ABOUT 20 AT A TIME ON LSD's OR LANDING CRAFT TO GET US TO THE DOCK.

I THINK WE SPENT ONE NIGHT THERE AND GOT ON 40 AND 8 BOXCARS. IT IS JUST WHAT THEY MEAN. THEY HOLD 40 MEN OR 8 HORSES. WE GOT ON THAT TRAIN AND WE HAD A SECOND LIEUTENANT RIGHT OUT OF OCS IN CHARGE OF OUR CAR. OF COURSE, EVERYTHING WAS BLACKED OUT. YOU COULDN'T EVEN LIGHT A CIGARETTE. THERE WERE NO LIGHTS AT ALL. OVERNIGHT, WE TRAVELED DOWN THROUGH FRANCE AND

AFTER DARK, THERE WASN'T ANYTHING ELSE TO DO SO I GOT MY SLEEPING BAG AND WENT TO BED. MAYBE AN HOUR LATER, SOMETHING WAS DRAGGING ME ALL OVER THAT CAR. SOME GUY HAD TIED THE BOTTOM OF MY SLEEPING BAG TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS LIEUTENANT'S SLEEPING BAG HE WAS TRYING TO MOVE. WITH NO LIGHTS, WE COULDN'T SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON. WE HAD A TERRIBLE TIME GETTING UNTANGLED WHERE WE COULD BOTH GO TO BED. WE MADE IT. WE GOT THROUGH IT.

FOREST

WERE YOU ASSIGNED TO A UNIT AT THAT TIME?

ABE

NO. WE WERE JUST REPLACEMENTS.

FOREST

DID YOU GO TO A DEPOT TYPE FOR FURTHER ASSIGNMENT?

ABE

WHEN WE GOT OFF THE 40 AND 8 BOXCARS, WE WERE IN LUXEMBURG, WHICH WAS A BIG GAS DUMP. I MEAN THERE WERE GASOLINE CANS STACKED HIGH EVERYWHERE AROUND AND TENTS FOR US TO STAY IN. IT WAS AT THAT TIME WE GOT ISSUED OUR ARMS. WE DIDN'T HAVE AN ARM (RIFLE) UNTIL THEN, JUST OUR CLOTHING AND STUFF. AT THAT TIME, THEY TOOK OUR CLOTHING AWAY FROM US, THE BARRAKS BAG WE HAD DRAGGED CLEAR ACROSS THE COUNTRY. YOU HAD WHAT YOU HAD ON YOUR BACK AND KNAPSACK, WHICH CONTAINED AN EXTRA SHIRT AND A DRY PAIR OF SOCKS AND THAT WAS IT. BUT THEY ISSUED US ALL NEW CARBINES, NEW RIFLES. THEY WERE PACKED IN BAGS. OH IT WASN'T PLASTIC BACK THEN. IT WAS IN A BAG LIKE PLASTIC AND COSMOLINE, WHICH IS A GREASE THAT YOU CAN JUST HARDLY GET OFF AND ISSUED US TWO CLIPS OF AMMUNITION, 20 ROUNDS TO A CLIP AND SAID, "GO BACK AND CLEAN THESE GUNS. YOU MAY BE HERE A FEW DAYS AND YOU MAY BE HERE A WEEK, WE DON'T KNOW. HOW WE ARE GOING TO PROCEED ON FROM THERE."

I TOOK THE RIFLE APART, CLEANED OFF THE OUTSIDE. I HADN'T EVEN GOTTEN A PATCH DOWN THROUGH THE BARREL OF MINE YET. THE OUTSIDE WAS CLEAN AND THE IMPORTANT PARTS WERE IN GOOD SHAPE. THEY CAME DOWN THROUGH THERE AND SAID, "PUT THEM BACK TOGETHER, YOU ARE GOING ON." THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT PUT THEM BACK TOGETHER IN THAT CONDITION. THEY LOADED US ON GASOLINE TRUCKS THAT WERE GOING ON TO THE FRONT. THERE WERE ABOUT SIX PEOPLE ON A GASOLINE TRUCK LOADED WITH FIVE GALLON CANS OF GASOLINE.

WE RODE THAT THING I WOULD JUDGE-----I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR IT IS FROM LUXEMBURG TO GOTHA, GERMANY, BUT THAT'S WHERE THE NEXT STOP WAS. WE GOT OFF THE TRUCKS, WE WERE IN GOTHA, GERMANY.

FOREST

WOULD YOU SPELL THAT?

ABE

G O T H A, GOTHA GERMANY.

FOREST

THANK YOU

ABE

THE TANKS----EVIDENTLY THERE WAS AN AIRPORT OF SOME KIND BECAUSE THEY WERE ALL BACKED INTO HANGER LIKE QUONSET BUILDING. THEY WERE ALL UNDER COVER SO THAT YOU COULDN'T SEE THEM FROM THE AIR. IF I MAY SAY SO, EVERYBODY IN THE OUTFIT WAS DRUNK. (LAUGHTER). I DIDN'T KNOW WHO THE COMPANY COMMANDER WAS FOR TWO WEEKS AFTER I GOT ASSIGNED TO THAT COMPANY BECAUSE NOBODY WORE ANY INSIGNIA. THEY ALL DRESSED ALIKE. SOME OF THEM HAD HARDLY ANY UNIFORM ON. ACTUALLY, I DIDN'T KNOW WHO THE COMPANY COMMANDER WAS AND WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO FIND A TANK, THEY ALL NEEDED CREWMEN.

THERE WERE TWELVE OF US WHO HAD TRAINED TOGETHER AND GONE OVER TOGETHER. WE GOT TO LOOKING AROUND AND FELLOWS FOUND SOME THAT SAID, "WE NEED A MAN. GET IN HERE." IT GOT DOWN TO TWO OF US. THE REASON THEY NEEDED CREWMEN SO BAD, IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING ABOUT A WEEK OR TWO BEFORE WE ARRIVED, PATTON HAD COME THROUGH AND HAD PULLED ONE OR TWO CREWMEN OUT OF EACH TANK TO LIBERATE A PRISON CAMP WHICH, TO MY UNDERSTANDING, HIS SON-IN-LAW WAS IMPRISONED IN. THEY CREATED A TASK FORCE. THEY TOOK ONE OR TWO FELLOWS OUT OF EACH TANK AND THEY GOT THROUGH AND LIBERATED THE CAMP. THE GERMANS LET THEM THROUGH AND THEY WERE LAYING FOR THEM WHEN THEY CAME BACK AND NOT A ONE OF THEM EVER GOT BACK TO THE COMPANY. THAT'S THE REASON THEY WERE RUNNING THOSE TANKS WITH TWO MAN CREWS. THAT'S THE REASON A TRUCK DRIVER LIKE ME GOT ASSIGNED TO A TANK. THAT'S WHAT THEY NEEDED, WERE TANK CREWMEN. I THINK I LEARNED MORE IN TWO DAYS ACTUALLY BEING THERE THAN MOST OF THEM LEARNED IN 16 WEEKS OF BASIC TRAINING IN THE TANKS. YOU HAD TO LEARN THEN. THAT'S HOW I ENDED UP IN COMPANY D, 37TH TANK BATALLION, 4TH ARMORED DIVISION.

FOREST

I WAS JUST GOING TO ASK YOU WHAT UNIT YOU WERE ASSIGNED TO.

ABE

37TH TANK BATALLION. THAT'S THE ONE THAT COL CREIGHTON ABRAMS WAS THE BATALLION COMMANDER OF.

FOREST

WAS THAT IN THE 3RD ARMY UNDER PATTON?

ABE

THE 3RD ARMY UNDER PATTON, YES. THEY ALWAYS SAID THAT ABRAMS WAS ALWAYS PATTON'S PET BOY. HE HAD A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART FOR CREIGHTON

ABRAMS. WE STAYED THERE ABOUT TWO DAYS, I THINK. I KNOW THE FIRST DAY WE WERE THERE, I WAS SITTING OUT ON THE TANK WRITING A LETTER HOME. WE WERE NOT CARRYING GUNS OR ANYTHING. I THOUGHT, HECK, WE ARE A LONG WAY FROM THE FRONT. I WAS SITTING ON TOP OF THE TANK WRITING A LETTER HOME AND I HEARD MACHINE GUN FIRE. I LOOKED UP AND THERE WERE 4 AIRPLANES UP IN THE AIR, ON GERMAN AND 3 AMERICANS. TWO OF THE AMERICANS WERE P-47's THAT WERE JUST FLYING AROUND. THE THIRD ONE OF THEM WAS RIGHT ON THIS GERMAN'S TAIL. YOU COULD SEE THE SMOKE, THEY WERE HIGH ENOUGH YOU COULD SEE THE SMOKE BEFORE YOU ACTUALLY HEARD THE FIRE. HE WOULD GET IN SHORT BURSTS, WHICH WERE NOT DOING MUCH DAMAGE. FINALLY, AS I WAS WATCHING, HE GOT IN A LONG BURST AND I SAW SOMETHING. I THOUGHT IT WAS THE PILOT BAILED OUT OF THE GERMAN PLANE BUT I DON'T THINK IT WAS. IF IT WAS, A PARACHUTE NEVER OPENED. THAT PIECE OF THAT PLANE CAME DOWN AND HONESTLY, I THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO FALL RIGHT IN THE TANK I WAS IN BUT IT HIT ABOUT 3 OR 4 HUNDRED YARDS AWAY. THERE WAS NOTHING BUT A CLOUD OF BLACK SMOKE CAME IN JUST AT THE EXPLOSION. WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARD AWAY, SEVERAL OF US WALKED OVER THERE . THERE WAS NOT A PIECE LEFT THAT YOU COULDN'T PICK UP AND CARRY OF THAT PLANE AND NOTHING BUT A CRATER IN THE GROUND WHERE THAT THING HAD CRASHED AND BURNED.

FOREST

SO THAT WAS YOUR INITITATION AND FIRST EXPERIENCE?

ABE

YES IT WAS. NOW BACK TO MY STORY. THERE WERE TWO OF US LEFT THAT HADN'T BEEN ASSIGNED TO A TANK YET. ONE BOY WAS FROM NEW JERSEY. I CAN'T EVEN TELL YOU HIS NAME NOW. I MAYBE KNEW IT AT THE TIME, BUT THAT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME AGO. I WENT AROUND AND FOUND A TANK WHERE THERE WERE TWO FELLOWS FROM OHIO IN THE TANK. ONE OF THEM WAS THE TANK DRIVER, EUGENE CASE FROM HAMILTON, OHIO AND THE OTHER WAS GLENN KALK FROM SANDUSKY, OHIO. HE

WAS THE GUNNER. I TALKED TO THOSE BOYS AND SAID, "IF YOU DON'T CARE, I'LL GO IN THIS TANK BECAUSE THERE ARE A COUPLE OF OHIO BOYS IN IT." THAT WAS FINE WITH THEM AND THERE WAS A PLATOON SERGEANT THAT NEED A CREWMAN TOO, THE OTHER BOY WENT WITH THE PLATOON SERGEANT. ABOUT AFTER TWO DAYS THERE, WE MOVED OUT ONE MORNING AND IT DIDN'T SEEM ANY DISTANCE AT ALL FROM THE TOWN AND HERE WAS THE INFANTRY DUG IN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD AND A DEAD GERMAN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD THAT HAD BEEN KILLED THE NIGHT BEFORE. THAT'S WHEN I REALLY WOKE UP AND FOUND OUT, "HEY, THIS IS IT." IT HAD ONLY BEEN A WEEK OR TEN DAYS SINCE I HAD BEEN IN THE STATES BUT NOW I AM HERE.

WE STARTED EARLY IN THE MORNING AND WE WENT ALL DAY LONG. WE HAD A LITTLE BIT OF SMALL ARMS FIRE BUT NOTHING TO STOP US. WE JUST KEPT GOING AS LONG AS WE COULD UNTIL ABOUT 4 OR 5 O'CLOCK THAT EVENING. WE WERE COMING IN TO A LITTLE SETTLEMENT AND THERE WAS A LITTLE STREAM WITH A BRIDGE ACROSS IT. WE WERE, I BELIEVE, THE SECOND TANK IN LINE. D COMPANY WAS LIGHT TANKS AND A, B, & C COMPANYS WERE MEDIUM TANKS. D COMPANY ALWAYS SPEARHEADED THE UNIT. WHEN THE GOING GOT TOUGH, WE WOULD BACK OFF AND LET THE HEAVY STUFF GO IN. ANYHOW, WE WERE GOING UP THE ROAD AND NOTHING SERIOUS HAPPENED. I HAD A CARTON OF DAYS WORK PLUG TOBACCO WITH ME. I JUST CUT ME A NEW PLUG OF TOBACCO AND TOOK A CHEW; JUST GOT IT WORKED UP PRETTY GOOD AND THE FIRST TANK WENT ACROSS THAT BRIDGE AND WHEN WE GOT UP CLOSE TO IT, THE BRIDGE DISAPPEARED. IT BLEW UP. I CAN'T TELL YOU TILL THIS DAY WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THAT CHEW OF TOBACCO. I DON'T REMEMBER SPITTING IT OUT BUT IT DISAPPEARED. WE JUST FANNED OUT AND FOUND A PLACE WE COULD CROSS THAT STREAM AND GOT ON ACROSS.

I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE GUY THAT WENT IN WITH THE PLATOON SERGEANT. HE LIVED ONE DAY. FIRST DAY OUT, A SNIPER GOT HIM. HE HAD HIS HEAD STICKING OUT OF THE TOP OF THE TANK AND HE WAS HIT RIGHT UNDER THE CHIN. JUST THAT QUICK, HE LIVED JUST THAT ONE DAY. WHEN WE WENT OVERSEAS THEY PUT

CHALK MARKS ON OUR HELMETS AND HE STILL HAD THE CHALK MARK ON HIS HELMET. HE LIVED ONE DAY. THANK GOD HE WENT WITH THAT TANK AND I WENT WITH THE OTHER ONE. IT WAS JUST FORTUNATE. THAT TOOK CARE OF THE FIRST DAY. FROM THEN ON, IT WAS NOT LIKE THAT EXCEPT FOR A FEW INCIDENTS.

GERMANY AT THAT TIME, I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT IS STILL THAT WAY OR NOT, BUT THEY DIDN'T FARM LIKE WE DO HERE. THEY DIDN'T HAVE A FARM HOUSE EVERY MILE OR HALF-MILE. THEY HAD 10 OR 12 OF THEM TOGETHER IN ONE AREA AND THEY USUALLY HAD A WALL AROUND THEM AND THE CHURCH AND THEY ALL HAD NAMES. DURING THE LATTER PART OF THE WAR, WHEN YOU WOULD GO THROUGH ONE OF THOSE LITTLE TOWNS THERE WOULD BE A BEDSHEET OR A WHITE RAG HANGING OUT OF EVERY WINDOW IN TOWN. WELL, THAT'S FINE, THEY DIDN'T GET A WINDOW BROKEN. IF YOU GOT ONE SHOT, FROM THAT TOWN, WHETHER IT WAS A RIFLE SHOT OR ANYTHING, ANY RESISTANCE AT ALL, THEN THEY SUFFERED. THE FIRST THING TO GO WOULD BE THE CHURCH STEEPLE BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE THE SNIPERS USUALLY HOLED UP. YOU GET ONE SHOT AND THAT CHURCH STEEPLE YOU COUD BET IT WAS GOING TO DISAPPEAR RIGHT THERE AND THEN. WHEN WE LEFT, EVERY BUILDING WOULD BE ON FIRE.

FOREST

I AM ASSUMING THEN THAT THE ADVANCE HAD ALREADY GONE INTO GERMANY.

ABE

OH YEAH. GOTHA WAS IN GERMANY WHEN I JOINED THE COMPANY.

FOREST

THEN YOU HAD ALREADY CROSSED THE RHINE AND WERE IN GERMANY PROPER?

ABE

WE CROSSED THE RHINE ON A RAILROAD BRIDGE 50 FEET ABOVE THE WATER, ON A NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD. THE TANK TRACKS WOULD FIT JUST ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE RAILS. THEY WERE TRYING TO BLOW THAT BRIDGE AS WE WERE CROSSING IT ONE

TANK AT A TIME. WHEN ONE WOULD GET TO THE OTHER SIDE, THEN THE SECOND ONE WOULD START. SHELLS WERE FALLING IN THE WATER. YOU COULD LOOK DOWN BETWEEN THE TIES AND SEE SHELLS HITTING THE WATER. WE MADE IT ACROSS ALLRIGHT WITHOUT ANY SERIOUS LOSS THERE. I KNOW MY COMPANY DID. WE WERE THE LEADER OF THE COLUMN. AS FAR AS THE MEDIUMS, I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY GOT ACROSS OR NOT BEFORE THE GERMANS DESTROYED THAT BRIDGE.

FOREST

I REMEMBER READING PATTON LED THE FORCES INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA. DO YOU WANT TO TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

ABE

IN GERMANY, DON'T LET ANYBODY EVER TELL YOU THERE WASN'T A HOLOCAUST. WE LIBERATED A COUPLE OF THOSE CONCENTRATION CAMPS WHICH WERE FENCED WITH TEN FOOT HIGH CHAIN LINK FENCES. THERE WOULD BE SKELETONS OF PEOPLE HANGING ON THOSE FENCES JUST IN RAGS AND PRISON GARB. THEY WERE BEING HUMAN SKELETONS. THEIR EYES WOULD BE SUNKEN IN. THEY MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN DEAD. THOSE BODIES WERE STACKED UP LIKE CORDWOOD IN ONE OR TWO OF THEM JUST AS HIGH AS THEY COULD THROW THEM. THERE WOULD JUST BE STACKS AND ROWS OF THEM. I KNOW THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF ATROCITIES WENT ON THERE.

IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WHEN WE GOT THROUGH GERMANY, WE WENT IN AND THE LAST TOWN WE WENT THROUGH IN GERMANY HAD WHITE CLOTHES HANGING OUT OF EVERY WINDOW. IT WAS JUST LIKE DRAWING A LINE ON A BLACKBOARD. WHEN YOU GOT INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, PEOPLE WERE OUT IN THE STREET JUST CHEERING, HANDING YOU PASTRIES AND YOU KNEW YOU HAD CROSSED THE LINE. WE WENT IN THERE, I SUPPOSE, 2 OR 3 MILES AND SET UP OUTSIDE A LITTLE FARMING COMMUNITY THERE. WE WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO STAY IN THE BASEMENT OF THIS FARMHOUSE. OUR TANK WAS PARKED ACROSS THE ROAD. WE HAD TO KEEP SOMEBODY ON THE TANK 24

HOURS A DAY TO ANSWER THE RADIO AND SO FORTH. THE END OF THE WAR ACTUALLY CAME THERE.

I GOT TO TELL YOU, THE END OF THE WAR WAS ON THE 7TH OF MAY. THE 5TH OF MAY WAS MY NINETEENTH BIRTHDAY. WE HAD PICKED UP AN INFANTRYMAN WHO HAD LOST HIS OUTFIT. HE WAS RIDING ON THE BACK OF OUR TANK. WE GOT IN THE HOUSE THAT NIGHT. THEY HAD A COOKSTOVE IN THERE AND I FOUND AN OLD WASHPAN, FILLED IT WITH WATER, PUT IT ON THE STOVE. THE OTHER GUYS SAID, "WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU GOING TO DO?" I SAID, "THIS IS MY BIRTHDAY AND I'M GOING TO TAKE A BATH." I HADN'T HAD MY CLOTHES OFF SINCE THE 17TH OF MARCH AND THAT WAS THE 5TH OF MAY. I SAID, "I'M GOING TO TAKE A BATH." THEY COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I SAID, "I COULD USE A HAIRCUT TOO" BECAUSE I WAS GETTING PRETTY SHAGGY. SAMUELEN, THIS INFANTRYMAN SAID, "I USED TO BE A BARBER, I'LL GIVE YOU A HAIRCUT." HE LOOKED AROUND AND FOUND A PAIR OF OLD HOUSEHOLD SCISSORS, THREW A TABLECLOTH OR SOMETHING AROUND MY NECK. HE GAVE ME A HAIRCUT THAT YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE. (LAUGHTER). IF HE WAS BARBER, I WAS A HEART SURGEON. IT SURE FELT GOOD.

FOREST

I WOULD IMAGINE AFTER GOING ALL THAT TIME.

ABE

WE MET THE RUSSIANS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THEY WERE ON ONE SIDE OF TOWN AND WE WERE ON THE OTHER. THE GERMANS HAD FLED THROUGH THERE A DAY OR TWO BEFORE WE GOT THERE. NOW THEY WERE ALL FLEEING BACK THE OTHER WAY BECAUSE THEY WERE DEATHLY AFRAID OF THE RUSSIANS. THEY GATHERED IN A FIELD OUTSIDE OF TOWN ALONG A LITTLE STREAM. THERE WERE 20,000 OF THEM THEY ESTIMATED. THEY CAME IN THERE AND SURRENDERED. THEY WERE STILL ARMED. THEY HADN'T BEEN DISARMED OR ANYTHING BUT THEY WERE WHIPPED. THEY KNEW IT WAS OVER THEY SURE DIDN'T WANT TO BE RUSSIAN PRISONERS. THAT NIGHT, THEY SENT

THREE TANKS DOWN THERE, 12 FELLOWS TO GUARD 20,000 ARMED GERMAN PRISONERS. THERE WAS NO WAY TO DO IT. THEY WERE WALKING THEIR OWN POST AROUND THEIR CAMP, AFRAID THE RUSSIANS WERE GOING TO COME IN AND MASSACRE THE WHOLE BUNCH. WE PULLED UP IN THE CENTER OF THE WHOLE GROUP THERE. WE HAD AN OLD FELLOW IN ONE OF THE TANKS WHO HAD BEEN KNOWN TO DRINK A BIT. HE HAD A HARMONICA IN HIS POCKET. HE PULLED IT OUT AND STARTED PLAYING "LILI MARLENE". THAT WAS KIND OF THE GERMANS NATIONAL ANTHEM. THEY GATHERED AROUND SINGING. HE SAT AROUND THERE FOR HOURS PLAYING THAT SAME SONG OVER AND OVER AGAIN. WE GOT TO TRADING RATIONS FOR SOMETHING TO DRINK. THEY HAD SOMETHING TO DRINK BUT THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO EAT. WE ALL GOT PRETTY WELL SNOCKERED BEFORE THE EVENING WAS OVER. WE GOT ALONG. ABOUT 11 O'CLOCK, I CRAWLED DOWN IN THE TANK AND WENT TO SLEEP OR PASSED OUT OR SOMETHING. ABOUT 6 O'CLOCK THE NEXT MORNING, I FELT SOMEBODY SHAKING ME AND I WOKE UP AND HERE WAS A GERMAN SOLDIER SITTING IN THE DRIVERS SEAT OF THE TANK. HE HAD CRAWLED IN THERE FOR SAFEKEEPING AND SLEPT THERE ALL NIGHT.

I DIDN'T TELL YOU BEFORE BUT WHEN WE WENT BACK THE NEXT MORNING, I THINK I WAS HUNG OVER A LITTLE BIT AND ONE OF THE TANKS HIT AN OXEN ON THE ROAD AND KILLED IT. THE PEOPLE SWARMED THAT THING, JUST LIKE A BUNCH OF VULTURES, BROUGHT KNIVES AND IN 20 MINUTES TIME, THEY HAD THAT THING SKINNED, CUT UP IN PIECES, THE MEAT DIVIDED UP. THERE WASN'T A BIT OF IT THAT WENT TO WASTE. THEY WERE HUNGRY. I MEAN, THOSE PEOPLE WERE HUNGRY.

THE CZECHS SEEMED VERY NICE. THE LADY THAT LIVED UPSTAIRS AND WE WERE IN THEIR BASEMENT, SHE WOULD BRING US DOWN FRESH BAKED PASTRIES VERY MORNING FOR BREAKFAST. THEY INSISTED BEFORE WE LEFT TO HAVE SUNDAY DINNER WITH THEM. THEY HAD A LITTLE COURTYARD THERE THAT HAD SOME GOATS OUT THERE. THEY HAD TWO LITTLE GOATS. BEING A FARM BOY, I PLAYED WITH THOSE LITTLE GOATS WHEN I HAD TIME. I GOT PRETTY WELL ATTACHED TO THEM. WE

AGREEED TO HAVE SUNDAY DINNER WITH THEM. THE PRIEST CAME ON SATURDAY AND THEY WENT OUT THERE. I DIDN'T SEE WHAT THEY WERE DOING BUT WHEN SUNDAY DINNER CAME, HERE ARE THOSE 4 LEGS STICKING UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TABLE AND THERE WAS ONLY ONE GOAT OUT THERE. I COULDN'T EAT A BITE. I KNOW IT WAS GOOD AND THE BEST THEY HAD TO OFFER. THEY WERE TRYING TO BE NICE TO US BUT I COULDN'T EAT THAT GOAT. I HAD BEEN PLAYING WITH HIM FOR 3 OR 4 DAYS.

WE FINALLY DID GET ALL THOSE GERMANS DISARMED AND PILED THEIR WEAPONS UP. THERE WERE SOME OFFICERS FROM SOME OTHER OUTFIT. THEY WEREN'T FROM OURS. THEY WERE FROM G-2 OR SOME OTHER THING. THEY HAD COME TO INTERROGATE THE HIGH RANKING OFFICERS AND THEY MADE A DEAL WITH THEM THAT WHEN THE BREAKUP CAME THAT THEY COULD GO TO BE AMERICAN PRISONERS AND THE REST OF THEM WOULD HAVE TO BE RUSSIAN PRISONERS. THEY TOOK THOSE GUYS FOR EVERYTHING OF VALUE THAT THEY HAD. WHEN THE BREAKUP CAME, EVERYBODY WAS TURNED OVER TO THE RUSSSIANS, THE WHOLE 20,000. THERE WERE NO EXCEPTIONS, THEY ALL WENT TO RUSSIA. I THINK WE DIDN'T MAKE A GOOD NAME FOR OURSELVES RIGHT THERE. GOD KNOWS HOW MANY BRAINS WE LOST IN THAT TRANSACTION. THERE WERE SOME HIGH RANKING GERMAN OFFICERS THERE AND STAFF CARS AND SO FORTH.

OUTSIDE OF THAT, WELL, THAT WAS THE END OF THE WAR AS FAR AS THAT GOES. I SPENT ANOTHER 16 MONTHS IN THE CONSTABULARY, THEY CALLED IT. THEY EVEN CHANGED THE NAME OF IT TO CONSTABULARY WITH THE MILITARY POLICE. THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION, THEY CALLED IT. SOME OF THOSE FELLOWS HAD BEEN IN SINCE NORTH AFRICA, SOME OF THEM IN THE OUTFIT. AS FAST AS THEY COUD GET THEM ON A SHIP, THEY SENT THEM HOME. THAT LEFT US WITH NO RANK SO WE ALL STARTED GETTING PROMOTIONS. I WENT IN AS A KNOW NOTHING AND CAME OUT AS A KNOW NOTHING AS FAR AS THAT GOES BUT ENDED UP AS A PLATOON SERGEANT. IN OUR COMPANY, THE FIRST SERGEANT WAS A FELLOW I TRAINED WITH, THE PLATOON SERGEANTS, THE SUPPLY SERGEANT. ALL THE RANK WERE THE ONES WHO HAD BEEN

OVER THERE AND GOT THEIR TRAINING OVER THERE. I KNOW, LAST MONTH I WAS THERE, I WAS SENT DOWN TO LORCH, IN GERMANY, ON THE RHINE RIVER, WHICH WAS THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND AMERICAN OCCUPATION ZONES. THERE WAS A BIG RAILROAD STATION IN TOWN AND WHAT WE WERE TO DO WAS STOP EVERY TRAIN THAT CAME THROUGH AND EXAMINE PAPERS AND LOOK FOR CONTRABAND AND SO FORTH. THE COMPANY COMMANDER, I AND A LIEUTENANT WENT DOWN ABOUT A WEEK EARLY AND EVACUATED A HOTEL THERE. IT WAS ONE OF THE NICEST HOTELS IN TOWN ABOUT A BLOCK FROM THE TRAIN STATION. WE MOVED A LARGE POLICE DEPARTMENT, A TOWN OF ABOUT 30,000 PEOPLE I SUPPOSE. WE MOVED THE POLICE DEPARTMENT INTO THE BASEMENT OF THE HOTEL AND KICKED OUT ALL THE GUESTS BUT WE KEPT THE HELP, THE KITCHEN HELP, THE MAIDS AND EVERYTHING.

FOREST

HOW DO YOU SPELL THAT TOWN NAME?

ABE

LORCH ? L O R C H. RIGHT ON THE RHINE RIVER. NOW IT IS A VINEYARD COUNTRY. THERE ARE VINEYARDS THERE. MY WIFE WAS THERE A FEW YEARS AGO. SHE WENT OVER THERE FOR A VISIT AND SHE WENT TO THAT TOWN AND IT IS ALL VINEYARDS. AT THAT TIME, IT WAS ALL POTATO FIELDS, KARTUFEL FIELDS THEY CALLED THEM. THEY HAD TO RAISE THEM FOR FOOD.

I TOOK 39 MEN DOWN THERE. WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY OFFICERS DOWN THERE. THEY SENT OUR SUPPLIES DOWN ONCE A WEEK WITH A TRUCK. WE PUT ALL THE EDIBLES IN THE FREEZER IN THE HOTEL. WE ATE OFF WHITE TABLECLOTHS AND HAD SILVERWARE. WE HAD MUSIC EVERY NIGHT FOR DINNER. IF YOU WANTED YOUR CLOTHES CLEANED, YOU LEFT THEM LAY OUT AND THE NEXT MORNING THEY CAME BACK PRESSED, YOUR BOOTS SHINED. WE WERE LIVING THE LIFE OF LUXURY. THAT LASTED ABOUT 2 MONTHS. EVERY WEEK, THEY KEPT ROTATING THESE PEOPLE AND GETTING NEW RECRUITS AND SOMEBODY GETTING READY TO GO HOME. THEY WOULD GO BACK

ON THE SUPPLY TRUCK AND GO BACK TO THE COMPANY AND SHIP OUT, THEN BRING A NEW ONE IN FOR YOU. THEY HAD IT MADE. THEY DIDN'T WORK 6 HOURS A WEEK. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS SEND A REPORT IN EVERY DAY THAT EVERYTHING WAS ALL RIGHT, WHICH IT WAS, I GUESS. WE USED THE GERMAN POLICE TO DO MOST OF THE WORK, ACCOMPANIED BY A COUPLE OF SOLDIERS.

FOREST

WHAT PART OF GERMANY WAS THIS?

ABE

IT WAS RIGHT ON THE RHINE RIVER. I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WITHOUT LOOKING AT A MAP.

FOREST

WAS IT A BORDER TOWN?

ABE

NO, IT WASN'T A BORDER TOWN. IT WAS THE BORDERLINE BETWEEN THE ENGLISH ZONE AND THE AMERICAN ZONE OF THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION, WHERE THEY DIVIDED THEM UP. IT WASN'T A BORDER TOWN, NO.

IN TOWN THERE WAS A BOAT OUT THERE SITTING RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RHINE RIVER. IT HAD A BIG ARM DOWN OVER THE SIDE. WE KEPT WATCHING OUT THE WINDOW THERE AT THE HOTEL. ABOUT TWICE A DAY, THEY WOULD RAISE THAT ARM UP. TOMMY GREENWELL, ONE OF MY SECTION LEADERS AND I SHARED A ROOM TOGETHER; ONE DAY WE SAID, "LETS GO OUT THERE AND SEE WHAT THAT GUY IS DOING." WE GOT US A ROWBOAT AND ROWED OUT TO IT. IT WAS ABOUT TIME FOR HIM TO RAISE THAT BIG ARM. THERE WAS A BIG FISHING NET COMING OUT WITH A LITTLE BAG ON THE END OF IT. THEY DIDN'T BRING IN THE WHOLE NET, THEY JUST TOOK IN THE BAG ON THE END OF IT. THEY WERE CATCHING EEL IN THERE, ELECTRIC EEL. THEY BROUGHT IT UP AND THEY HAD ONE LITTLE OLD FISH IN THERE BUT A DOZEN OR SO OF THE EELS. THEY WOULD NAIL THEM ON THE WALL. THEY HAD A SMOKER, THERE ON THE

BOAT, AND THEY SMOKED THEM. THEY GAVE US A BUNCH OF SMOKED EEL TO TAKE BACK.

A DAY OR TWO LATER, THE BURGEMEISTER CAME DOWN. THEY HAD TO GET OUR PERMISSION TO DO ANYTHING. THE BURGEMEISTER IS THE EQUIVELANT TO THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN. HE CAME DOWN AND WANTED US TO GO UP AND HUNT WILD BOAR IN THOSE POTATO FIELDS. THEY WERE COMING IN THERE AT NIGHT, RUINING THE POTOTAO CROP, ROOTING THEM ALL UP. I SAID, "YEAH, IF I CAN GET SOME GUYS TO GO UP AND HUNT. WE TOOK A JEEP, ABOUT 4 OR 5 OF US. WE WERE ARMED WITH EVERYTHING FROM M-1 RIFLES TO SUB-MACHINE GUNS. WE SAID WE HAD TO HAVE A GUIDE TO SHOW US WHERE TO GO. HE AGREED TO GIVE US A GUIDE BUT HE WOULDN'T DO IT UNLESS WE GAVE HIM A GUN. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WE WERE GETTING INTO. WE GAVE HIM AN OLD M-1 RIFLE AND HE AGREED TO TAKE US OUT THERE TO SHOW US WHERE TO LOOK. WE WENT OUT ONE EVENING. MY GOSH, THAT BRUSH WAS SO THICK YOU COULDN'T WALK THROUGH IT AND IT WAS AS HIGH AS YOUR HEAD. HE SAID, "THIS IS WHERE THE HOGS ARE." I SAID, "THIS IS WHERE THE HOGS ARE GOING TO STAY TOO." WE WENT BACK. WE NEVER GOT A DARNED HOG, BUT WE TRIED. WE COULD NEVER SEE WHAT WE WERE UP AGAINST THERE.

THE OLD MAN TOLD ME----I WAS A BUCK SERGEANT AND DOING THE JOB OF A TECH SGT. IT CALLED FOR TWO MORE STRIPES. BEFORE HE SENT ME DOWN THERE, HE TOLD ME WHAT HE WANTED ME TO DO. HE SAID, "IF YOU WILL REENLIST AND GO DOWN THERE WITH YOUR PLATOON, WE'LL LET YOU GO HOME FOR 30 DAYS AND I'LL GIVE YOU A STRIPE FOR EVERY MONTH." I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS GETTING INTO. I THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR ABOUT 15 SECONDS AND SAID, "CAPTAIN, I WOULDN'T CARE IF YOU MADE ME A ONE STAR GENERAL, IF I EVER GET BACK HOME, I'M NEVER COMING BACK." SO, I DIDN'T GET ANY MORE STRIPES. BUT I DID DO THE JOB FOR HIM FOR A COUPLE MORE MONTHS.

OTHER THAN THAT, THAT'S ABOUT THE END OF MY EXPERIENCES.

FOREST

DID YOU COME BACK ON THE *QUEEN MARY*?

ABE

OH! HEAVENS NO. I CAME BACK ON THE *USS PRINCTON VICTORY* OUT OF VERSAILLES. WE LEFT VERSAILLES AND IT WAS 28 DAYS COMING BACK; THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS GOING OVER AND 28 DAYS COMING BACK.

FOREST

I KIND OF THOUGHT THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A DIFFERENCE.

ABE

YES, THERE SURE WAS; THE ACCOMMODATIONS AND EVERYTHING ELSE. THEY WEREN'T OVERLOADED OR ANYTHING BUT IT CERTAINLY WASN'T ANY LUXURY. IT GOT PRETTY ROUGH A DAY OR TWO. I NEVER DID GET SEASICK BUT A LOT OF THEM DID. THEY MADE YOU CARRY YOUR STEEL HELMET WITH YOU ALL THE TIME AND THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO UPCHUCK IN AND THEN GET RID OF IT OVERBOARD. IT WOULD MAKE YOU SICKEST WHEN THESE GUYS WOULD UPCHUCK IN THEIR HELMET AND THEN THROW IT OUT AND THE WIND WOULD BRING IT BACK ALL OVER. YOU DIDN'T DARE WATCH THEM TOO LONG. LUCKY ME, I NEVER GOT SEASICK.

FOREST

HOW LONG AFTER YOU GOT BACK TO THE STATES, HOW LONG BEFORE YOU WERE SEPARATED?

ABE

WITHIN A WEEKS TIME, I WAS ON MY WAY HOME AND OUT. I SWORE I WOULD NEVER REENLIST ONCE I GOT OUT I WAS DONE. WELL, WE HAD A CAPTAIN WHO GAVE US AN ORIENTATION BEFOE WE LEFT, TOLD US HOW GOOD WE HAD HAD IT AND

EVERYTHING. DARNED IF I DIDN'T SIGN UP FOR A 3 YEAR HITCH IN THE RESERVES, THE INACTIVE RESERVES. BEFORE MY 3 YEARS WERE UP, THE KOREAN WAR CAME ALONG AND OHHHH, I SAID, "I'M GONNA GET CALLED BACK UP." I USED TO GO TO THE MAILBOX EVERY DAY. WHEN MY DISCHARGE FINALLY CAME THROUGH, I GOT DOWN ON MY KNEES AND KISSED THAT THING. NOW I'M DONE WITH THE MILITARY.

FOREST

DID YOU GO BACK TO FARMING ?

ABE

YEAH. I GOT MARRIED THAT YEAR AND STARTED RAISING THINGS. IF THE WIFE DOESN'T KILL ME BEFORE DECEMBER (2002) WE WILL HAVE BEEN MARRIED 55 YEARS. WE GOT MARRIED IN 1947.

FOREST

IN GENERAL, WERE YOU HAPPY WITH YOU OFFICERS? DID YOU FEEL THEY WERE GOOD?

ABE

FOR THE MOST PART, YES. DURING THE SHORT TIME OF COMBAT, WE HAD A 23 YEAR OLD CAPTAIN, CAPTAIN DONAHUE, AND HE WAS A PRINCE OF A FELLOW, BUT YOU KNEW HE WAS THE CAPTAIN. IF SOMEONE WOULD DO SOMETHING, HE WOULDN'T COURT MARTIAL YOU, HE WOULD TAKE YOU OUT BEHIND THE TENT AND GIVE YOU A WORKING OVER AND ASK YOU AGAIN. EVERYBODY THOUGHT THE WORLD OF HIM. RIGHT AFTER THE WAR, THEY CAME OUT AND SAID WE HAD TO DO CALESTHENTICS, TRAINING AND THAT KIND OF STUFF. HE SAID, "NO, I WON'T DO IT." THEY SHIPPED HIM OUT AND SENT A FELLOW IN THAT WAS COMMISSIONED A CORPORAL IN THE REGULAR ARMY BUT HE WAS TEMPORARY CAPTAIN AND HE WAS BUCKING TO STAY LIKE A

PERMENANT IN THE REGULAR ARMY. HE WAS A LITTLE BIT CHICKEN. I GOT ALONG WITH HIM. I USED TO DRIVE A JEEP FOR HIM ALL THE TIME.

FOREST

FOR THE MOST PART, YOU LIKED YOUR OFFICERS.

ABE

YEAH, YEAH, VERY MUCH SO. PATTON WAS ROUGH. I'VE SEEN PATTON SEVERAL TIMES IN THE FIELD. I HAD NO PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH HIM OR ANYTHING, BUT HE WAS A PICTURE OF A MILITARY MAN. HE ALWAYS WORE HIS CALVERY BOOTS AND JOHDPURS, TWO PEARL HANDLED SIX GUNS AND HE HAD THE SHINIEST HELMET YOU EVER SAW. HE HAD HIS STARS ON HIS HELMET. DOWN AT THE COMPANY LEVEL, THEY DIDN'T WEAR ANY INSIGNIA. THEY MADE TOO GOOD A TARGET TO FLASH THOSE THINGS AROUND. I WAS WELL PLEASED WITH THE TREATMENT I GOT. THE WAY I FELT ABOUT IT, I WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED IT FOR ANYTHING THE WAY IT TURNED OUT, BUT I WOULDN'T DO IT AGAIN FOR NOTHING. THAT'S JUST THE WAY I FEEL

FOREST

I THINK THAT'S PRETTY COMMON. YOU LOOK BACK AND SAY IT WAS GREAT WHILE IT LASTED BUT I DON'T WANT ANY MORE.

ABE

WELL, I WISHED MANY A TIME I WAS SOMEWHERE ELSE. OVERALL, I WAS TREATED WELL.

FOREST

ANY OTHER STORIES Y9OU WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON?

ABE

NO, I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING.

FOREST

AS YOU KNOW, WE WILL SEND YOU THIS TRANSCRIPTION AND YOU CAN EDIT IT ,
CUT OUT ANYTHING YOU WANT OR ADD TO IT.

ABE

YOU CAN GO AHEAD AND EDIT IT. I DON'T THINK I HAVE TOLD YOU ANYTHING I
CAN BE HELD LIABLE FOR. (LAUGHTER)

FOREST

IF YOU THINK OF SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD, JUST WRITE IT DOWN
AND WE WILL ADD TO IT.

ABE

THAT JUST ABOUT COVERS ME FROM START TO FINISH. ACTUALLY, I WAS ONLY
IN FOR 22 MONTHS. A LOT OF THOSE FELLOWS THAT I WAS IN WITH WERE IN FOR
SEVERAL YEARS. THEY WENT THROUGH NORTH AFRICA AND THE WHOLE THING. I JUST
GOT STUCK IN WITH A BUNCH OF VETERANS. I SURE NEEDED THEM AT THE TIME. WHEN I
FIRST WENT IN, I TRIED, BECAUSE I FIGURED I WAS GOING TO THE INFANTRY, THAT'S
WHAT THEY WERE TAKING AT THE TIME. I DIDN'T THINK TOO MUCH OF GOING TO THE
INFANTRY SO I TRIED TO ENLIST IN THE PARATROOPERS. I WAS UNDERWEIGHT. I ONLY
WEIGHED 120 POUNDS. THEY HAD A 140 POUND LIMIT TO GET IN TO THE
PARATROOPERS, SO THAT WENT OUT. THEN WHEN I GOT INTO THE ARMORED. IF I HAD
TO GO BACK, THAT'S WHERE I WOULD WANT TO GO, IN THE ARMORED. LIGHT TANKS,
THOSE LIGHT TANKS WERE POWERED BY TWO CADDILAC ENGINES, SIDE BY SIDE. THEY
WOULD DO, I WOULD ESTIMATE, 60 MILES AN HOUR OUT ON THE ROAD ON FLAT
GROUND; THOSE OLD MEDIUMS, ABOUT 27, 28 MILES AN HOUR. I'VE SEEN SHELLS FALL
AROUND THEM AND THEY WERE TRYING TO GET IN BEHIND SOMETHING. THEY
COULDN'T MOVE FAST ENOUGH. WE COULD GET IN AND OUT. THE MEDIUMS WERE

ARMED WITH A 75mm CANON AND ALL WE HAD WAS A 37mm. WE HAD A 37 AND A 50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN AND TWO 30 CALIBER MACHNE GUNS ON THE LIGHT TANK. IT HAD ONLY ¾ INCHES OF ARMOR PLATE. SMALL ARMS FIRE WAS FINE BUT, ANYTHING LARGER THAN THAT COULD GO THROUGH 3 OF THEM. THAT GERMAN 88; YOU COULD LINE UP A WHOLE COMPANY OF THEM AND THAT THING WOULD PENETRATE THEM ALL. THAT WAS A TERROR WEAPON.

FOREST

ON BEHALF OF THE NIMITZ MUUSEUM, WE CERTAINLY APPRECIATE YOUR TIME.

END

TRANSCRIBED BY FOREST J. REES

FREDERICKSBURG, TX NOV. 2002

EDITED JAN. 20, 2003