

Interview with Edward Jacobsen
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Interviewed by John Carter

Carter: Which branch in the military did you serve in?

Jacobsen: The United States Army, Infantry.

Carter: Infantry, all right.

Carter: When did you go into the Army?

Jacobsen: Well, I was in college, at Ripon College in Wisconsin and was in ROTC and on April, I think, think-- April, the 8th, 1943; we were called to active duty and we went to Fort McClellan, Alabama for our basic infantry training. Then they didn't have room for us at Fort Benning so we were sent us back to our own colleges. The fellows from [unintelligible] I can't remember all the other schools from our area but, we went back to our colleges for one quarter and then they had room at Fort Benning, and we went down there and I, I was just about through our, our cycle and I was washed out because I weighed 112 pounds and they decided I'd had waivers to even get into ROTC. They said I wasn't sufficiently rugged physically to make a combat platoon leader. That was what I was told and at that time we were all had the rank of cadet, the equivalent of corporal. and they had changed things so that only the first three graders kept their rank when they left Fort Benning and washed out is what they called it and so, I marched out of there as a

private and they put me in as a heavy machine gunner; I couldn't carry a carbine but I could carry a heavy caliber water cooling machine gun. [Laughing]

Carter: What happened after Fort Benning, you were assigned to carry the machine gun?

[Subtle laughing]

Jacobsen: Well, I was given furlough and I went home to see my wife. I'd been married the previous December 22nd so, after my furlough, I went to Camp Myles Standish in Massachusetts and from there shipped out, from Boston for England and was in replacement depot at Warminster, England. We were all getting ready for the invasion. They had us haul packages as they called them and one day two and a half ton truck drove up, and a sergeant with a clipboard jumped off and started reading off some names and my name was one of 'em, he said to grab my gear and climb on the truck and this truck went from place to place picked up other people; we didn't know why, what was happening or anything. Later on we started comparing notes and we couldn't figure out anything that we had in common other than we were infantry and finally they'd dropped us off at this little place and the trucks drove away, just left us there and they said somebody'd be along in a bit. Well, somebody did come along, a jeep with a couple of officers in it; they informed us we were now members of Provisional Battalion XX or Provisional Battalion 20 and we still didn't know what the devil we were supposed to do until the next day we were informed we were to [unintelligible] a unit was to convert people from all other branches to infantry; if they were artillery, airborne and had been injured in training and things like that over there, all sorts of things- so that we would have replacements. They started to worry about how many riflemen they would need when they crossed the channel and I almost felt guilty for a while because my job, the reason I was in this group was because I was qualified on all infantry weapon and I was supposed to take men out, and if they were going to be armed

with an M-1, or with a pistol, or with a carbine, or a grease gun; and I make certain that, even though they had basic training, that they knew how to fire that weapon and then march ‘em back and then some Lieutenant would [unintelligible] at that time I was an acting Sergeant, and some Lieutenant then would use his magic pencil and say they were qualified as infantry or riflemen, or whatever

Carter: [Subtle laughing, amused]

Jacobsen: --and that was the marvelous thing, that I was doing that at the time the invasion occurred; so it was by the grace of God and the Army’s wonderful ways that I missed the actual assaults on the beaches.

Carter: Oh, okay. So, when the, the, the invasion took place you were fortunate to not have to assault the beaches?

Jacobsen: Right. I went up the hill at Omaha beach when there wasn’t any firing going on and spent my time, my first time in France in the apple orchards of Normandy until I went forward to a replacement depot, and then was reassigned, or rather assigned to the, the D Company, 320th Infantry, 35th Infantry Division, of the 3rd Army-George Patton’s army.

Carter: Oh, okay

Jacobsen: --and I ended up on my first wedding anniversary down in the Saar, near a town called Sarreguemines on a road block with a fellow from Jersey and we were sort of huddled up in some straw that night and I mentioned to him, I said “Billy,” name was Bill Jordan, I said, “Billy, tonight’s my wedding night.” He said, “Get away from me!”[Laughing]

Carter: [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Still laughing] ‘Cause we were tryin’ a huddle up to keep warm and then all the, the tanks were starting to roll past us like crazy, we didn’t know what was happening. It turns out that the Bulge had taken place the German attacks up there were going on and Patton had turned us around and was sending the armor up first. We pulled out of the, the Saar, down in Sarreguemines on the- I think it was the 24th, yeah, on the 24th. We went back to Metz and picked up replacements and went right up to the Bulge. We were at- We hit Diekirch, Luxemburg, and from there we were committed to action, the first real action I can remember of a place where the name was Lutrebois by Bastogne; I think that was just south of Bastogne and we did fight our way into Bastogne, and I think it was January 13th we moved out of Bastogne with one company of the 101st Airborne, I don’t know what regiment it was and we moved forward, and our objective was a little village, or hamlet called Bourcy. We called it “Ubercy,” but it was named- real name was Bourcy. We got a late start the morning that we were to make the assault on the place. There was a sloping road that went up toward this town and the fields were mined on either side, but we started going up just as the [unintelligible] started to get light. Then the Germans wouldn’t expect anybody to come up there, they had an 88 pointed right down the road and [laughing] the Germans were on that gun obviously were either half asleep or eating breakfast; or something. Our two scouts got up there, the rifle company I was with, Able Company of our battalion. I was the section leader of heavy machine guns and we went along as a machine gun unit. The scouts pulled a round out of this 88, stuck a thermite grenade and then all hell broke loose. We started fighting for that village. We took the first house. I, well, I had my platoon leader with me, a Lieutenant Gerbough, and as he, he turned to me and said “Jake,” he said, “Get ‘em dug in” and I was running along the back of this house here trying to get my two machine squads of machine gun people dug in and just then the shells started coming in. We

thought we were being hit by our own artillery, but instead they were self-propelled German guns and there.

Carter: Ah.

Jacobsen: --were spurs of woods on either side of this little hamlet, and they were firing at us and I saw a depression in the ground and I just jumped for that, and it was all snowy up there and everything and fortunately it was a hole that some German had dug and I sat down and only my knee were sticking up and after that all these shells had burst I looked up and I saw my knee was all bloody and like an idiot, I was filthy dirty and everything. I took off my leather palmed wool glove and started [laughing] scraping away and discovered I didn't have a hole in my pants and I looked up- the shelling was- had finished. I looked up and here the radio man from Able Company had been hit, that's what I had on me--

Carter: Ah.

Jacobsen: --was part of his blood. He was dead and I crawled over to Lieutenant Gerbough (?) who was squatting down with his back against the building with a cigarette in his mouth and I started to talk to him and discovered he had a big fragment right through the top of his helmet.

Carter: Oh, my God.

Jacobsen: It ended up that there were just four of us left in that section of, uh, machine gun section.

Carter: Now how many men in this section?

Jacobsen: Let's see. I think we had, I think we had sixteen men. I can't remember exactly.

Carter: Ah, that's fine.

Jacobsen: And the riflemen, we went from- they went from house to house and we finally took that town. But we were cut off, and we couldn't get anybody a rifle, uh support, rifle--couldn't come up to support us.

Carter: Ah.

Jacobsen: Uh, two tanks- no three tanks came up, and they fanned out and all of the sudden one of them got hit and the bogey wheel was blown off. The other two tanks turned around and beat the devil out of there. We were left, and we couldn't- nobody's coming up.

Carter: Ah.

Jacobsen: And the latter part of the day we saw a thin column coming up that road there we thought, "Thank the Lord, we got some support coming up." It turned out to be a medical unit [laughing] with litters. They walked up but the rifleman weren't coming up.

Carter: The medics would come through, but nobody who wanted to fight would come up. Oh God, that's terrible.

Jacobsen: After that following the medics came a couple platoons of riflemen. After we secured that area, a couple of days later we were told to continue, we tried to establish fire superiority to get up off the ground and move forward. At that point we were using air cooled machine guns- we burned out our heavy .30s. We couldn't even move so we were pulled back to Metz again to just try and get rest and replacements. We went from there into the Seventh Army in the [unintelligible] mountains for short time to try and season the replacements. From there we went up-- I think it was the 9th Army we were assigned to then, for the drive up to the Rhine over the--

Wern River was right there; a little town Gelsenkirchen. The Germans had blown the Ruhr dam the water was up so we had to wait till that stuff went down. We cut off there, I think the operation was called “grenade.” We cut up across the area there up to the Rhine. We pulled back, we didn’t have to make the Rhine assault; which wasn’t really much anyways. Once they crossed the Rhine, we were moved over across the Rhine and we continued. We were up in what’s called the “Rose Pocket” up in the Ruhr. I was leading my section across a bridge over a canal. They had thrown smoke in for concealment for us so we could run across there. I tripped over some German communication wire, a very neat German had lined his; this was a town called Bottrop, near Essen; he’d lined his little garden with bricks up on end. My knee went right through on this and cut a gash in my knee. I was limping around that evening and the Company Commander asked me why I was limping. I told him and he says, “Jake, why don’t we give you a three day pass?” I hadn’t had a pass all the time I’d been there. I thought hot dog! I’m going to get some doughnuts. We were going back to Nuerenbeck (?) or Treebeck (?), Holland; to the rest center. I was sitting in a jeep trailer and the driver went down the wrong road and backed up, he was headed for the German positions and backed up. I was asleep a fellow and I had tied ourselves to the rings on the side of the trailer. My foot was hanging down and it got caught and I broke my toe. Instead of getting doughnuts at the rest center I ended up on a hospital train at the rest center and sent me back to the 16th General Hospital at Liege, Belgium. There they used tongue depressors to splint my toe. I got a little rest there for a while at the hospital.

Carter: How long, so you got your toe broke the guy back the jeep into something, broke your toe, and you got hospital rest, how long did they leave you alone at the hospital? Two days?
Three days?

Jacobsen: Oh no, I can’t remember exactly, but it must have been a couple of weeks.

Carter: Oh really?

Jacobson: Because had some other problems that were caused by an infection; from a prostate infection developed, you probably don't want this on here. They considered prostate trouble venereal well it want from anything like. They checked me out and discovered it wasn't venereal. They started feeding me a lot of sulfa, and my blood started to deteriorate. That was a long time afterward, they kept feeding me sulfa. But anyway, I was released from the hospital when my toe heeled and went back to my outfit. We ended up closest to the Elbe River, we pulled back from there to Muenster, Germany. They sent me back to the hospital because my blood condition, I was getting kind of weak. When they took care of that I went back and joined up with my outfit at Muenster and discovered I was commandant of a prison, warden of a prison.

Carter: What rank were you now, as warden?

Jacobsen: I was a sergeant.

Carter: A buck sergeant huh? How many prisoners did you have?

Jacobsen: I think we only had one, they had a GI in a padded cell because he charged a lieutenant. Somebody decided he was crazy.

Carter: Was he?

Jacobsen: I don't think so. That only lasted about a week, we spent most of our time there getting calls, sending jeeps with a heavy .30's rounding up displaced persons who were running around with butcher knives killing cows, threatening the German's. That sort of thing

Carter: About what time frame we talking here? When you were the warden and keeping the TPs from killing all the cows?

Jacobsen: Could have been March, I'm not sure. That date is all hazy.

Carter: Oh sure.

Jacobsen: That was a short time and then we pulled out from there and were sent to Altenkirchen down near Koblenz where we were in occupation for a short time. Again my blood was acting up so they sent me back to the hospital. At that point-- before I went in the hospital, Bob Grieger from North Dakota he was another section leader of the other section in our platoon; he and I got to go to Paris on a pass one day. We were walking down the street people were hawking newspapers. We grabbed one, he and I had taken French back in high school and that's about all the French we had. We tried to read this newspaper and very laboriously discovered the atom bomb had been dropped in the Pacific, This was after the war was over. Then I got back to camp went on sick call. They put me in the hospital. After they checked my blood and gave me some more stuff they sent me back to the replacement depot. Word came down the 35th division had been moved to Lucky Strike. And anybody that was in the pipeline to go back would not, since they were alerted to go back to the States. People that were not with them would be reassigned in the Pacific. This really broke my heart, I had lived through the first part over here and I didn't think I'd make it again. Machine gun people were very popular targets. I fortunately ran into a man that had been my Battalion Commander in England, before D-Day. It's just a miracle that I ran into him in the street there. He saw to it I got back to my division and came back on a recuperation furlough, supposedly. I ended up getting discharged and coming home in August of 1945. that's it in a nut shell.

Carter: I would like to talk about other things if you don't mind? I would just like to go back. Now you were with Patton's group--

Jacobsen: Until, after the Bulge. If you read Lucky Ford by Codren was the man he does make reference to the fact that if I remember correctly Patton was unhappy that he lost the 35th

Carter: Did you have any opinions of Patton at all? I've read things in history about some of the guys just hated his guts.

Jacobsen: I didn't hate him at all.

Carter: Some guys loved him, some guys hated him.

Jacobsen: No, I think the newspapers, the correspondents probably built more out of that thing than anything. I knew very few, well I can tell you one quick story about Patton. A fellow in my section, his name was Morris, can't remember his first name, He'd been in from Normandy-been through everything. We were in a fire fight one day and all the sudden he just slumped down behind a tree and started to cry. Crosby was our medic and he put a tag on him and sent him back, that's what we used to call combat fatigue. He was reassigned to the MPs. He was at a road junction directing traffic, after he had recovered and General Patton came along in his command car and was riding along. The story we got was that Morris stood at attention, threw a highball and said, "Go Georgie, Go!" The vehicle stopped, an officer came over and wanted to know name, rank, and serial number. Believe it or not, he was reassigned to us. He had no bad feeling for Patton, even after that.

Carter: A number of months ago, I just finished reading a book called *A Time for Trumpets*, that has to do with the battle of Bastogne and that and things that went on with the tankers and all the problems they had. I think it was Bastogne if I'm not mistaken. But you were actually involved in the relief of that.

Jacobsen: We fought our way up from the south.

Carter: Yeah I don't know a great deal about Patton, just a couple books I've read and the movie I saw of course.

Jacobsen: I think he was a fine field general, I don't think he, he certainly wasn't a politician he was a fighting general-the kind we needed.

Carter: You gave a couple of names of the towns, what city was your first fire fight in?

Jacobsen: Lutrebois- That was a terrible fight. We ran into, I can't remember the unit, they have a history of the 101st Airborne Division I was reading some years ago. I became incensed because they attribute the capture of Bourcy to the 101st Airborne unit. That wasn't the case because we did it. But before that at Lutrebois we had a terrible time with a German paratroop unit. Of course, they weren't using paratroopers for air drop after I think, Sicily it was. They were good fighters; that was a real terrible time. That's where our unit had its worst pasting with 88's guns--they were just firing point blank at us. That was a terrible spot.

Carter: The 88s were, they were for the Americans, a terrible gun but for the Germans an excellent gun that 88 mm cannon.

Jacobsen: Oh yeah, there was a flat trajectory. They would fire them right at us on the ground. The good thing about the 88, was that if they fired and the round went over you; all fragments went forward-didn't have to worry about that. It wasn't the same as artillery shells, or mortars; an HE would come in and explode; that was different. I hated mortars, everybody hated mortars.

Carter: Worse than artillery? Or not?

Jacobsen: Not the same. There's something impersonal about artillery, you don't see the guys that's doing it. You wish you could so you could shoot him.

Carter: Your unit used mostly .30 cal. machine guns?

Jacobsen: Yes, water cooled heavy .30 caliber machine gun.

Carter: For some reason, I was always under the impression the only machine gun they had was the .50 caliber.

Jacobsen: Oh no, we threw away more .50 caliber machine guns. If we were to cross a stream as wide-or half the width of this room; we were supposed to have a .30 caliber on one of our jeeps. As far as we were concerned they weren't worth a dam, we threw them away.

Carter: Oh really? That's interesting. 'Cause all you hear about is the .50 caliber machine gun in World War II.

Jacobsen: yeah, on airplanes.

Carter: On airplanes.

Jacobsen: I'll never forget down in Alabama, when the first time, you remember I was very light; the first time I was supposed to fire a .50 caliber I reached forward to pull the operating handle to tug it back and I didn't have the strength to pull it back. Two guys grabbed my legs and pulled me back.

Carter: It took three of you to cock it. It was bad enough. I went through Greely and they closed down the industrial studies department and you went through Ripon? And they closed down the college.

Jacobsen: Yeah, that's true

Carter: That's sad really. Nice little school is gone.

Jacobsen: No, Ripon.

Carter: Which one is closed? No isn't, Ripon is still going.

Jacobsen: Oh, I'm sorry, it's down in that area, not too far. I know what you mean

Carter: The quarterback from the Seattle Seahawks went there and the school is gone. (Crosstalk)

Carter: What do you remember most about serving in the military? Anything special or is it just fuzzy time ago?

Jacobsen: I don't remember much, I did enjoy my time in England before D-Day. If you can talk about enjoying being away from your wife and family. If we didn't have a package in camp; they would bring them in by the truckload and we would take all the clothing and stuff and re-clothe them and reequip them with weapons, that sort of thing. If we didn't have anything in camp, and all the other work was cleared up; I had a pass to go anywhere in the U.K. I traveled a bit. I went up to Edinburgh, because my wife is of Scottish decent. Of course, I had to go to Scotland first. We were right near Salisbury, and I used to go into Salisbury Cathedral. I am an Episcopalian so I used to go there for church every Sunday. I was free to be in there but we also had our private little church at our camp. This was a little old church built on Saxon foundations, Norman part of the structure it was the church of St. Mary of Codford. And then Codford proper has down in the very little town down the road was St. Peter's Church, which was a relatively new church; maybe only a few hundred years old. But I went back there my wife and I were back there a few years ago we been back a couple of times, she wouldn't believe the camp would have

been in back of this church. Until I found something in the church that mentions the woods in back or that area had used as a military camps for two world wars. So she believed me then. But it was a beautiful little church.

Carter: You kind of took the next question, I was going to ask you if you had ever been back to Europe and to France and that area? Just England?

Jacobsen: Well, Father Merrick was the priest in charge there at both St. Peter's and St. Mary's. Having grown up in the church I used to serve as an acolyte at home, so I used to serve to him occasionally. He became a very dear friend, he was an older man. He had been a machine gunner in WWI, so that was a bond. Incidentally my wife's uncle (unintelligible) had been a machine gunner in WWI with the British Army before he joined the French Army and became a member of the Lafayette Escradille. So, machine gunners sort of hang together. But I found his grave last time we were there. I didn't know that he had died in the meantime. But he was buried in the church yard.

Carter: I've read some things about machine gunners, the life expectancy wasn't very long.

Jacobsen: No, it wasn't.

Carter: It was in seconds or minutes

Jacobsen: Ah minutes. I can't remember what they estimated

Carter: Yeah, someone told me minutes. Machine gunners, guys with Browning automatic weapons. (Crosstalk) The enemy would sort of look for the automatic weapons groups first. I think I asked you this how many men were in a section.

Jacobsen: I believe we had sixteen men in our section.

Carter: Did you always have a full complement or did you sometime run short?

Jacobsen: We would get replacements in as we lose people. Hardest thing I had was the new fellows, the young fellows were the most troublesome. The older men weren't as silly, doing stupid things. We had trouble getting them to throw their ammunitions chests forward. You'd be lying on the ground and you can't always get up; you've got to throw 250 rounds in a chest up to the next guy to throw them up to the gunman, if you were in action. Up there in front of Lutrebois, that's where a funny thing happened. I had my first gunner-- Rosey and an assistant gunner named Harvey Huffman. It was strange his name would be that, he was part Indian from Oklahoma, he and I became good friends. Gerbough had moved up near the gun too and, why Huffman did this he couldn't tell me afterwards. We didn't carry packs, we carried our blankets wrapped around our shelter half with tent rope tied around and we'd swing these over our shoulders, or leave it on the jeep. We didn't leave these on the jeep that day because Huffman reached back and grabbed his bedroll, and threw it in front of the gun. Just then a German rifle grenade hit that bedroll and the machine gun. Blew the machine all over, splatter Rosey with fragments to the face; I thought he was dead but he wasn't. Huffman got a couple of pieces and it hit Gerbough too. The gun was out of action then, until we got another gun. But that was some action.

Carter: How many jeeps per section?

Jacobsen: Two jeeps per section.

Carter: And then you had other machine guns that were in the section?

Jacobsen: Two squads per section, two sections to a platoon. The heavy weapons Companies had two platoons of heavy .30s and a platoon of 88 mm mortars.

Carter; So, you were in charge of how many machine guns total?

Jacobsen: Two machine guns.

Carter: Did you ever get a Purple Heart?

Jacobsen: No.

Carter: Why not?

Jacobsen: I didn't want one.

Carter: What didn't you want one?

Jacobsen: I mentioned this Lieutenant Gerbough before in front of (unintelligible) we had this experience where the assistant gunner Huffman threw his bedroll up in front of the machine gun and just as he did that a German rifle grenade hit and fragments from the grenade hit the gunner, Harvey Huffman, the assistant gunner and Lieutenant Gerbough was up near the gun got hit and that evening Crosby, our medic asked the lieutenant if he'd like the Purple Heart. He'd come all the way from Normandy without a scratch so said he may as well. A few days later some white phosphorous exploded near us and Huffman got burned a bit and Gerbough got burned. Crosby asked Gerbough if he'd like another Purple Heart and he said sure, "I may as well start collecting them and sending them back to my girl." "My little girl" as he said. He wasn't married, it was his girlfriend. When we were out of Bastogne, when we took Bourcy; that's when he was killed. That was his third Purple Heart. I was superstitious. When I tripped over the wire up in Bottrap, the chief in our aid station; one of our medics, asked me, "Jake, do you want me to write up a tag on you?" I said, "No," he asked why not, I said, "I don't want to collect those things." I was superstitious of the devil at that point.

Carter: Was that the only superstition you had?

Jacobsen: Well no, I liked number 13; my army serial number was 16102313, I was thirteenth on the army shipping list, there was 13 of us that came out of the Bulge there, the riflemen, got nine rifleman in Able Company and the four of us. Thirteen was lucky there. My son was born on the thirteenth, Friday the 13th. My youngest son. There are other thirteen things I can think of. I was superstitious but I liked thirteen.

Carter: Did you ever wonder what am I doing this for” Why am I here? Why am I fighting this?

Jacobsen: No. I never had that feeling at all. When I grew up, my father as I mentioned, had been a professional Marine. He’d been in Nicaragua-- We’d been there before, he was in Vera Cruz, Haiti. In WWI, his Marine unit was getting ready to go overseas, they were test firing their French 75s. That was the last thing they were going to do before they were supposed to go over and he didn’t make it. My great grandfather fought with Sherman, marched to the sea. There was sort of a family tradition you might say, I thought of as a tradition. I was proud, for that matter, being a small man; small men are usually feisty than big men-big men don’t have to be. I think all things went into it, without being conscience of what they call machismo. I probably thought this is what I have to do, my duty.

Carter: What did your dad, a Marine, say when you went into the army?

Jacobsen: Well, he was in the insurance business in Chicago; and I had signed my contracts with the Army ROTC and then into the enlisted Reserve Corps. I went home on the weekend and stopped to see my dad. We went to lunch at Demetts Tea Room in the board of trade. After lunch there were a bunch of ladies having their lunch. Casually I mentioned to my dad that I had joined the Army. He exploded, being an old Marine, they didn’t hold back normally. He lost all control,

“JC, SOB, what the hell is wrong with you?! What’s wrong with the Marines?!” The Navy wouldn’t take me to begin with, and the Army wouldn’t take me because of my weight. The Marines wouldn’t take me because my chest was a half inch off at rest. They didn’t care about my weight, they knew I could be a fighting fool without that.

Carter: Any of those people you were in the army with, did you ever have reunions since this?

Jacobsen: I’ve been in one reunion, a few years ago, I went down to Kansas City, Kansas. I had to sign in when I got there. A telephone call came and I gave my name, what unit I was in that sort of thing. Caller said “Jake, this is Edwards.” I said, “Bill, come on up.” He said he was coming. A guy knocks on the door, I open it up and this guy’s looking at me, I’m looking at him; Edwards?-Jake? He sits down, my wife is sitting there. I introduced him. We were good buddies back then. We sat for a minute or two and I said can I offer you a drink and he said “No, thanks I don’t drink” he used to drink like a fish. He was in mortars but we had been together in Alabama before. After a minute or two he leaned forward, he said, “I don’t know you.” He lives in Rome Georgia. He’s a retired wealthy contractor. So I pulled out a little packet of photographs I had and I opened it up to a picture of Harley Huffman, I handed it to him and I said you know him? “Sure enough, I remember him” and he flips it over and there’s a picture of me. “I knew him too,” and I said, “You sure did because that’s me.” He about flipped. Our little medic Crosby was there. I convinced him that he should go to college if he survived the thing, and he did go to college after the war and he got his degree and worked for some big steel company. Then retired and then became a farrier, he always wanted to shoe horses. That’s what he does in California, he shoes horses of famous movie stars.

Carter: Probably makes for money doing that than he ever did working for the company.

Jacobsen: he does very well

Carter: Did you have any contact with British or French soldiers?

Jacobsen: Two, the good and the bad; in England I had a lot. I was coming back from Bath one time, hitchhiking; and a British Lord came along and some of the red devils picked me up. I rode on their laundry with them, their dirty laundry. They dropped me off, it was a good thing. There was a major in a Scottish unit that used to be at Salisbury, he gave me rides occasionally, so I had pleasant relations with them. When we were up north we were the extreme left flank of the Americans Army. We were to the right and the British were to our left. We moved along them and we got along with the guys OK. The Canadian artillery were there, and they were good artillery. We observed their work, it was very good.

Carter: Did you have any opinion about Montgomery?

Jacobsen: No, I knew nothing about him, but I did have trouble with the French. I was in the general hospital at Nancy, with this blood business one time. I was ambulatory and I got out of the hospital with a fellow and we went down to a little bar. Some French fellows down at the other end had been drinking a little bit, they were wearing American Khaki uniforms. They resented us and they came down and started messin' around with us and they wanted to know why we were wearing French uniforms. Of course that started a little trouble, a few more Americans were on the other side of the room and they came over. We had a little time-heated physical discussion. (Crosstalk) I wasn't too fond of the French.

Carter: You found a lot of amusing things a lot of fun things to talk about. Things you try to get out, you don't want to remember.

Jacobsen: I'll never forget, there was a movie some years ago, I can't remember the name, about Army action in Italy. I could hardly believe, the same thing happened in that movie that happened to me. When we crossed the Rhine, the Germans weren't fighting too vigorously or resisting too much. They were one end of this village and we were at the other, with sort of a no man's land in the middle. My wife had recorded and made up one of these small phonograph discs and mailed it to me. Of course I had no way of hearing the thing. Somebody who had been scouting around and there was this little hotel or guest house in the middle of this no man's land. There was a phonograph there on the floor. He came back, he knew I had this phonograph record; "Jake," he said, "I found a phonograph." So we went up there. It was an old one with a heavy steel needle. For cheap disks. We got up there and here was two German civilians dead on the floor, the phonograph was over on its side. We turned it up and like idiots we cranked the thing up and tried to put it on there and the needle just about went right through. We picked it up so it was barely on there and we could finally hear my wife talking to me. It worked, we did that and then put it back in its envelope. Crawled out of that place, crawled back to our place and what an evening. We had a first sergeant that could smell wine no matter how far away he was from it. We had been in this house about four or five hours and we didn't notice anything. He found a cupboard in there loaded with bottles of wine. Wow did we have a good dinner that night! One guy from Jersey his name was Madio? There was some German civilians still there; and he was trying to make some time with this pretty German girl who was in the house next door. He was standing out in the backyard and there was some chickens out there. He grabbed a chicken by the neck and swung it around and popped its head off. This girl started screaming bloody murder, it was her chickens. We had chicken and wine that night. Nobody wanted to fight too much that night. (Unintelligible crosstalk)

Carter: Where did you cross the Rhine at?

Jacobsen: I really don't remember, we went over on a pontoon bridge.

Carter: I thought maybe it was a big city.

Jacobsen: We crawled up to Cologne, that's where we were pulled back from Cologne, as we went up to the Rhine. The Germans had lowered these dual purpose 88s and they were searching like that, firing their air bursts. We crawled up there, we didn't like that, we were glad when we got out of there.

Carter: Could we have done better during the war?

Jacobsen: I don't know, we did OK. (Crosstalk) I had no complaints about the equipment. I did have one complaint and that was that it seemed like everyone in the rear echelon had combat boots and we had high top shoes and canvas leg-ins. In the winter we had goulashes to put on over our shoes while they had snowpacks back there. They had wonderful rain suits and we had slickers. I complained about that, but our weapons were great.

Carter: Did you have any trouble coming from the front and seeing men with these?

Jacobsen: We had more trouble with our feet from that stuff. I never did figure out why but the bottom of our feet would get white and look like tripe. You ever see tripe, all rippled. We got rid of them, we were able to get regular boots. One interesting thing, I had such a thin face, I had to wear what was known as a SS gas mask. The one most people wore, for a normal face, was my problem because it had a gap on either side of my face. It was a custom to throw away your gas mask after a while and use your gas mask carrier to carry anything else that you had that you wanted. Because we didn't think they were going to use gas. Around the time of the Bulge,

maybe it was in the Bulge, I don't remember exactly. There was a rumor the Germans were firing powdered glass over in artillery shells that would cause respiratory troubles. They back up a couple of 2 ½ ton trucks and pushed all these gas masks and on the ground and everybody was told to grab a gas mask. I searched and searched and I couldn't find anything, all they had was universals so I went to our supply Sergeant, we were back at battalion headquarters, that's where our CV was. I told him my problem. I said I had to have a SS mask and he said I'm sorry Jake we don't have any. I said, "What am I going to do?" He said to hold my breath. A lot of sympathy in the Army.

Carter: Did you ever encounter the SS troopers that you know of or fight against them?

Jacobsen: Yes, we fought against the SS in the Bulge.

Carter: They didn't have a very good reputation. You said something about sympathy.

Jacobsen: Yeah I know. Well, we didn't have a good reputation either.

Carter: All I know is I was reading the Malmedy massacre.

Jacobsen: Malmedy massacre.

Carter: And I was reading something about that the other day in a paperback book, after that happened the order came down that there would be no SS prisoners from now on.

Jacobsen: I will tell you one story about a war atrocity. We took a lot of POWs at Bourcy. The road going out from there was icy, and our wounded. After we pushed on and secured most of the area there, the prisoners sometimes we discovered were wearing GI boots. The guys would just cut the laces on the boots, take them off and throw them away; tell them to get going down the road. There was about 10 or 12 of them doubled timed down there. By the time they got

down to the collecting spots, some of those guys feet looked as big as violin cases. We weren't nice to them. One of my buddies actually saw this, they put this German on the hood of a jeep and they went around a corner and he flew off. They couldn't find him they said. These are not nice stories. But there were a lot of things that upset me, I think I have become re-civilized over the years. But at that time things happened--our attitude toward death was highly different with or civilized society and customs. I remember sitting on frozen Germans eating my lunch, eating K-rations, rather than sit in the snow.

Carter: Did you take any pictures over there?

Jacobsen: No, I didn't have a camera. A fellow did take a picture of me. In England I have some pictures from England. We had a mail clerk, he was a Spanish Jewish descent and ancestry. When we were in France--there were some Spanish Jews who had been saved over there by the French. He became acquainted with them, and we were on short rations, something had happened and we didn't have much chow coming to us. We were digging up what we called "cow turnips" from these mounds and, I used to keep the bullion from my K-rations, I'd put that in a kettle with these cow turnips. We would get French bread and onions and eat this stew. It got too hot for him after a while and he went over the hill, we never saw him again, but he was a real nice guy. I think he went to Spain. (unintelligible)

Carter: You came after being there for how long? How long were you over in Europe total?

Jacobsen: I don't know exactly, I got over to England, I think it was May of 1944, I think. I sailed home on the Queen Mary in August of 1945. I wasn't there a long time. I had two Hershey bars on my sleeves.

Carter: Oh, that took me aback.

Jacobsen: My stripes.

Carter: You got discharged because of those health problems?

Jacobsen: No, I didn't.

Carter: I misunderstood.

Jacobsen: The war was over and I had enough points to get right out. After they said you got points for decorations; for Purple Hearts and things like that, I just about went crazy thinking, "Hey, I could have had at least three Purple Hearts myself." I had scratches I could have claimed for. I got hit with a spent fragment right between my eyes right here and bled like a pig. But I had been laid open before by my wife's cousin Homer, who was incidentally killed up in the Bulge. He was in one of the outfits that were in the Bulge when it broke. He grabbed a heavy .30 caliber and threw it in a jeep and dashed up to an OP that could help with support. He was killed in action. But Homer, when we were playing touch football down in Fort Benning he wacked me with his elbow right between my eyes and laid me open the first time. Then that fragment hit me for the second time, and I can't remember the third time, I got hit with something else. Oh, I got hit in the face with a canteen cup by a young seventeen year old kid. One of these kids that came down from the 106th that had been decimated up in the Bulge. People picked on them all the time and I would say to them "look, you have to learn one thing that I had to learn-guys are too big for you, OK; you hit the first!" You don't wait for them to do something. When I took over my squad there was nothing but hillbillies and Oklahoma Indians. This one guy started pushing me around he was a little sergeant and I just turned around, reached down grabbed a rock and hit him right in the face. Nobody gave me trouble after that. I told this kid that was how you got on even terms with these people. This was after the war was over and we were in this camp. We had

some German nonalcoholic beer that was being served. These kids thought they were drunk after drinking this. He came strolling in with three or four more of them into this--tent we had together. We were all trying to sleep and they were making noise. I got up and went over to them and told them to shut up, you get in your sack there, and we're trying to get some sleep. "OH YA!" smash with the canteen cup, the sharp edges. That's the third time.

Carter: So, he took your advice.

Jacobsen: He took my advice, he was a fast learner.

Carter: Well, you were married and you got discharged, I ran into you in, oh, about 1957 I think I came up here to Winona. I remember seeing you the librarian.

Jacobsen: Drifting through the stacks--

Carter: I think one of the first times I remember seeing you was coming from the library over to Somson Hall. (cross talk) after I transferred up here. You mentioned something about you were in the reserves for a while, tell me about that.

Jacobsen: Yes, I stayed in the Reserves. I went back, I was out completely, but then in 1947 or 48 it looked like we might be having some more trouble. I felt that anyone that had any service experience should get back in. At least you knew what was supposed to be done. So I applied and received a direct commission supposedly in the Reserves equivalent of military intelligence. It was supposed to be but I ended up in the infantry. I stayed with that and retired or didn't retire when I went down to the University of Chicago in 1960, one of the fellows in the unit had a kidney stone and they had washed him out, retired him with no pay. I had a kidney stone and I figured why waste more time on this thing? Everything was over we thought, didn't worry about

war at that time. So I resigned from the Reserves, I applied for honorary retired Reserve which meant you didn't get pay or anything, you were just out. Joe Emanuel couldn't believe it because he was the CO. Here I was out completely; and about six-eight years after that I received a letter to Captain Jacobsen informing that, no, I didn't qualify for honorary retirement from the Reserve. I was still on the active list! All those years. Joe wouldn't believe it so I had to produce the letter.

Carter: Did he ever say anything or make you do anything?

Jacobsen: Oh no, I mean I'm not with the unit, I just, at my age, I can't do anything. (crosstalk)
It was because I wasn't drilling actively.

Carter: Were you the only one in the section to have a college education, you mentioned something about (crosstalk)?

Jacobsen: I was the only one. We had this one guy named Harley, couldn't keep shoes on him when the weather was good. JC Penney, that was his name, couldn't read or write, we used to read his letters from his sister to him and write his letters. "Dear Ma and Pa, and Jeanie; I am fine, hope you're fine. How are the pigs? Things like that. Love, JC." They were great guys, they were good soldiers. Harley was a ditch digger by trade and that's one of the reasons he and I were so good. I would go out and lay my guns and he would go down like a sand crab and dig a two hand fox hole, in the dark. Never hit a rock, or never hear it; and the floor would be as flat as this kitchen floor here. He was a good ole mate. Well, this is rambling, I didn't mean to do that.

Carter: It's fine. That's what we want to do is just ramble and talk. I don't like to like, "question number one then question number two" because if you start doing that, you start interrupting

people and I want to hear what you have to say. It always surprising to me sometimes to talk to people who I have sort of known off and on and just find out about them.