

## Frank Crain Oral History Interview

PETER RIESZ: We're having a deposition today.

FRANK CRAIN: Yeah. (laughter)

PR: It's June the 22nd of 2000. It's 2:15 in the afternoon. We're at the business address of Cole, Cole & Easley in downtown Victoria, Texas. I'm Peter Riesz, interviewing for the MOWW. And we have today one Frank H. Crain, Judge Crain. Good afternoon, Judge. How are you doing?

FC: Fine, thank you, sir.

PR: What does the H stand for?

FC: It stands for Harrington. Harrington is R. [Stevadore?], who raised my grandfather. My grandfather had been born in poverty.

PR: (laughs) And he rose from it. When were you born, and where?

FC: January 21st, Victoria, Texas.

PR: Where was your elementary schooling?

FC: Here in Victoria. I went to two elementary schools, [Bromston?] and Mitchell School.

PR: And high school?

FC: I went to Patti Welder High School.

PR: That was the high school in those days.

FC: That was the only high school except for St. Joseph's, and naturally it was for girls.

PR: That's a consolidated school. (laughter) What year did you graduate?

FC: Nineteen thirty-eight.

PR: What'd you do after '38?

FC: I went to the University of Texas. My dismal record is in here. Academically, I'm not going to tell you how miserable it was. But I was a big shot on the freshman football squad and didn't study. Didn't keep my eligibility. So my father said, "We've tried it your way. Now we can try it my way." So I came back here and went to the junior college the rest of that semester. And then the next year, sent me to Shriner Institute, which was a hard-shell Presbyterian military school.

PR: Was that in --

FC: [Carvale?]. It's not a military school anymore, but it was in those days.

PR: Saw a lot of citadel?

FC: No, it was a junior college. I was almost on my way to Kemper Military Academy up in Missouri. At the last minute, one of the coaches came down and recruited me for Shriner. It wasn't an ROTC. The cadet officers studied

tactics. The rest of us, all we did was [force?]-[order?]  
drill and very...

PR: So it was sort of paramilitary, not a regular ROTC program.

FC: Well, so far as the discipline piece. So far as the  
discipline, boy, it was strict.

PR: Did you had uniforms you wore?

FC: Yes, sir. We had uniforms. If you got a demerit, you  
walked four miles on the [bullring?] in full regalia.

PR: That'd shape you up pretty quick.

FC: You're damn right it did. I had halfway decent grades I  
made.

PR: So you had one semester at Texas, and then...?

FC: Then a semester in Victoria College. Then I went to  
Shriner for a year. And then I went back to the university  
for a year. And then I entered law school.

PR: Did you have a different attitude when you went back to the  
university the second time?

FC: Unfortunately, Pete, I didn't realize the importance of  
making good grades. I've developed more of an intellectual  
outlook in old age now that (overlapping dialogue;  
inaudible). I don't know why, but (overlapping dialogue;  
inaudible).

PR: You matriculated into law school, then. When did you  
finish the law school?

FC: Nineteen forty-eight; I was in law school when the war came. I volunteered during the Christmas holidays.

PR: What year was that?

FC: January 3, 1942. I never went back to school after the Christmas holidays.

PR: Right after Pearl Harbor, then. You went right in. What did you volunteer for in those days?

FC: My uncle had been chief of the ordinance (inaudible) service, brigadier general, and would have been the head of the ordinance department but he got involved with some politics everywhere. He later was the oldest man to serve overseas and retire as a major general. (inaudible) to England. He was more of an engineering... He'd been in the (inaudible). He served in the rainbow division. And he served in the Philippines with MacArthur. (off-topic; dialogue not transcribed)

PR: What's his name?

FC: His name is James K. Crain. Nickname among the officers was [Jake?]. George Patton and Douglas MacArthur's pictures were in a place of honor in their home. He served with both of them. And if you want to be attacked by a couple of 85-year-old people with walking canes, just say something bad about either one of them. (laughter) So, I signed up in San Antonio with my brother-in-law. We were

advanced the night before. (inaudible) And I told him I was going to volunteer for the Army tomorrow. He said, "If you do, I will." And much to his surprise, I stopped by the next morning. And he didn't chicken out, so we (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). We went to Dodd Field for a few days.

PR: You were inducted on the spot.

FC: Yeah. They sent me to Ellington Field. And I don't know what unit I was with.

PR: When you swore, that was induction. You had a physical and some testing and stuff. Did they give you a serial number then?

FC: Yeah.

PR: You remember what that serial was?

FC: 18058544. I'll never forget it.

PR: You don't forget that one. (laughs)

FC: I remember that better than I do my Officers.

PR: So Dodd Field, just a few days. And then off to Ellington.

FC: Just a staging area.

PR: What was Ellington? A basic training?

FC: No, it was Air Force. I was in the Ordnance Department, but we were always attached to the Air Force.

PR: So you were Army Air Force.

FC: Well, I never knew. I was in the 735th. I went overseas with the 735th Ordinance Detachment, attached to the 3rd Air Depot.

PR: What'd you do at Ellington?

FC: Scraped mud off the street, physical word.

PR: Lot of calisthenics and working out?

FC: I seem to attract some resentment. People in my age group, we were Depression children. A lot of us didn't have anything. Some of us had some advantages. I had finished college. "He's smart. We don't need to train him. Send him over there on KP." That was (inaudible).

PR: Ignorance is universal.

FC: There was some resentment against me.

PR: That does exist. Did you have Close Combat Infantry (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

FC: No, at Ellington Field I didn't do anything but load and unload ammunition. And I picked up the artillery shells that would fire out of the Reveille Retreat. I used to sit and (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). And then from there, I was what they call a Shanghaier. They wanted to get rid of me. The Commanding Officer knew who I was. I might have told you, that guy was General Maclean's nephew. So he called me up one day and told me that if I write my uncle a letter and tell him that he'd been given a raw

deal, that he would see that I got an OCS. And when I didn't do it, they made a list of about 17 people to leave that post, and every name was on it. Probably 50, 60 people's name was on and off that list, except mine. Mine never left. They sent me to [Teddy?] Field in San Antonio, to the 3rd Air Depot. This was in March.

PR: March of '42.

FC: From there, they took us to Charleston. And then from Charleston we sailed to India.

PR: Out of Charleston, South Carolina?

FC: The first night out, they cleared us by accident at least twice. They told us everybody had to get up on the deck. And then we went to Puerto Rico and we stayed in San Juan for a day. And they put out the rumor that we were headed for Martinique. By this time, I was PFC. They told us this later -- hoping that any German submarines would go between us and Martinique. They would sail north for a day and then over.

PR: Were you alone when you sailed, not in a convoy?

FC: There was a freighter and a small old-fashioned passenger liner, like one I went to Germany on in '27. Fancy (inaudible) on it. We had a small English aircraft carrier and an English light cruiser.

PR: What was the name of the ship you were on?

FC: I was on the USS *Brazil*. And then I went to Europe as an Officer on the USS *Argentina*, its sister ship. For that day in time, they were a luxury. It was in the South American trade.

PR: There was one more.

FC: I've forgotten.

PR: It was a fairly comfortable ride, then.

FC: Not for us. I want to say there was at least 5,000, maybe 6,000 of us on that ship. The decks were boarded in. The railing men were out on the deck. We were in the smoking lounge in the middle of the ship. And I felt the coolest would be in the bottom, so I took the very bottom bunk. And we ate two meals a day. We cleaned out the PX in about two weeks. And we had to zigzag. We had to go as slow as the slowest ship. We pulled in at Freetown in Sierra Leon.

PR: From Puerto Rico, the next stop was --

FC: We didn't stop. We were in the harbor. We didn't go ashore. We waited there for some reason. Then we left and went to Cape Town. And we had three days shore-leave in Cape Town. First thing I did was (inaudible). All of us lost about 10 percent of our weight. I was about 195, 200. But you'd have a lot of big men in those days that probably weighed 230 and 240. So all you did was eat.

PR: How tall were you?



FC: I was six-foot-and-a-half inch. I've shrunk now. We stayed three days in. We went to Port Elizabeth, a place I had never heard of, on the very tip of Africa. And I sent my father a cablegram from there. We stayed there five days. And as I said, all we did was eat everything we could get our hands on. Then from there, we went up the East Coast of Africa. I'd say about a third of the way up, the freighter in the ship that we were understood had civilians, it headed for (inaudible), Somalia. We took off (inaudible) without escort. But they put the (inaudible). It was traveling 18 or 19 knots, about 21 or 22 miles an hour. Going that fast, a submarine couldn't possibly hit you.

PR: Did you ever see any submarines or enemy aircraft?

FC: No, never.

PR: Did you wear a life preserver the whole time?

FC: The whole time. You were never without your life preserver. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) I had (inaudible) before and I had (inaudible) after sunrise and sunset, we stood in formation on the deck, the (inaudible) being a silhouette. Since we're silhouetted, we'd make a better target. I don't think that was...

PR: Got you some fresh air, anyway. Were you with a unit?

FC: Yeah, I was with this 3rd Air Force. It supposedly was a unique organization that was supposed to be able to move anywhere and establish an airbase. And that's what we did. We landed in Karachi, India. It's on the west coast, up toward the north part of India. And from there they shipped us to Agra, which is where the Taj Mahal is. That's in central India.

PR: How'd you get from Karachi to Agra?

FC: Troop train. The bunks were wooden, with no mattress. Made about two-feet wide, made up of slabs. And for food, once again we had an abundance of tea and bread, toast. They put a lot of sugar. They put condensed milk in the tea.

PR: This was run by the British?

FC: Indian train. We were on the train about three days, two days at least. Once a day they gave us a can of beans for four of us. We'd take a spoonful and pass it. And the next day you'd start, and the next. I think probably twice a day we got that. I'm telling you, there was nothing that would taste any better than that tea. They had canned marmalade for us. They had sanitation. They had some meat for us, but it spoiled by the time they got -- they don't eat meat. So the food was... And then we got to Agra and we built the airbase in Agra.

PR: You constructed an airbase?

FC: Yeah, it was under construction. We got there, they'd used old-fashioned (inaudible), old steam rollers. Mostly Indian labor. Breaking open rocks, everything was done by manual labor almost.

PR: Could you see the Taj Mahal?

FC: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) in the winter (inaudible).

PR: The airbase was a way's away?

FC: Yeah, it was out (inaudible).

PR: When would you guess you started to build the base there?

FC: It was well under construction. It was well under construction by the time we got there.

PR: Give your best guess when you got there.

FC: We left here on March 17, '42. We landed May 19. Best of my recollection, that's (inaudible) birthday.

PR: Two months on the sea?

FC: Yeah, except for that eight days ashore. I would say that sometime probably in June, late June or early July, we got to Karachi. That's when the monsoon hit. I'm not mechanically inclined. I don't have any skills. And some of the men made mountings for machineguns that we never used. I found myself loading bombs onto the train that we setup to Assam up in northeast India to be taken over to --

PR: That was your function, then, loading bombs?

FC: I was exploited physically. And I did a lot of KP. And I did a lot of Guard Duty.

PR: Still a PFC.

FC: No, I was a Technician, Fifth Grade, by this time. See, the Army used to have specialists. You could be a Private with it, but the main stripes under (inaudible). A Private could have the same pay as a Master Sergeant. But these were skilled jobs; these weren't leadership jobs. So although a Technician Fifth Grade, I had the pay of \$54. I had the pay of a Corporal, but I had the rank of a PFC. A Corporal wouldn't stand Guard Duty or KP. Before they made that change, I would've been a Private, Third Class.

PR: You were a highly trained private.

FC: I was supposed to be.

PR: What sort of quarters did you have at Agra?

FC: At Agra quarters were stone barracks, one story.

PR: Built just for you all?

FC: It was built for us.

PR: Comfortable living? Cold night, hot in the day?

FC: Well, it rained a lot in the daytime. Of course, in the monsoons, it rains heavily several times a day. We were terrified of snakes. I never saw a snake, except for snake charmers. Stayed there and then I was sent to Allahabad.

Allahabad is where the Yamuna and the Ganges River meet. It's in central. It's a holy city because the Yamuna and the Ganges join there. That's where Mahatma Gandhi was killed. All we did there was Guard Duty.

PR: Was there any planes at Agra?

FC: Yes. They were P-43s, which we were giving to the Chinese. And the reason we were giving, they didn't work out. I'm not a pilot. I try and read about aviation. It was a predecessor of the P-47. It was a weaker version, underpowered and underarmed. So we had given those to the Chinese. And then at Allahabad, all we did there was guard the Bomb Depot. At Karachi, when you're on Guard Duty it's risky. It's kind of risky. We never had anybody get it, but there were no weapons. And one night, we were in Allahabad when Mahatma Gandhi went on a hunger strike. And there was great hostility towards the British. Fortunately they could tell the difference in our uniform. (inaudible) We thought the Germans are coming through the Caucasians, the Germans are coming through Egypt. They sent everything to Egypt that could fly. We had this one B-17 that couldn't fly. And I drew the duty of guarding it one night. And it must have been 150 Indians surrounding me, all kind of squatted down on the ground around that plane. They never bothered me. But that was pretty...

PR: What was their intention?

FC: To just intimidate me, harass me.

PR: Why didn't they send a few more out to help you?

FC: I don't think anybody thought this would happen. I probably drew the 10:00 to 2:00. They probably began to disperse around midnight. They were just there to threaten.

PR: These bases and bomb supplies, how are bomb supplies getting in here, and where were they shipping them off to?

FC: I don't know.

PR: They were old bombs? World War I?

FC: No, see, we didn't have any bombs when we were in Karachi. They began arriving in Agra. They came by train.

PR: Was all the fighting over here in Burma?

FC: The fighting in Burma was pretty well over, because the Japanese had run us out of Burma. And these bombs, there wasn't that many bombs. (off-topic; dialogue not transcribed)

(break in audio)

FC: There's just 8 or 10 or 12 of us. They just need to load freight. All menial work. And then from there they sent me back to Agra when they didn't need those -- we were staying there in real great old British barracks built in the airbase.

PR: In Agra?

FC: No, in Allahabad. It was a permanent British base with a lot of barracks.

PR: What were they shipping those bombs to, and how were they shipping them?

FC: Assam, by train, up to northeastern India. We were trying to bomb the Japanese.

PR: The Japs were trying to come up into India?

FC: No, they weren't. They were just static. They didn't try to invade India until well after I was back. But they were taking the bombs into China. And there were other supplies besides bomb or junk. They sent me back to Karachi, finally. I didn't know what the hell unit I was in. They gave me the orders. And when I was in Karachi, I was making practice bombs. I'd go out in the desert and shovel sand on this truck. Then I'd drive the truck back. And I'd drive the truck back. Had to have these tin bombs. And they put a shotgun shell. And when they drop, it would explode enough where you could see the burst. And they could use the bombs over and over. Just practice bombs. I'd shovel the sand through a screen, and then the other guy would fill the bombs. The CO would spy on us with binoculars.

PR: To see if you were working? (laughs)

FC: Yeah. I was there when I applied for OCS when I was in Agra. And my Company Commander gave me the lowest possible recommendation, to where he wouldn't have to provide my endorsement for even doing it. He had a line like so. He would check, "This is good; this one's bad." Put me right in the middle. I came back on this Letter Order, which would have allowed them to stop me anywhere along the way at the convenience of the government.

PR: How did you get that Letter Order?

FC: I think they still were just so surprised that somebody was going to go to be in the Infantry. I wanted to do something.

PR: Did he see your education?

FC: I don't know. He was an Infantryman.

PR: Where was Stilwell at that time?

FC: He was in Burma.

PR: How did he get involved with your Chain of Command?

FC: He was the Commander of the Theater. He was a Theater commander.

PR: You're sitting over here in Karachi, and all of a sudden they come in with an order. "Crain, you're going to start back"?

FC: Yeah. That's why I didn't get the Good Conduct Medal. I could hear the clerk talking. I didn't tell this at the --



"But, sir, are you going back to..." "I don't care what this son of a bitch is doing. (inaudible). Get him out of here." So I came back to Fort Benning.

PR: What timeframe are you looking at then?

FC: These papers indicate I got back in April. I left there in late March. But they stopped me in Accra, on the Gold Coast, with (inaudible).

PR: This is April of '44?

FC: No, this is of '43.

PR: You really bounced around.

FC: I did.

PR: How'd you get back from Karachi?

FC: I was fortunate enough to get to fly from Karachi. They could've sent me by ship. I flew from Karachi to Khartoum, spent the night. Then we flew to Ghana. I had the lowest priority.

PR: Khartoum to Ghana, okay.

FC: On the west coast of Africa. And I had the lowest priority. So I probably stayed there for 9, 10, 11 days doing nothing, reading and going swimming. Then my time came. They flew (inaudible) Brazil. And we stopped at Ascension Island. We stopped in Arabia to refuel.

PR: Wait a minute, from Karachi --

FC: From Karachi we flew to (inaudible), just long enough to refuel. Then onto Khartoum. Khartoum was right there. Then Khartoum to Ghana. And then over to Natal.

PR: Ascension Island.

FC: Well, we stopped there for gasoline.

PR: Then Natal in Brazil.

FC: I'll never forget. I went in the back of his plane, and they told me I was upsetting the trim of the plane. I was looking out there.

PR: What kind of planes are they? DC-3?

FC: No, this was a C-24. It was a B-24 bomber without the bombs. We sat on the floor. And we had a Turkish Infantry Officer.

PR: Did you have seatbelts on? (laughs)

FC: No, they only had a couple of them. I don't know what the Turkish Officer was doing. And then from Natal, we stayed there a couple days and then went to Berlin, spent the night there, then to Puerto Rico, and then to Miami.

PR: Is this the same plane?

FC: No, from Natal we have C-53s. Probably the same plane.

PR: And then Miami was your final?

FC: We landed. From there, I went by train to Fort Benning.

PR: Start your OCS. When did you start that?

FC: I want to say I got back there on April 11, '43. Then I came home. They gave me some (inaudible) time, (inaudible).

PR: Came back to Texas?

FC: Yeah. I had a nail in my shoe. We were pretty rundown. And then I went back to OCS at Fort Benning. And I graduated on September the fourth. (inaudible) I came back and got married. Then went to Camp Fannin over in Cairo. That was an Infantry Replacement Center. I was there from September 11th or 12th until the following May when they sent me to Camp Hale, Colorado, to the 10th Division.

PR: What did you do at Fannin? What was your duties there?

FC: Training for recruits. Basic training. I ended up teaching math, reading. And I'm not a good shot. I have to look over like this. I never fired a rifle till I got in the Army except once or twice shooting at cans, maybe. Anyway, I did a lot of training with teaching them how to use mortars and how to fire machineguns, because you have all these knobs and snaps. It's all mechanical. And we taught them how to take a machinegun apart, put it together.

PR: What that a division you were training?

FC: No.

PR: Just the general recruits coming through?

FC: Yeah.

PR: After that they'd get signed up.

FC: We'd have them there for 13 weeks and they were gone.

PR: Was it pretty comfortable living at Fannin? Barracks?  
Tents?

FC: I had to live on the post. We weren't like the Air Force. The Air Force had it good. My wife couldn't believe what we was going through. She was here in Victoria at Foster Field. I could go home two nights a week, newlywed. We had two bachelor Officers in their late 30s, too old to go overseas. You're overage at 38 as Lieutenant. They would take my duty. I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning and drive to get out there. Icy, cold weather. Then from there they sent me to Camp Hale, with the 10th Light Division. Were you in the Air Force?

PR: No, I'm Medical Corps.

FC: They called it the Light Division because it didn't have the number of men. I don't want to bore you, but normally there are 12 men in an Infantry Squad. And you have a (inaudible) automatic rifle, which served its purpose but it's now archaic. They used some in Korea. But that took two men. We only had 9 men in my squad, not 12.

PR: Where was Camp Hale at?

FC: It was in Colorado. It's up by Aspen. Aspen was developed by men who were in this 10th Mountain Division. They came back. See, these were skiers. We had skiers.

PR: How about Fannin, is that still in existence up there, or is that flattened and gone like Foster?

FC: It never was --

PR: It never was a big, permanent base?

FC: They took over -- they used to raise roses. A lot of our maneuvers were on these old rose beds. Then from there, I was strictly (inaudible) my first day on duty.

PR: At Hale?

FC: At Hale. So then I had to live 60 miles from the base. We'd just gotten a new home.

PR: Did Betty go along with you to Hale?

FC: Yeah, seven months pregnant. I blew out my last tire 27 miles out in the country. But she went right with me. We had a lot of fun. We were young and it didn't bother us. We had a coal stove to cook on, and we didn't know how to cook on it. But anyway, by the time I had a 30-day medical leave, by the time I was ready to (inaudible), they moved that division down to Camp Swift, outside of (inaudible). And they had beefed it up. It never was as big as a regular division, but it beefed up from that light division. And we trained there from August into November.

Then they sent us overseas. This was when I was an Infantry Officer.

PR: This was August to November of '44.

FC: Mm-hmm.

PR: This was now the 10th Mountain Division. We're up to full strength.

FC: The 10th Mountain Division brought up considerably from what it was, but not quite up to... I don't recall what we didn't have. See, the 10th Light Division had 75-millimeter artillery. It was a mule pack out there. (inaudible) it wasn't. This was Merrill's Marauders. We were in Burma. General Merrill, Frank Merrill, came back. And after talking, his advice was that these light divisions needed to be beefed up. So, they shipped us. We left here about the 8th or 9th or 10th of December. We shipped out of Newport News, Virginia, and landed on about the 22nd of December.

PR: Which ship was that on?

FC: That was the *Argentina*, the sister ship. It wasn't as crowded.

PR: Did you go in a convoy or zigzag?

FC: Don't remember.

PR: That'd be fast enough if it could go on its own.

FC: I don't remember.

PR: Did you have any stops out of Newport, or right into Naples?

FC: Right into Naples. And of course as an Officer, the enlisted men had it way better than I did two years earlier on the *Brazil*. It wasn't crowded like the *Brazil*. The *Brazil*, they put planks and sat on the outside of the ship. When you walked out on the deck, they didn't see you. All you saw was a wall and bunks. And on this, took probably about 3,000 of us. And we had table and tablecloth and knives and forks. And on this, you stood up and ate out of a mess kit.

PR: Were you a Second [Lilly?] or a First?

FC: I was First this time (inaudible). And then we landed in Naples. I'll never forget, I was at church on Christmas Sunday, Christmas Day. That's the only Episcopal chapel I ever saw. We had communion in the afternoon. And just as we finished that service, they told us to get going, that we were shipping out. They shipped us out, set us up to (inaudible) in English with a (inaudible) and an Italian, in an Italian ship with the Italian Navy as an escort. The Germans had launched what they called the [Sergio?] River Campaign. I'm not going to say everything about that, but it could cause a lot of trouble because they were very

close to capturing (inaudible) and arms supplies which they needed very badly.

PR: This was a counter-attack.

FC: No. My understanding of it -- this isn't what the books say, but my understanding of it was that it started out as kind of an oversized patrol. And they found -- I don't want to put it on the tape.

(break in audio)

FC: -- Livorno.

PR: By ship?

FC: By ship.

PR: The whole division?

FC: We went over the 86th Regiment. I was in the 86th Regiment, the 3rd Battalion of the 86th Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division. They sent us over first. And we went in the line behind to stop if they needed us. Then we moved into the line. Our artillery were English. They're an English Artillery.

PR: Support by actual Brits?

FC: Yeah, ours were still on the way. And we went into the line next to the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, which was a disaster.

PR: Was this around Pisa or Leghorn or Florence?



FC: I didn't know where I was till I saw the Leaning Tower of Pisa. We were up in the Apennines by this time. We were (inaudible) Lucca. (inaudible) Lucca, it was a sprawl. And then we went through the fighting in the Apennines. And then the second campaign I was in was called the Po Valley.

PR: What was your assignment with the 10th?

FC: My assignment, I had 21 men and one non-com and myself.

PR: A platoon or a squad?

FC: Platoon, Ammunition Pioneer Platoon. We were supposed to furnish ammunition and we were supposed to do light engineering work. I had organized the school. They didn't have this. They added this to the division at Camp Swift. They put me in charge of -- I was the newest man in the battalion.

PR: Was there one per battalion or one per regiment?

FC: One per battalion. But what we actually did, they didn't need us just as a munition loader. That wasn't our primary. We were kind of troubleshooters. We did a little reconnaissance, we did patrols, we did lots of odds and ends.

PR: Those are real mountains there, too, aren't they?

FC: Yeah, they're not like our Rockies. But they're --

PR: Up-and-down, valleys...

FC: Yeah, they are. And when you get out of the Po Valley, it's flat as this table.

PR: So, I've seen that as a campaign. That was the Apennine Campaign where you got credit for. How long did that last, that fighting there?

FC: I would say that lasted from the time we got there until Franklin Roosevelt died, because the day that Roosevelt died was when we started our second campaign out in the Po Valley.

PR: After the Apennine, you just stayed up in the hills there and made your camp?

FC: We were in the line. We had to advance into it. It was Mount Belvedere. And then Mount [Teleteroca?] is where I got my medal. It was when we assaulted [Teroca?]. We captured the salient cites.

PR: Strong points the Germans had.

FC: Right. From there, that was a jumping off for them.

PR: The end of the Apennine, down into the Po.

FC: That was down in the Po Valley.

PR: You got a Silver Star, I think.

FC: No, I got two Bronze Stars.

PR: What was the experience with those?

FC: The first one, we were counter-attacked by a unit called the [Mittmorel?] Battalion. Mittmorel is a section in

southern Germany. These were Alpine troops. And Edelweiss was there, the [singer?] (inaudible). And they attacked, a counter-attack. And I was in kind of a dugout with another fellow when suddenly the Germans had infiltrated. I was about 200 yards from the frontline, just waiting there. I'd forgotten what we were doing there. One time I was by myself doing things, and my Sergeant was running the platoon. I was kind of a troubleshooter for the Battalion Commander. Anyway, some Germans came in between where we were and the [pump?] and sprayed the area with submachine guns. Scared the living daylight out of me. I got hit by a piece of shrapnel. Once you get going, you're all right. I went up to this ridge and a foreign artillery shell landed where my other fella -- I thought he'd had it. And I got up to get going, going out to see what I could do. And I got knocked down by a tree burst. I didn't get hurt enough to have any... And I got out there and (inaudible) they were out of ammunition. So I got a few fellas and we went back and brought it up. They exalted me more than (inaudible).

And then the other one, we were on Lake Garda, the northern end. We were going up the road, and once again we had to go around. The lake had a dock. And I think I did a lot

of little things that added up. They promised me a third. Legion of America that day was higher than the Silver Star. It could be given for combat or administrative.

(break in audio)

FC: (distorted audio; inaudible) they had enough trained rock climbers (inaudible). And the snow there was of a texture that snow shoes (inaudible). And they used a ski patrol (inaudible) because the way the (inaudible) decimated Russia. (inaudible)

PR: They're real rocky mountains, too, aren't they?

FC: They're craggy, but they're not as high as ours.

PR: Not a lot of alpine meadows or anything.

FC: No, (inaudible) they sent us to (inaudible) Switzerland, Austria, and (inaudible). The war wasn't over (inaudible). The Italian Theater was over first. (inaudible) the war was still going on in Austria (inaudible) so they sent us there. (inaudible) glad the war was over. (inaudible) sent us over to (inaudible) Italy and (inaudible).

PR: Let's get back to the Po. You finished up the Apennines and you went down into the (inaudible). Is this all the Fifth Army?

FC: Yeah, we were the Fifth Army. General Crittenberger was our... The 2nd Corps of the Fifth Army. While we were on Lake Garda, the Armistice became effective.

PR: In Italy?

FC: In Italy. The war was still going on in the rest of Europe.

PR: When you came out down out of Apennine and (inaudible) across Po, was that just --

FC: (inaudible)

PR: (inaudible) fast as you can? Not much opposition by that time?

FC: No, because they were trying to get out of it. At the time, they were trying to get back. We talked to some of them. They were said, "You ought to help us. We're trying to get back to keep the Russians out of Europe." And we were (inaudible) them. "We're not trying to fight you. Can't you tell? If we had wanted to fight you, don't you think we'd be a little better?" Anyway, they sent us all up to (inaudible) called [Tito?].

PR: You went across the Po Valley at Turin and up into Garda?

FC: Up into the Alps, all the way up to the Swiss border.

PR: And [Pasarena?], was that up in that area?

FC: Yeah, [Reische?], R-E-I-S-something.

PR: Was the town there?

FC: No, it was a town in Switzerland. And you know what they did? When we got up there, we were bedraggled and unshaven. The Germans, they sent the (inaudible) to tell

us where our quarters were. (inaudible), 6'3", 230.

They're intimidating. And we won this war.

PR: And they showed you where to go to get cleaned up.

FC: Yeah, "This here, this here."

PR: Did you stay in a hotel, then?

FC: No, it was out in the boondocks. We stayed in homes. We had German MPs directing our traffic, incidentally.

(inaudible) when the Armistice occurred in Europe, it brought us back down into the Po Valley for a few days.

And then they shipped us to northeastern (inaudible) Tito, out of Italy. And the (inaudible), see, they had the Communist partisans, they had the Tito partisans, they had the [Makalovich?] partisans. In the Italian side, they had the Communist partisans and the Monarchists partisans. And we were supposed to keep these people apart.

PR: Sort of like it is now.

FC: One time, our Battalion Commander was a guy named John Hayes. We located him. One of the men located him for me through the computers, but he died in December of '97. Anyway, I tried to call his widow, and the phone rang and she never answered. But anyway, he was a resolute kind of man. And some of the Tito people seized a couple of the Makalovich partisans. This is unwritten history. He sent word to them, "I want that man released by six o'clock, or

we're coming after them." So he assembled -- in an Infantry Battalion, I think there are 36 Officers. He didn't use any enlisted men. He assembled us in the town square with our carbines. At six o'clock, [white?]- [faced?] forward-march, we started marching toward these headquarters. People in there saw us coming. They opened the door and flung those men out. He would do that sort of thing. Last time I saw him, they sent him to Miami. He was commanding troops from Miami when they had the Democratic and Republican -- they had all that fuel in Chicago. Soon as he got off the plane, I recognized him. And so did (inaudible). And I said, "They'd better not have any (inaudible) in there, because..."

PR: (laughter) They won't last long.

FC: Yeah, they'll put Big John on them. Yeah, he was a tremendous man. He also fought in Vietnam. Ended up as a major General. He was a Captain commanding our -- major is supposed to command a battalion. He commanded our battalion as a Captain. He commanded a regiment as Lieutenant Colonel. The Officers were on detached service, so they were holding up the...

PR: Where did you stay in Italy when you were over by Yugoslavia?

FC: It's called Tarvisio, was the nearest place. It was a British mining town. While I was there, the word came through that if you had 75 points you could get out. So I could get out. And then they told me to report to Milan before the Allied military government.

PR: This was right after V-E Day?

FC: It was some time after V-E Day.

PR: End of May?

FC: Probably June. We were up in the mountains. I reported to Milan. And then from there I reported to a Welsh office as part of the Allied military government. From there, they sent me to Cremona, where I was the commander of a refugee camp, trying to get these refugees back down to south Italy.

PR: Where's Cremona near?

FC: Cremona is on the Po River. And that's where Stradivarius -- it's almost directly below... I can't think of the name of it. At the bottom of it, Lake Garda, is a city where Romeo and Juliet... It'll come to me. Anyway, then I was there for several months.

PR: Verona?

FC: Verona is the town, right. Cremona is where I was. They had these trucks hauling things up to north Italy. On a



return, they'd send them by our place and we'd put these refugees on them.

PR: Which way were the refugees headed?

FC: Headed south.

PR: They'd been pushed up north by the war?

FC: (inaudible)

PR: Was there a lot of abandoned German equipment? Tanks and things along the road? They hauled them all with them?

FC: They were pretty well (inaudible) through. They didn't have many things. You can't use tanks to -- the tanks weren't effective. Our tanks were very ineffective. I saw a German tank, at one time there was a P-47 trying to knock it out. And the P-47, the guy with the tank, with the machineguns and the 20-millimeter, the tank was firing right back at it. They were trying to get it with artillery, land a shell close to it. And it would move a little bit. It was (inaudible), huge. You could've hit and you'd just see the tracer back off. From there, they sent me to Milan. I was at Milan about a month, living in a hotel. That was (inaudible).

PR: For Occupation government?

FC: Yeah. I had refugee camps there, too.

PR: In Milan.

FC: But it was so well organized, I didn't have to do anything. And then from there they sent me to a POW camp. I was Officer of the Day one time with a German driver and a German [oiler?]. And (inaudible) speaking German (inaudible).

PR: Where was that POW?

FC: I don't remember where that was.

PR: Still in northern Italy?

FC: Yeah. I don't recall. I'd have to see.

PR: Were they trying to churn those Germans out as fast as they could to get them back into Germany?

FC: They were not POWs. They were internees. If an Army surrenders as a unit, they're internees. You surrender individually, you're POW. So they maintain their own chain of command. And they were sending them back to Germany. And then from there, I commandeered a bottle of champagne when they said I was leaving for home.

PR: Where were you in Germany?

FC: I wasn't in Germany.

PR: Where'd you go from the POW camp?

FC: Naples. The POW camp, the reason I don't know -- it wasn't any city. And I never left the -- I was just there maybe a week. They sent us to --

PR: You were out of the 10th Mountain by this time.

FC: Oh, yeah, I was in the 85th Division. I never saw them. It was just administrative. Somewhere in the pictures they showed them, but after that, until I saw this I didn't realize that (inaudible) 88th Division. It was long since gone. These were all administrative. I don't know that they ever gave me a copy of the orders.

PR: Would you get orders when they tell you to go? Someone would shuttle orders for you, or did the orders eventually just catch up with you?

FC: No, someone would tell me, "You got a real break. You're going to..."

PR: Didn't you have to have something to tell you where to go to or what unit to go to, though?

FC: I'm sure I did. I was attached to them for quarters and rations. That's what they called it.

PR: Where'd you go out of Naples? Rotating home?

FC: (inaudible) ship. I was probably in Naples 10 days waiting for a ship to go home.

PR: What was that ship?

FC: It was one of the Liberty ships, and old --

PR: Old, rusty tub?

FC: Well, yeah. I had one example of something that -- I would never remember this sort of thing. But this guy was a Lieutenant Colonel. And he had been a big, husky young

fella, somewhat older than we were. I was 24; he was probably 28. He played football in some small college over in the southeast and was coaching. He got in the Army. And in the Infantry, you get to be a Lieutenant Colonel under 45, you're a boy wonder. He was out of the Army, and he was the kind of man we ought to have in the Army. You know why? He applied for -- you have to go to the (inaudible) Command school forever.

PR: To progress.

FC: He applied for it, and they passed him over and sent some brand new people far less experienced than him, Captains. They passed him over. And he said, "I'll take it." He was a Lieutenant Colonel when we were all in a big room together. We were in the (inaudible) on the ship. Weren't wasn't a lot of us on there. We were all Officers. But nobody paid any attention that he was a Colonel or even called him Sir.

PR: Did you have your own Officers' mess on the ships?

FC: I don't remember.

PR: They must have ate somewhere else.

FC: There weren't any enlisted men. There weren't a lot of us on that ship. I'd say there weren't over 40 or 50 of us.

PR: That went from Naples. Where'd that dock back here?

FC: Up in Virginia.

PR: Newport News again?

FC: I think so. And then from there, they sent me by train to Fort Sam. I got discharged at Fort Sam.

PR: When were you discharged?

FC: December the 23rd.

PR: You had an Officer's number, too.

FC: Yeah, O-1324756.

PR: And the O was --

FC: (inaudible) 18058544 I remember. You had to identify yourself. (inaudible) if I reported, they sent me, they said, "You go there and do that," I'd go over there and I would -- "Crain, Frank, H, 18058544," when you reported. Some of those dates are wrong.

PR: We can step them up.

FC: I got back to this country April the 11th, not August 8th.

PR: When were you discharged?

FC: Discharged December 23rd, 1945. I know this because I got credit for my military service as a member of the Legislature: I served 3.885 years. If I had stayed on the third of January of 1946, that'd have been a full four years. But I'm from December 23rd to January 3rd, shy of four years.

PR: Did you have any Reserve time?

FC: I got in what was known as the Inactive Reserves. They tried to encourage us to go and stay in the Reserves. But once again, I was married with a child. I wanted to get back. Figured if I got in law school they would call me up. So I stayed in the Inactive Reserves. And then I had three friends a little bit younger than I, maybe a year or something, maybe two years, who were Air Force Officers. They were all called back into duty, Korea. Now, I'd been out looking at oil field locations, (inaudible). And I came back to my office. It was December 22nd. Dark, icy-cold day. And my law partner was a man named Paul [Blott?], who was a geologist. He was waiting at the office for me. I had a letter to me, Subject: Recall to Active Duty. I went home and found that my father had taken a turn for the worse that my mother wasn't fully aware of. So I sent for the doctor to take him to the hospital, and he died Christmas Day, which was Monday.

And my orders told me that I would be notified when to take my physical. Then in February, they said if I volunteered I could join with my old unit. Well, MacArthur sent two columns up into North Korea with no reconnaissance. The Chinese came down, and they were... That was a terrible war, terrible. Anyway, I didn't take the physical until

March, early March. And the only thing wrong with me was the allergy. And I [waived?] that. So I'm telling you, I was sweating that out. And what saved me, I turned 30 in January. Would have been overage (inaudible) 38. And they cut them off at 29. It's a rumor. I didn't know that at the time. But they were cutting the First Lieutenants off at 29. There wasn't a lot of Infantry in Korea. We couldn't get a lot of soldiers in there. They use the word troops, but that's wrong; a troop is a group of soldiers. But it was a small place, and we couldn't get a lot of people in. And what they did -- I read this in a book -- back in Korea they took older Officers, some of whom had been POWs, and gave them command in Korea. Those in POW camps, they suffered deprivation, but they weren't in combat. So they sent them over there. By this time, they were four years older. And then they sent most of the graduates from West Point over there as Platoon Leaders, with no experience, no field experience at all. They were decimated.

PR: This is December and January of what years?

FC: Fifty-one. I got my notice December 22nd, '50. Some years later, I found where I was discharged in 1953.

PR: Officially.

FC: From this Reserve.

PR: They never did call you? You were due to go in March but -  
-

FC: No, that was for the physical. See, by March, I was 30 years old.

PR: They never did call you after that.

FC: After that, they never did call me. But I was sweating it out. And then some years later I heard that they cut the First Lieutenants off at 29 and that they sent a lot of ROTC graduates and West Point graduates. And they sent them over there with no field experience. And the casualty rate among Platoon Leaders was probably the highest.

PR: That's as bad as the Bulge, I guess, where they fed those green divisions in. They just didn't know what they were doing. Untrained.

FC: (inaudible) [Doosey?]. He was captured almost immediately after he got in the lines.

PR: One day, I think.

FC: Wounded. There's a man here named Ledbetter who was landed at Salerno, and he was captured the first day.

PR: I just interviewed him last week. He has a fascinating story. I just wrote it up.

FC: [Simon Cloud]? was right --

PR: I feel bad I missed Simon Cloud. He gave me a videotape. You might want to see it sometime. It's an interview they



did at Andersonville in Georgia. Simon Cloud on it and Orby Ledbetter and two or three others. I'm not sure who they were. Have you ever seen that tape?

FC: No, but Simon had the worst deprivation that I ever heard. You take these big guys, they don't fare as well. They give a guy, 150 pounds, a piece of bread; they give a 250-pound man a piece of bread. A 250-pound guy is going to end up being 200, and I'm going to end up being 150. That guy (inaudible). Simon, was an airplane mechanic, first entered the Infantry.

PR: Where was he captured?

FC: He was captured on Bataan and escaped.

(break in audio)

PR: Do you have anything else about your career you want to say?

FC: I think my generation, the most significant thing they did was our military service. It was the most significant event in my life. And I had a lot of (inaudible) things happen. And I did so many different things. Most people, they're pilots or they're this. Man, you name it and I did it.

PR: Isn't a lot of it attitude? How you approach things?

FC: It might be. Maybe I'm bragging, but the battalion group, major General [Hayes] and major Drake, his exec, they had a

lot of confidence in me. If something would come up they'd say, "Frank..." For example, we're crossing the Po River. It got all screwed up. And they said, "Frank, go up there and straighten that out." So I got up to the river and got the boats collected and got everybody back going. I was the last man to cross the river. And a Staff car drove up with a Field Grade Officer. He was shouting at me. And I pretended I couldn't hear him. I said, "Get me out of here. Get me out of here, man." I saluted him. He saluted me and got in the car and drove off. (laughter) Things like that.

PR: I'll never cease to be amazed at the responsibility you guys were given at age 18, 19, 20, 21.

FC: I was 22 when I was commissioned, and I was 24 when I got out. For example, we didn't have anybody in the battalion that knew how to operate a flamethrower. So Colonel Hayes said, "Frank, I want you to pick out a non-com. The two of you are going down to learn how to operate a flamethrower."

PR: (laughs) And you did it.

FC: Yeah, and they said, "I'll show you. You're in charge of the gasmasks." I said, "Where are they?" They said, "Well, we don't know, but they're back there somewhere." So that was interesting. They wanted to find a place to have a firing range. But the flamethrower had a poor

design. It had a valve here. You hit the ground, the damn thing knocked the breath out of you. And this valve would hit you. They had two kinds of flames. You had gasoline. Then they had -- it looked like Cheerios, the cereal. It had Cheerios back in it, those little round things. You put that in, and it just dissolved and turned into kind of like a real thin gelatin. And when you shoot that out, it sticks and burns.

PR: It'll actually stick and not just run off.

FC: It depended on the situation as to which one you used. I think you've seen pictures of these Japanese running out on fire. That's the gel.

PR: The sticky stuff.

FC: Yeah. The other stuff was... It had three tanks. Two tanks were compressed air. And the little tank was the --

PR: The juice.

FC: You turn this on, you open this valve. Then you have the hose and the nozzle.

PR: Would there be a pilot light?

FC: No.

PR: How would you light the thing?

FC: It had kind of a spark. And then when you use this tank up, you'd reach up and turn on this, or vice versa.

PR: That's the compressed air.

FC: Yeah. You had two tanks for compressed air, and one tank... So I was the designated... And when I made my talk -- you weren't there, were you? (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) I said, "Are there any flamethrower operators here?" One other guy. Normally, an Officer wouldn't do that.

PR: No, probably wouldn't touch it. When did you go back to law school? Right after you were discharged?

FC: March of '46. I graduated in May of '48.

PR: Was that on the GI Bill?

FC: Yeah. I built a house on the GI Bill. Had to build a house to have a place to live, because there was very little rental property. And they wouldn't rent to you if you had children.

PR: Discrimination, isn't it? (laughs)

END OF AUDIO FILE