

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Philip Fox

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Mr. Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is May 20th, 2005. I am interviewing Mr. Philip Fox. This interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies [now the Nimitz Education and Research Center], Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Let me start out, Mr. Fox, by thanking you for spending the time today to share your experiences of World War II with us. We appreciate that and we know you've come a long way from Colorado to share your experiences. Let me ask you to start, if I would please, by telling when and where you were born, a little bit about your family, what your dad did for living, things like that, to get us rolling.

Mr. Fox: I'll see if I can't accommodate some of those answers. I was born in Dallas, Texas, June the 1st, 1917. I was educated in the Dallas school system. I have no brothers and no sisters, I'm an only child. My father was the managing editor of the Daily Times Herald. My mother was a housewife. My father, in his career, left the Times Herald and went to Atlanta, Georgia where he was the, I suppose you'd call it, the public relations man for the Ku Klux Klan. He stayed there until he got into some trouble, volunteered and retired. I, in the mean time, came back to Dallas and was educated, as I said, in the public school system. I graduated

from Forest _____(??) High School in 1935. A month after I got out of high school, I went to work for the transit system in Dallas, Texas. I stayed with them until I retired in 1973—38 years of service I have with that company. At the time I went to work, I was the office boy. When I retired, I was the controller of the utility company. I had been in that capacity for about ten years. I made myself a CPA while I was working for the company, I went to night school for five years, I believe, and passed the CPA examination at the end of that time. That was about 1960 and I had the privilege of working for the company as a controller for about the last ten years of my life there.

Mr. Metzler: So when did you go to work for them?

Mr. Fox: 1935.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. So, were you still working for them when the war started?

Mr. Fox: Yes I was.

Mr. Metzler: So what were you doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Fox: I got behind, you always have to work some overtime when you're in that kind of capacity and, I had gotten behind on some of the work I was doing, and that was on a Sunday. I went down to my office in the early morning and what I saw that day down there was one the janitor cleaning the offices up. And he came back and said, "Hey, you know, that we're at war?" and I said, "Oh, come on. You're kidding me." He said, "No, sir. It's on the radio, television, right now. The President is going to speak tomorrow." I said, "Well, good gosh." And I closed that shift and went right home. It was a kind of a startling thing, I suppose I'm the same anybody else would be, it was kind of frightens you 'cause you know that

you're the right age to go do whatever has to be done. Well, I went along and my company was giving a lot of deferments because any utility is a chosen entity and transit was a very important thing, you got a lot of people to work and moving around. Anyway, I stayed there until I believe it was, we declared war in 1942, I believe—

Mr. Metzler: End of '41.

Mr. Fox: End of '41 and I went in, I believe, yah I went in early 1943, the call for the draft. They offered me deferment so I imagine I probably could have gotten it, I don't know. By that time I was treasurer of the credit union there and that made me entitled to a lot of extra work but they offered me a deferment but my wife's cousin, on the battleship Astoria, had gone down in the battle of Savo Island, and she had strong feelings about deferments and I felt kind of the same way so I just told him and the company I don't wish to be deferred, I'm going on. So I went on to the Army and I went to, oh what's the camp out in Fort Worth, ah anyway, all it was is a camp for a training camp and they set you up where you'd go. And I went up there and then from there I was set to Camp Barkley in Abilene, for my basic training and was enrolled in the 34th Evacuation Hospital, where I stayed for the duration of my tenure in the Army. There we went on twenty-mile hikes and did all kinds of things (laughter) that I couldn't begin to do now but, all the things the Army needed us to do, I suppose because they sent us to maneuvers in Louisiana. They sent me to laboratory school in El Paso, Camp Bliss.

Mr. Metzler: Fort Bliss?

Mr. Fox: Yah, Fort Bliss. After the lab training, I went back to the outfit at Camp Barkley. The Army was in preparation to go overseas—

Mr. Metzler: Did you know what outfit you were in?

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. They didn't take me out of the outfit, they just sent me to school. And I came back to my outfit. That was the routine procedure. A couple of months after that, my wife told me she was pregnant and so I said, "Well, there isn't anything in the world I can do about it now. Wherever they send me to go, I have to go." So I went back to the outfit, we packed everything up, got on a troop train, went from, after maneuvers we came back to Camp Barkley. And we went from Camp Barkley to Camp Kilmer, which is in New Jersey, for debarkation to the European Theater of Operations. We stayed there, oh a couple three weeks, waiting for, I suppose, for the ship to get ready for us. And during that time, they gave us passes. I went to New York, and I saw 3 or 4 Broadway plays. One of the friends I had in the Army was a New York boy, and I visited him in his home while I was up there. And ah, I had a good time. In the back of your mind there's always the thought, here you go. You don't look forward and don't anticipate very much. We embarked on the, I've forgotten the name of the ship, but it was a hospital ship, and was the X, was the ship belonging to the ex-premier or Sultan of Egypt; went up and down the isle. They had prepared it as a hospital ship, to take equipment and soldiers overseas. And it's an eerie feeling—the hospital ship turned the lights on at night and displayed the American flag under a light. And displayed the call symbol under a light. So if there was a submarine shooting over here, they'd know they were shooting a hospital ship.

Mr. Metzler: Hopefully they wouldn't shoot.

Mr. Fox: And they didn't.

Mr. Metzler: Was the hospital ship going alone or was it escorted?

Mr. Fox: No, it was alone. I didn't see another ship until we docked. Two or three things happened that impressed me. I played a little poker. Nothing expensive, I couldn't afford anything expensive with a baby in sight. We didn't have any money though because we had spent about a week, 10 days or two weeks, some period of time, in New York and I had spent all I had. Two or three friends I had, I had a couple of friends from Dallas, they banked me because I was the best poker player in the crowd. And I played poker in the mess hall for—

Mr. Metzler: We've had a slight interruption and we're back together now so Philip you were telling me on the hospital ship and you were playing poker, as I remember, go ahead.

Mr. Fox: That's correct. Well let me just supplement what I was saying about the poker game by telling you that the ship had gone through, it was going through some of the worst storms they'd had in 25 years in that area of the Atlantic ocean. This was from, we got into the port at Manchester and I don't really know exactly where we spent the extra time, but anyway, you'd played a hand or two of poker and the ship would be rolling so badly. Your stomach turns and flips. (laughter) So I'd play a hand or two and then I'd run to the side and urp over the side and then come back and play poker again. Anyway, I was lucky that night. I won about \$25.00 or \$30.00.

Mr. Metzler: That was a lot of money back then.

Mr. Fox: Back then, it was a lot of money. That enabled us to eat. They had boiled fish for breakfast and the smell of it would wake you up. (chuckle) It would just smell fishy and I don't know, it's not a good atmosphere to wake up and go to eat.

Mr. Metzler: Fish is not good for breakfast.

Mr. Fox: Not at all. (chuckle) Anyway, we didn't have to do that anymore because they had a PX on board and I saved the poker money I had, we used to eat fruit, pineapple and all kinds of things you'd get out of the can and don't have an odor about them. The rest of the voyage came out pretty well. We came ashore, short way out of Manchester, England. We went to a little town real close to Manchester and we set up in buildings, homes that had been vacated by this one or that one or whomever. But there were a number of them that were vacant and that's where they built this entire, about a 200-person hospital outfit.

Mr. Metzler: This is the 34th Evacuation Hospital?

Mr. Fox: That was the 34th Evacuation Hospital, 3rd Army.

Mr. Metzler: So these were in empty homes, in the city of Manchester.

Mr. Fox: Well, they weren't in Manchester, they were in a little town just outside, kind of like outside of Dallas, a suburb of Manchester.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. That's fine.

Mr. Fox: The thing I remember it was cold, we got in, in the evening and it was night, middle of the night when we marched into the barracks—

Mr. Metzler: So what time of year was this, that you rolled into England? Was it winter?

Mr. Fox: Oh, it was winter, winter time. I think it was June, so we had time to be there four or five months. They burned peat in the fireplaces and we had to go find peat

before we could start a fire and geez, that was, I was one of the lucky ones to chosen to go out (chuckle) –

Mr. Metzler: Went out on a peat searching trip?

Mr. Fox: That's right. Finally found some and brought it back and we had our fire. The house we were in. We got settled down, settled into a routine life of the Army. You've got reveille, you've got all this sort of thing, drill and go on marching. We'd get off in the evening and go have a beer, do whatever you wanted to do.

Mr. Metzler: So you were still in this suburb of Manchester?

Mr. Fox: Stayed there. Stayed there all the time until we got ready to embark. Then they pulled us out and sent us directly to the dock in the south of England.

Mr. Metzler: I want to hear a little bit more about what went on when you were in Manchester area. What were you doing? Who was cooking your meals?

Mr. Fox: We had our own cooks.

Mr. Metzler: You had your own cooks? And they were cooking in what, the kitchens?

Mr. Fox: Yes, and sometimes, it depends on what we were doing, the unit. If we were going over here to do a march, why, they would come along and we'd pitch a tent. They got the equipment to cook and all that. Most of the time we got cooked stuff, others would bring it to us. But this was not true all the time. Our cooks were going to be cooking all the way across Europe so they faced whatever hardships they had to face to take care of the needs the outfit had. They were nice guys. I always wondered how a guy could favor being a cook because that's the least of my ambitions to be in the kitchen. I did manage to learn enough to help my wife do the dishes. (laughter) There were a lot of guys, single and married,

that had girlfriends over there. The girls were always, as far as I could find out, they were all anxious to get married to an American because then they could come to the States. Some of them did. I know one or two or three, not many of them but some of them. I have not heard anything about anybody going back to England after the war. I don't think any of our people did. But I don't know that.

Mr. Metzler: So how many were in your group?

Mr. Fox: About 200. I never shot a gun the whole time I was in the Army.

Mr. Metzler: So most of your training was in what area, doing what?

Mr. Fox: When I went to school, I went to lab school. That's the Laboratory. You do your blood analysis, all the sort of things that you get done in the hospital now, but you are much more efficient now than we were then. There were things I've heard of but I've never had done. That's understandable, the Army did not have aging people, everything was young or younger. Everybody that was badly ill was eliminated when they had their physical. So when they got to us, they were all young people, relatively young and relatively in good physical shape. So they didn't need all this care. All the exercise, gymnastics and everything else they put you through, toned your muscles up and you're in fairly good shape. After I'd been in the Army, before I went to school, they had a twenty-mile hike and I had been in three weeks and I wasn't in any shape to run twenty miles. Anyway, I made it, but just barely, I just barely made it. A lot of guys came in with me did not.

Mr. Metzler: That's a long way.

Mr. Fox: That's a long way. (laughter) But I got through it. Right foot, left foot. It's a hard thing to do. Very difficult. I'd never thought about trying it on my own. The thing that I did, they maintained a pretty rapid pace. Every 50 minutes you rest 10. And you cover the miles pretty good. They get about three miles to the hour. A twenty-mile hike is five or six hours.

Mr. Metzler: So how long were you in the Manchester area before you shipped out?

Mr. Fox: We were in the Manchester area. We got there in cold weather, and we were there in June for the invasion, we went in on June 21st, so we were in combat zone June 21st; say from January, no February 1st, just guessing. February, March, April, May, June. Six months. I was in the Manchester area about six months. Oh, I believe going to London. It was just the idea of seeing London and I'm glad I was able. My wife and I've been back since the war to London. It was nice. You get overseas you run into a whole different way of view. When we first went in, we went in on Utah Beach—

Mr. Metzler: So you went in on a landing ship?

Mr. Fox: We went in on a LC, landing craft, people and craft—

Mr. Metzler: Personnel—

Mr. Fox: Personnel. You go over on a big ship, like a regular cargo ship. It takes, it depended on the number of ships that were ahead of us in a line, and they'd go in and unload on certain beach heads and all that sort of thing. Utah was one of the American beaches, it was one of those. When we got there, they had cleaned up all the bodies, you couldn't see anything. It was D+15 if I remember right. The bodies were not available, they were taken and buried. And the beaches had been

fairly well cleaned; debris, equipment and all that sort of thing. There, all the traffic was managed, they had an MP over here saying, 'no you go over here and you go here' and as we went ashore, we followed our outfit. And we went to Sainte-Mère-Église which, if you know your history, was the first French city taken by the Allies. And it was the one where Red Buttons hung from the clock in the movie and that was our first, that's where we went first.

Mr. Metzler: One of the airborne divisions jumped, parachute jumped right there and came down—

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. They were already out by the time we got there. They had probably taken them out of combat, I don't know that, but I think they had. Because they don't keep them up there too long. It wasn't that big a space. As soon as they can ship the people in, send them into the line and pull somebody out because they would have had casualties higher.

Mr. Metzler: When you went in, how did it feel going in on the beach that all that, two weeks earlier had been an absolute—

Mr. Fox: That's pretty, pretty sobering because for all the, everything good that might happen to you, you might have been one of the guys on that beach. And everybody knew it. Of course, we did not go to combat. That didn't stop anything because they had snipers—

Mr. Metzler: They still had snipers there, two weeks later?

Mr. Fox: Yah. Occasionally. It wasn't anything that they did on a 15-minute basis. But occasionally you'd hear shots and that's what it was. They had, they still had part of an air force. While we were on the beach itself, these planes came zipping by

and they were German planes and they had exhausted their ammunition down the beach and they were flying up the beach. So when they got to us, they were not shooting. But we knew what they were, there were several of them.

Mr. Metzler: The swastika.

Mr. Fox: The swastika. We went to another outfit and we worked as a, just as a relief for them. We, they put, the personnel in our outfit went somewhere else and did a job that the other, another evacuation hospital that was servicing casualties. I guess that's the first place, you know when you're out in the field, you have to do what you have to do. When they'd bring the wounded in, they didn't have enough cots to handle them all, and if you couldn't put them on cots, so they just laid them on a blanket on the ground. I don't think they did any of the real bad ones that way, they took them directly wherever they, to the OR. That was the first place I had seen casualties. It's kind of a bad feeling but you just have to get used to that sort of thing. And after I'd been, after we'd gone to combat, set up on our own, which we did real shortly, why, the nurses came and that's when they joined the outfit. First time when we were overseas.

Mr. Metzler: What kind of facilities then we were in. Were you in tents, were you in buildings?

Mr. Fox: Tents. All the way through France until we got to Bordeaux we didn't, we were in tents. Then when cold weather came, we moved to Metz which is, I don't think it's on the Rhine River, it was a big river. From there, they put us in, I think it was an old ex-German hospital. That's where we spent most of the winter until the Bulge, the Battle of the Bulge. That was tents again. Just a few days, not long

because we went to Luxembourg and we got casualties in Luxembourg in buildings and we spent, by the time we got everything taken care of, got set up, why we took on casualties for about a month or so I guess and then about that time, they took the Remagen Bridge.

Mr. Metzler: Let's go back to when you first came on shore and the first place where you were set up, we were talking about your first experience with casualties. And how sobering that was. So tell me more about your first impressions and how things went when you were first seeing the casualties.

Mr. Fox: Well, my first impression of course, you're depressed. You can't help being depressed. Then you're always, I think most of the people do, think the very worst is going to happen. The guy lying five feet from me is dead. There's nothing you can do about that. And it can happen. A lone machine gunner if you're moving and the machine gun gets you on the move. I know one thing happened I, for some reason, the officer had chosen me or somebody chose me to be, help around the Officer's Mess and do various things that had to be done. They sent me up north somewhere, I've forgotten where I went now, except I was in the company jeep and that was some distance away from where we were in camp. And ah, just the jeep driver and I were the only two there and we drove down the, you know these little French roads about big enough for one car to go around, and we were going down this road at not a great clip because you don't go very fast because the road's not good enough to get up to speed. The highway's nice, the super highway, zoom you're gone and if you're not careful, they'll run over you. (laughter) We were going down the road and we met this

guy on a motorcycle who said, “Get off the road! Get off the road!” You do things by instinct in the Army; you have an instinctive reaction to protect yourself. I said, “Get off the road!” The driver pulled over, off the road. We both jumped out of the jeep and fell flat in the ditch, right beside the road. Here comes a line of tanks – just down the road, just coming down the road, going to and from the front, I don’t know which. That’s what he was talking about. But, we were should get excited saying “get off the road” that was his signal the enemy is right behind you! (laughter) Get off the road! It scared the heck out of me and out of the driver too. He got up, looked around, hoping nobody had seen us jump in the ditch. But anyway, that’s the way it was.

Mr. Metzler: So these were Allied tanks going?

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. They were higher tanks. All they were doing is just clearing everything, and they should probably, clear the road. But you don’t have the communication that you were seen, that’s a bad thing to happen. That about concludes my interesting story about my tank encounter. It’s a frightening thing. We had people come by the hospital, after, gosh I remember. We had a guy come in there who had apparently just lost his mind. He wasn’t injured. What had happened, some outfits were in the bombing. We were inside, couldn’t see outside, not much windows, not much light and every time a plane came over, he couldn’t see whether it was German or American or what it might be, the man just had a spasm. Oh my god, he’d jump and get under the bed. He was just, he had been frightened so badly by being in this bombing that his well being couldn’t tolerate the plane overhead as being a friendly plane.

Mr. Metzler: So it was more like battle fatigue then?

Mr. Fox: That's exactly what they called it. Battle fatigue. Well, he, we evacuated him. There was nothing we could do for people like that.

Mr. Metzler: I was going to say, how do you treat that?

Mr. Fox: You don't treat that. At least we didn't. Maybe behind the lines they might. I had another young friend; Alice's father worked the Ford plant as the general manager. He was a young man; he was studying for the ministry. And of course that's one reason they sent him to a non-combat outfit. He must have gotten sick in the mind, I don't know. When I went to lab school, I'd come back and he had gone, they had put him with other people like him and I didn't get to see him, but I understand after the war I tried to visit him, and ah, he wasn't aware of me. He didn't recover as far as I know.

Mr. Metzler: So you were at this station in the Sainte-Mère-Église area for roughly how long before you went on? Because you kind of followed the lines as they moved north.

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. We were right behind. It didn't make any difference. What we did, we moved out of Sainte-Mère-Église, we moved to a little town called Fougères. If you'll remember what happened, they had an air force barrage, not a barrage, a storming; they were breaking out of this German form, that was around them, they were on a peninsula, Carentan.

Mr. Metzler: Do you know how to spell that?

Mr. Fox: Carrington, C-A-R-R-I-N-G-T-O-N. They were breaking out of that, the first thing they did, unhappily they killed a bunch of our people, the planes got dislocated and got into our lines, they had 1500 airplanes. I've never seen that

many airplanes in one wave in my life, certainly not in the air trying to bomb something. And ah, who was it, somebody's son, the next president I think, Roosevelt, his son, not his son, anyway, a close relation of Teddy Roosevelt, not Franklin D., and he was an older man, I say older, he was older than I, of course I was only 23. They were trying to break out, I think that's the term, and they had 1500 airplanes, they were German airplanes up there—

Mr. Metzler: So you could hear the bombs falling?

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. You could hear them. You could see them exploding over there on the hill. They were working on the front lines. I said German planes but they were American planes. They were up there doing the bombing, trying to open a way out. And they made it. They opened it, Patton took his bunch and he took off. And we were right behind him and he went to, I guess you'd call it, south or southwest, no southeast. He made, he got the cream of the German army and trapped their own, what's the name of it? Falaise Gap? I think that's it. They got 100,000 Germans in that. Boy, that effectively ended the war. For days they sat there piling up all kinds of casualties. And Patton, he broke out, he started moving and we started right in behind him. Next thing we knew, we were over, we were in Metz, and that's on this big river that goes up the, it might have been the Rhine, but I don't think it was the Rhine; we've been on the Rhine. Anyway, we went up there to Metz, and spent the whole winter in Metz.

Mr. Metzler: That was the winter of '44, '45?

Mr. Fox: Yes, it was the only winter I was there, in Germany. They ah, we had a lot of patients, and we had snow up to your hip, boy it was bad weather—

Mr. Metzler: That was a bad winter as I remember.

Mr. Fox: We were all very thankful that we were inside. Then about that time, springtime, the Battle of the Bulge came and we went north to Luxembourg.

Mr. Metzler: Where was your group during the Battle of the Bulge? Were you right up in that area?

Mr. Fox: Pretty close. We were there at Metz a large part of that and then towards the end, when Patton started getting the Zan Zone (spelling?) and moved back while we moved forward. We went to Luxembourg which was five or ten miles off the line. We stayed there for several weeks and then we started moving. Then they had the Remagen Bridge. When they got Remagen, they were able to cross at points above and below the Rhine because he was coming over here like mad over the Remagen, as many as we could get and as fast as we could get them over there. A little aside, somewhere I thought I had, I haven't been able to find it, it was pictured in a German newspaper, Patton urinating in the Rhine River.
(laughter)

Mr. Metzler: That shows them what he thought of them. (laughter)

Mr. Fox: That's our boy. He was (unintelligible)

Mr. Metzler: Did you ever actually see him?

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. He visited our outfit.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about those visits, pearl-handed pistols on and everything?

Mr. Fox: I can't think of the name of the town, it was after we were in Germany. He came to visit our outfit because his son-in-law was in our, a patient. He had been a

captive of the Germans and they had had this prison camp, by the way, I visited one or two of those—

Mr. Metzler: We'll get to that in a minute.

Mr. Fox: They had him in this prisoner camp and ah, Patton, part of his outfit got hit. What he was doing, he was liberating the prison camps, like Dachau and there's two or three of them, the big, and ah, Patton got up there he went over their orders, Eisenhower's orders, anyway he went up there and rescued his son-in-law, Waters, I believe the guy's name was, he was a Colonel, he was in charge of that. He brought him back and left him in our hospital and ah, he came to visit us, I know once and maybe he came twice. Lord of mercy, word got out that Patton was coming to visit our outfit (laughter). You should have seen all the working that went on. That Colonel had everybody cleaning everything and making sure everything was all right and everybody understand just exactly what—

Mr. Metzler: So you had advanced warning he was coming?

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. I don't think he would ever just drop in. I don't think he could. Somebody down the line would tell you—

Mr. Metzler: His reputation preceded him.

Mr. Fox: That's right. He was quite a warrior. Anyway, when he came, our Colonel was out the front waiting to meet him, they shook hands and our Colonel escorted him down through the area and showed him this and showed him that and all this sort of thing. Told him how many people we had there, gave him all the numbers and treated him with upmost courtesy. He did what he had to do.

Mr. Metzler: How was he outfitted?

Mr. Fox: Oh, he was in his immaculate uniform. I can't remember seeing any other soldier in boots, I mean high, high boots. And had a pistol on his hip and he was in a jeep, wasn't riding any horse. When they come, they were in the combat zone; he was escorted by MPs, two or three MPs. But he was very cordial, he got along good. Our Colonel was a regular Army man, of course so was Patton, they got along good.

Mr. Metzler: What was the name of your Colonel?

Mr. Fox: Colonel Brewer. B-R-E-W-E-R. He was an older man, I'm sure he's gone by now. Gosh, I'm 87 and I know he was older than I am.

Mr. Metzler: Did you ever see any German casualties in your—

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. The German casualties, we had an abundance of German casualties. What happened, we used them as helpers and everything. We had a ward for German casualties. German casualties went to a certain ward, which was a tent with a number of cots in it, and they had people watching them and taking care of them just like our boys did. I laughed a lot of times because on the ward, on the German ward, this was back when we first got into France, we had guys that give them shots, rolled up their sleeve and they'd stick them and throw it in there, Heil Roosevelt. (laughter) I laughed about that.

Mr. Metzler: That's what everybody said. So, did you get a chance to interact at all with any of the German?

Mr. Fox: Yes, they used them as a, just to clean the area, that is the—

Mr. Metzler: Kind of orderlies, type?

Mr. Fox: That's right. They were orderlies. They worked in the mess hall, they served food, they worked in the wards, cleaned the wards, put on clean, fresh blankets, sheets and what-not.

Mr. Metzler: They didn't try to escape?

Mr. Fox: Where they going to go? We were fifteen miles behind the line and the lines moving away from them. They're on foot, they're going to have to kill somebody to get a jeep and they've got a soft deal, they're not being killed, they're being fed.

Mr. Metzler: They're not being mistreated.

Mr. Fox: Not mistreated at all. Nobody mistreated them. I never saw a German mistreated over there. I've seen a lot of them shot when they were brought into the hospital, wounded and all that, out in the street.

Mr. Metzler: Could any of them speak English?

Mr. Fox: Some. Just enough to understand, maybe what you said. But they did not run, they didn't want to run, they wanted to be right there, they felt safe and snug in our hospital. They were not mistreated, they were well fed. They've got everything to lose and nothing to gain! Occasionally as they got to be—

(end of tape, side one)

They shipped them back to where ever they were shipping them to, to get them out of there. I don't feel about Germans about like I, particularly German prisoners of war because they never gave us any—

(tape has silent gap)

Mr. Metzler: This is side two. Philip Fox. I didn't mean to interrupt you. Keep going.

Mr. Fox: Well, the German POWs, most of them were well-mannered and easy to get along with and easy to say 'go do this' and have them go do it. I laughed about that because during the war my mother, step-mother, was the, at the, they had a POW camp in Dallas and she was a, what do you call the girls, ladies that go around and look after you, in other words, she went to the hospital to see that everything was all right with the POWs. I say hospital, by the camp. And I just wondered if any of those had come from France or Germany. You know they did. Anyway, I never had an opportunity, I mentioned it to her, talked to her briefly about it, but she just said she looked after them and they never gave her any trouble.

Mr. Metzler: Ever have any German officers come in, wounded?

Mr. Fox: Very few officers. They apparently segregated the officers and the enlisted men. We didn't get any officers, to work around. As far as I knew. I did not question anybody; they didn't wear any distinguishing ranks. But as far as I knew, there wasn't any German officers around at all.

Mr. Metzler: Now all this time you're running tests in the laboratory?

Mr. Fox: No.

Mr. Metzler: What are you doing?

Mr. Fox: Well, when we first went in, they didn't have E N T, ears, eye, nose and throat. They didn't set it up because they weren't treating that type of patients. You had to be a combat casualty. So I went to work on a ward and I was, just ward work, cleaning and whatever had to be done. Then they called me and sent me over to the ear; ear, nose and throat. And that's when I went to work over there. And ah, my doctor, he was a physician, an ear, nose and throat physician out of Chicago,

Chicago University. And ah, he had an unfortunate desire to associate with the lady nurses and some of the German whiskey—

Mr. Metzler: German whiskey and nurses, huh?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Metzler: That's a mix.

Mr. Fox: Any how. He taught me how to refract. And by refract I mean put glasses. I could make a pair of glasses, I wouldn't make them.

Mr. Metzler: You could tell what it would take for corrective lenses?

Mr. Fox: I could give you a prescription after an eye exam. And that's what I was doing all this time. I would open up the ear and eye clinic, you always had a bunch of people in there, and I'd open up the eye clinic and these guys would come in for glasses and they get sent back to me if he wasn't available. And he never was available. He was in the OR doing eye surgery and all kinds of things. I took a couple of pieces of shrapnel out of guys eyes, I just flick it out. As far as disease, I didn't treat anything like that. I didn't do that. I didn't recognize it when I saw it. It was hard to do and required a lot of training so he could train me to recognize how to do the eye deal so that's what I was doing. After the war was over, why, two guys from the optical lab, they had an optical lab that followed the Army, followed the hospital. And they'd take the prescription to the optical lab and they'd fit the guy with a pair of glasses. And the two guys in the optical lab came, this was after the war was over in Germany, and said, "You the guy who sent the people over to our lab?" And I said, "Yah." They said they just wanted to shake the hand of the guy who put glasses on more American soldiers than

anybody else in the EO. (laughter) That was kind of a compliment considering coming from a job you don't really know how to do, that's the way it was. We just want to let you know.

Mr. Metzler: Did you have any other guys in your group that you got particularly close to, became good buddies? Tell me about some of the friendships?

Mr. Fox: Well, I have one very close friendship, man by the name of Hollis Hewett. He was a Dallas boy, he had been to the, what was the name of the thing during the depression where they sent you to build houses—

Mr. Metzler: WPA and CCC.

Mr. Fox: CCC. He got to be the mail man, the guy that organized the U.S. Mail. Got the mail and brought it back and distributed mail and picked up to home took it to the APOs and all that stuff. He and I became very close. I know when my son was born, we were camped in outside Sainte-Mère-Église in this big field and he was the mailman and I was working in the lab, not in the lab, but in the wards and I was working the night shift. It was about 11:00, 12:00 and he came running down the aisle of tents saying, "Oh you've got a boy! You've got a boy!" (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: He was as excited as you were!

Mr. Fox: He was! We were that close though. What had happened. Normally if you become a father in the Army like that, overseas, they send, they notify the Army and the Army sends a telegram to your senior officer where ever you are, he calls you in and tells you you're a proud father. Well, that's normal. But what had happened, my father sent this letter, my father, by the way, my father was the manager of the Daily Times Herald in Dallas and he, he's got more history than I

want to go into, he was there when my son was born so he had sent me just a plain letter, typed letter, “Dear son. You have a son. He’s healthy, everything’s all right, Billie’s all right. Write a letter soon.” That was it. Well, I knew enough to know they were all right. Hollis, they didn’t seal the letter, somebody had opened it and read it, which was common, so when he found the letter in the U.S. Mail, it wasn’t sealed and he opened it up and read it. (laughter) And he ran down saying, “You’ve got a boy! You’ve got a boy!” Those were good days for some reasons and bad days for others. He was a very dear friend, lived in Dallas. I’d been on trips with him after the war—

Mr. Metzler: So you stayed in touch after the war.

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. Well, we had a 34th Evacuation meeting for several years, any number of years after the war. The first one was in Dallas—

Mr. Metzler: Kind of a reunion?

Mr. Fox: Reunion thing. We got a pretty good bunch of people. We got some people who came and some who didn’t. We enjoyed it and we had a good time and talked about old times and that happened for a number of years. When they had 9-11 why that kind of—

Mr. Metzler: Kind of shut the whole thing down?

Mr. Fox: The whole thing because it happened our reunion was two or three weeks after September 11th and planes were a nuisance. I said no, I’m not going to go to this one. So I didn’t go and I was very glad I didn’t. Because a number of the people I talked to afterwards, they had just a mess getting there, got there, cabs were not readily available, that kind of thing.

Mr. Metzler: So let's go back to when your outfit crossed the Rhine, now you mentioned taking the Bridge at Remagen. Tell me, since you were following the lines into Germany, did you cross at Remagen?

Mr. Fox: No, we did not. What they wanted to do, Remagen is just the bridge and you can just get so many people to it and over it. To it was quite a job because to get there you had to come in from all angles and so what they did, we were down close to ah, up from Metz, up to Luxembourg. Patton just said, "I'm going to cross the Rhine." So he did. He just got his engineers up there and they put a bridge in there and they were gone. And we went over on his bridge.

Mr. Metzler: Went over on Patton's Bridge.

Mr. Fox: That's right, on the one he made.

Mr. Metzler: That was probably a pontoon-type bridge.

Mr. Fox: That's it; it was a pontoon-type bridge. There wasn't a thing to stop anybody, the German army was receding so fast, they were just moving, get out of the way because they were going to be POWs, they were going to get surrounded and they knew it. So all they knew was move back as quickly as they could. And so we chased them into Germany for, oh, we got down to Austria. After that, they—

Mr. Metzler: You guys ended up down by the Alps then?

Mr. Fox: Oh yes. We were getting into the Bavarian Alps when the shooting stopped. I think the little town was, I can't remember. As I get older, why—

Mr. Metzler: That was a long time ago. Like sixty-something years. In fact they just had VE-day for 60th anniversary.

Mr. Fox: My son is just past 61. He's getting ready to retire. He's a lobbyist. He works for the school executives in Colorado and has been for a number years. Very interesting job, well paid job. I wish I'd made what he's making.

Mr. Metzler: So, how and do you remember when you found out that the war was over?

Mr. Fox: At that point, you gotta realize that the war in Europe was over back in May. And Germany wasn't until September, October VJ-day.

Mr. Metzler: Yah, Japan.

Mr. Fox: The war was still going in a very slow fashion, just plodding. So it just didn't make that big a deal, that big a change in anything we might have been doing. We didn't do any more patients, we had no patients. They were all going to the big hospitals. Well the big hospitals were right there in the middle of the city. So, there wasn't anything like that going on.

Mr. Metzler: Were you anywhere close to Munich?

Mr. Fox: We went through Munich, yes sir. Sure did.

Mr. Metzler: Was there much left?

Mr. Fox: (laughter), Well, let me try to recollect, see what I can remember of Munich. We were there. Well, no, Munich had taken a pretty hard beating. Munich was pretty well, you gotta realize these airplane bombings, they were just horrific. The guys, when they bombed something like that, they just leave it in rubble. Just not much. And Munich had been hard-hit as I remember. They had a lot of reconstruction to do. I went back years and years later. But they had all these bunkers they built in fields, houses that had been abandoned, all kinds of places and what they had done, they didn't dig the bunkers out, they just covered them with dirt and by the

time I got there, they had all nicely grown up in grass, real pretty decorative places. It's hard; it was hard for me to realize that, back in the past sometime, those places had just been leveled. And they're not leveled now. And they'll be there for, I guess now, until someone has a reason to remove them. And there's still a bunch of them there. Germany, well you've got the generation of people in there, they don't remember the war, they don't know anything about the war and they don't want to know anything about the war. Well, I remember, you didn't find any Nazis in Germany after the war. We've been back a couple of times.

Mr. Metzler: You mentioned earlier in our discussion that you had been to or had seen some of the concentration camps, tell me about that?

Mr. Fox: The thing I can tell you about that, I never did want to get close to one. The odor was bad, the smell, I presume, flesh, and ah, I went one time, I think it was Dachau, I've forgotten now.

Mr. Metzler: Dachau was right outside of Munich.

Mr. Fox: Well, it probably was Dachau then. I went to, I was out in the company jeep with a driver, we had to go for something. We got close to it, I said, "Gosh, let's just go by there." and he said, "Sure."

Mr. Metzler: This was after the war was over?

Mr. Fox: Over, dead and buried. There was no life going on. I would not have approached Dachau in combat. We got up there and the odor was just so bad. It was close after the war was over; they had just buried the dead. They had been putrefied. It was a horrible odor. There wasn't any traffic up there so we just whizzed through and whizzed out. That was the extent of my need with POW camps. I

did, I don't think I ever talked to anybody, I talked to Hollis though, Hollis my friend, the one that came down the aisle saying, "Oh you got a boy!" (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: 61 years ago.

Mr. Fox: Yah, 61 years ago.

Mr. Metzler: So how long we you over there in Europe after the war was over? How long did they keep you there?

Mr. Fox: Well, what they did when the war was over, they transferred me and several others, apparently we were not, I had enough points or something, I had a newborn child, they were supposedly trying to get me out of there if I could get out of there. When I finally got ready to be discharged, they sent me to Hood, then sent me from Hood to this camp close to Tyler, I forgot the name of it, but it dealt solely with discharges. All it did was discharge me. I got there, they took my name and they said, 'We'll call you on the camp phone system.'

Mr. Metzler: Public address type system?

Mr. Fox: Yah. I said, "Fine." And I discovered if it was on the 30th of March, 31st of March and if I stayed in there one more day I'd get a whole month paycheck. Subsistence for my child and all this sort of thing if I stayed. (laughter) I just got lost.

Mr. Metzler: You just couldn't be found.

Mr. Fox: I couldn't be found. I went up to the library and got me a book and I sat there and read the whole afternoon and evening of March 31st. On April the first, why, I marched in there and said, "Hey, when you going to send me home? I've been here since so and so." Oh, well we called you yesterday. And I said, "Well I

didn't hear a thing. You didn't call me very loud." They said they're sure sorry.
We'll get you out of here today. (laughter) Me and my wife got \$85.00 for it.

Mr. Metzler: That was a lot of money.

Mr. Fox: For one day and I served my time. (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: So, you stayed in Germany or in that area, even after the war was over, for about how long?

Mr. Fox: Well—

Mr. Metzler: You mentioned Austria too.

Mr. Fox: Yes, we were in Austria. We went; no I don't know whether we ever went to Austria—

Mr. Metzler: Well you mentioned it earlier so I didn't know if you were there or just close to it.

Mr. Fox: Well we were close to it. I know we were close to it. We went to Italy, after the war was over. Billie and I went over there. We went to somewhere in Switzerland and caught a mountain train and went over the mountains to Italy, just over the pass. Something they did, we sat up high so we could see, and then we turned around and came back.

Mr. Metzler: So you'd been to Italy.

Mr. Fox: Just barely. (laughter) We went to a number of places; England, Scotland, Wales, didn't go to Scotland. England, Wales, and something else but I can't remember. France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, I guess that's all.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me when, when they sent you back to the States. That was some months after the war was over.

Mr. Fox: Yah, I got a discharge I believe in March, I've got a photostatic copy of it.

Mr. Metzler: So when you came back, you came back on what, another troop ship?

Mr. Fox: On a, what do they call those, it wasn't a troop ship—

Mr. Metzler: On a passenger liner?

Mr. Fox: No it wasn't a liner, it's an infantry ship.

Mr. Metzler: (reading photocopy that Mr. Fox produced) Enlisted record and report of separation. Honorable discharge.

Mr. Fox: It took a while.

Mr. Metzler: You've got to have sharp eyes to read that because it's been boiled down to a small wallet-size.

Mr. Fox: And I've got macular degeneration and it makes it worse.

Mr. Metzler: Yep, that's something there. But at least you got a good sharp record of it. That way you can prove to somebody that you are no longer in the Armed Forces.
(laughter)

Mr. Fox: That's right. And that I was!

Mr. Metzler: So what was it like coming back to America after being overseas and seeing all of that?

Mr. Fox: Well, it was real good coming back because I had a son I'd never seen. I was real happy to get home.

Mr. Metzler: So what did you do? Come into the East coast and then get on a troop train?

Mr. Fox: That's it. Come to the East coast and got a troop train to Camp, (pause) Houston, down in Texas?

Mr. Metzler: Fort Sam Houston?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: In San Antonio?

Mr. Fox: Yes, San Antonio.

Mr. Metzler: Well that's just up the road here.

Mr. Fox: That's right. Then they told me since I had gone to lab school I was essential. I was not eligible for discharge.

Mr. Metzler: Even though you had a son—

Mr. Fox: It didn't make a prodigal of difference. The Army had me and I had been trained and I was supposed to stay there and take care of any calls that might have occurred because of my training. Well, my father was a wheeler-and-dealer in politics and so I went to see him as soon as I got back to Dallas. Billie met me at the train and we came home. He carried me down to see the congressman from Dallas, whom he knew very, very well for a long time. And he said, "I'll take care of it." So the first thing I did, I got this order to report to the Aid Service Command in Dallas. The headquarters for all Army, Navy and what not. And I went down there and they said, "You're on 60 days leave. Take 60 days to visit, you're to return back." I returned back after 60 days, they said, "You're to be discharged. You go to Camp Hood and they'll discharge you." Well, I went to Hood and they said, "We don't know anything about you." I said, "Well, you're supposed to get me discharged." He said, "Well, I'll investigate." And he did. And he sent me to a camp close to Tyler, I can't remember the name of it, and they discharged me, one day later than they should. (laughter) I took that pay and everything and stayed an extra day. That was the end of it. That was a very

hectic time because I didn't realize and didn't know that Dad had enough pull to get me out of that thing.

Mr. Metzler: Did you think you might go to the Pacific theater?

Mr. Fox: Oh, I would have. That's what they were doing. If you didn't have enough points to stay over here, you went to the Pacific.

Mr. Metzler: Right.

Mr. Fox: They were all keying up to do what they had to do to take Japan. Anyway, that was the end of my war experiences.

Mr. Metzler: What did you think about your Commanding Officers and the officers that led you guys? What was your feeling about them?

Mr. Fox: Well, you gotta realize what they did, they took, in the Army there were two separate deals where they had a deal for doctors, they were in a class by themselves. Lawyers and all these, that's why I got to be a CPA, so if they declared another war I could be in a class by myself. (laughter) What they did, these people who had special interests, they could do pretty well what they like they wanted to and all that sort of thing. They could go and get training if they wanted to. That's what I would have liked to have done. But they never offered me the opportunity. I would never have taken it because I wanted to get home.

Mr. Metzler: But did you feel like these officers were well trained?

Mr. Fox: Yes I did. I felt real good about the doctors in there because we had some really skilled doctors. The other guys though, what they had done was picked up rookies and sent them to OCS. They had about a dozen of these guys in charge of the motor pool, in charge of personnel, in charge of all kinds of little things that

officers normally do, they had one man doing each job. I always felt like they over-stepped. These guys didn't really realize what it was like to be a career officer and yet they were doing a career officers job. But I felt they got a pretty good degree of training and sophistication with the officers we had. Particularly the doctors, we had some good ones. They didn't know how to treat men but they knew how to treat people who came in and that was their primary job. I thought they did good. They did horrendous operations. By the way, one other thing I want to mention to you. When we went to the airport in Germany, the big one in East Germany—

Mr. Metzler: In the Berlin area?

Mr. Fox: No it's not Berlin. It's where the U.S. Army had their first major ops in Germany.

Mr. Metzler: I don't know where that is.

Mr. Fox: Anyway, they got the biggest airport in Europe there, and they, when we occupied the hospital in this town, it was a German hospital, of course, what they had done they had, you're supposed to have your mail censored and it's just supposed to be so-so and this sort of thing.

Mr. Metzler: This is mail going back to the States?

Mr. Fox: That's right. When we got to the hospital, there was all kinds of medical treasures that you find in hospitals. By that I mean, there's all these slides with pathology on them, everything to do with labs. They had dentist chairs, they had all kinds of equipment. Same is true of all kinds of hospital equipment the doctors might use. By God, they censored their own mail (laughter) – I know there had to be a

hundred of them. That set up practices on just what they sent to the States.
Equipment of all types.

Mr. Metzler: So they sent, this is German equipment?

Mr. Fox: German equipment. They might have bought it in the U.S. but they bought it.
Nobody gave them anything.

Mr. Metzler: So what was your impression of the facilities there, at that German hospital?

Mr. Fox: It had to be excellent. They had slides there of everything you've ever heard of.
We opened the drawers and pulled the slides out, examined them and they knew
what you had. Compare all this stuff that they take out of your body, with what
they had taken out of other bodies, and you either had it or you didn't. I know
they had to re-equip that hospital.

Mr. Metzler: It got stripped, huh?

Mr. Fox: Yah, it got stripped. I used to laugh about this. I never knew this to happen.
They found a lot of hidden treasures in Germany that our troops had taken. I've
often heard about the first thing the infantry did when got to a town, was to blow
the banks. (laughter) And I'm sure that's true. Imagine yourself in the infantry,
hell you might die tomorrow. Who knows what you're going to do. And if you
see an opportunity to pick up \$10,000.00 to send home to your wife that's
starving to death, you're going to take the \$10,000.00. There's no use pulling my
leg about that because that's just human nature.

Mr. Metzler: You mentioned earlier that you didn't harbor any hard feelings against the
Germans?

Mr. Fox: Well, I did, when Germany came out and they would not support our President in this terrorist thing, I felt like, "Hell, they owed us everything they ever had." I felt like they had a bound duty to do what they could to help suppress it. They didn't do that and they denied it and didn't send personnel and thought I wish I'd known that back then because we might not have been so generous to them. That's the only thing I've ever thought about being harmful to the Germans.

Mr. Metzler: What else can we talk about your war experiences while we have the time?

Mr. Fox: No I can't think of anything.

Mr. Metzler: Well, that's some really interesting tales that you've got there. I'm not sure that we have any other interviews with people that were in the Evacuation Hospital Corps back then so this will be a good addition.

Mr. Fox: That's fine. I'm happy that it could help you. Some suggestion may be made that might improve something, I don't know.

Mr. Metzler: And you're one of the few guys that actually saw Patton, so that's impressive.

Mr. Fox: Yah (laughter). I saw him a few times. And I was impressed. I know I've got that picture I've just got to find it. I was wondering about there's some of these things, this picture of Harris, you can't have a lot of that, you might have a picture of that place, that's a picture of me....

Mr. Metzler: I appreciate you taking the time today. I know it's taken a big chunk out of your day visiting here.

Mr. Fox: When you're retired, every day is Sunday.

Mr. Metzler: Every day is a weekend?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Metzler: I think we've got it coming to us.

Mr. Fox: I do, I agree.

Mr. Metzler: So, Mr. Fox. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with us.
And we'll have the transcript to you, we hope sometime in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Fox: That'll be fine.

Mr. Metzler: Thank you again.

Mr. Fox: You're quite welcome.

(end of tape)

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