

Part 2: "Europe" Transcript

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[Louis Slama:] When I came to this country, I was nine years old, and, uh, my mother and father were all living here already. My sister and I were living in Czechoslovakia, and my mother and father eventually wanted to come back and make some money here and go back to the old country. So when Hitler started with the Nazis and everything at that time, they went to the Red Cross and they said, you know, we gotta get... If you don't get our kids out now... They knew that Hitler would start the invasion of Poland and all the other ones, so they had to get us out before all that started. So we went to the Red Cross, but, uh, on our way we had to go through Germany into the ports and we came on a Baranger, which was a German ship. When we got into Germany, uh, all the swastika guys were all with the swastikas. They took all our clothing, opened it up and checked us all. And you see a whole line of them and they're all... You could tell that Hitler's regime was already starting in 1934. I mean, they were all over the place like flies. So, uh, that always stuck in my mind, saying that these people are ruthless, they're killers. The Nazis were not human. They were-- They were animals. They had no respect for the human beings. You know, they always thought they were the super human race, and when you get people like that, you know, the only way you can change that is to destroy them, basically. And that's--we had... The German soldier was rated the best soldier in the world, you know, so what we were doing, we were fighting the soldier that was best in the world. We had to defeat them at all costs really.

[Crit Killen:] Being defeated just was not part of our vocabulary. We was there for the end of the war, to stay until it was finished. When that song, "Over there, over there, "The Yanks are comin' and we won't come back ""Till it's over over there." That was our philosophy then was to fight until we had won and victory had been accomplished and then come home.

[Rick Randle:] There's not just one story of World War II. There are as many stories as there were men and women to fight. More than 3,600 never returned to Utah to tell their stories. These are some of the 67,000 that did.

[Rick Randle:] Four days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and America found itself shocked and unprepared for global war. Most citizens of Utah had never seen an ocean, had never flown in an airplane, and were lucky to own an automobile.

Yet in the following 3 1/2 years, the young and untested would volunteer in record numbers to wage war against the mightiest military powers on earth-- the Japanese empire and the Third Reich of Germany. Utahns shed their blood and gave their lives with a shared singular purpose, truly unique to the American character. A purpose not for conquest, treasure and rule, but instead for freedom, decency and human dignity. Hello. I'm Rick Randle. Tonight, KUED proudly presents "Utah WWII Stories: Europe," the second in a four-part series told by the men and women from Utah who were there.

[Rick Randle:] There was a growing danger looming beneath the waters of the Atlantic. Wolf packs--clusters of German submarines-- stalked U.S. convoys and merchant vessels and troop carriers. As early as 1942, hundreds of ships and thousands of lives were lost, many just off our own shores. The Atlantic became a strategic battlefield in the dangerous game of the hunter and the hunted.

[Crit Killen:] Well, the first time I saw the enemy, we had come in contact with a German submarine. We depth bombed it and it surfaced, and, of course, when it surfaced, we rammed it. Everybody was, of course, kind of cheering at first, you know, when it came up. You gotta understand it-- we were all very young and it was like a football game almost to us in a lot of ways. It was exciting, and I don't think any of us really thought about being afraid at the time or scared; it was to carry out our duty.

[Calvin Gould:] Our captain, who was a man named Dan Galloway, had the ability to kind of put himself in the mind of a submarine captain, and when he would get a report of a sighting of a submarine, he would kind of figure to himself, well, now, what would that submarine captain do? And as a result of that, he was able to put himself in a good position, generally, to find out where these submarines were. We had developed a system at that time of search and destroy. We'd use fighter planes to try to search out the submarines, and they had equipped a TBM torpedo bomber to carry depth charges.

[Crit Killen:] Or they could catch maybe a submarine on the surface, which happened quite often.

[Rick Randle:] Did any of them crash into the ship at all?

[Calvin Gould:] Yeah, we had one came crashing into the island one time. If they missed that arresting gear, you know, you've got a problem on your hands. When we were not in that position of launching or recovering, we would just screen with the DE's for us, and the Pillsbury, who was on our starboard bow, passed right over this submarine-- it was a 505-- a U-505. And he crackled over the TBS that he had contact. And, of course, our captain's job then is to get out of his way because he's gonna have to use depth charges. And it damaged the submarine to the point that he had to choose to either sink or swim, and he chose to swim. But we had, in the meantime, put another fighter in the air, and the fighter was able to keep

them from using their guns by strafing, so they finally just decided to jump.

[Crit Killen:] We got the word that the planes were battling with a submarine about a couple hours up ahead of us, so we go into full steam and head to that location to participate. And when we got there, the submarine was going down, and it had shot down one of our planes and we never did find the pilot, unfortunately. And so the crew started to abandon ship, and we moved in to pick up the survivors.

[Calvin Gould:] But we recovered that crew except for two of them, and brought them on board as prisoners of war. I think they were in a sense, kind of happy to be out of the water at that point.

[Crit Killen:] When we brought them on board and we saw them face-to-face. They looked like us, they acted like we acted. They were just other men of the sea. Well, this one that died on board, I'll never forget how he was looking up and asking for help. He was so weak and struggling with the sea that he didn't have the strength to climb up the cargo deck we had lowered over the side for them to climb up on. And he soon was faced-- was floating face down in the water, and one of our guys jumped overboard, put a line around him and brought him on board, and, uh, we started giving him artificial respiration, but he didn't come out of it and he died. We got to talking to them and found out that they had families same as we had families. And one fellow we had on board spoke good German, and he asked this one German, he said, "Why are you fighting?" He said, "Same reason you're fighting. "I don't have much choice."

[Spencer Felt:] My parents got a telegram that I was missing in action, and in addition to that, about two weeks after they got the missing in action, they got a letter saying, "Further intelligence report "indicate your son's plane exploded in mid air and there were no parachutes." So they thought I was gone.

[Ray Matheny:] If you're gonna be a survivor in combat flying, you have to be mentally set to take instant action or else you'll die, and we witnessed it many times.

[Rick Randle:] Our American airmen faced dangers far beyond our comprehension. Always on the alert for the enemy, a direct hit sent planes spinning into a ball of smoke and flames. Day after day, mission after mission, they went, wheels up, never sure if they would return. The Utah air veterans we meet did not fly on the same plane, they did not fly on the same missions, but their stories fit together to capture the tension and terror of air battle-- the struggle to do the job and survive.

[Heber Butler:] A couple of the B-25s got out of their formation, was off to the side, and Richard and I were flying each other's wing that day, he happened to be-- my brother was on my wing. So we swung over like this, and off to the side of 'em to give fighter cover. And just as we got over here

and rolled out flat, a flak burst from down below hit right between the two airplanes, and both of 'em exploded like that. Spectacular, but terrible. My thoughts were-- all of the crew on those airplanes.

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] We saw a plane off to the side at our height out of the range of the guns, and they radioed down to the gunners below what our altitude was, and that was when it really got tough. If you saw the plane off to the side, you knew you were gonna get hit bad, and we did.

[Bob McGregor:] So I had a mechanical failure at about that point and started losing my superchargers. The engines would still run, but they--it ran at reduced power. So I kept falling behind, falling behind, falling behind. Finally the group, our group here, dropped the bombs. You could see the bombs drop. So I was about a mile behind them by then, and so I waited the distance until I got over about the same target and I dropped my bomb so it hit the same target. And then I couldn't keep up with them, so I kept falling lower and lower and lower. Well, I'm duck soup for the fighters then.

[Ray Matheny:] A green flak burst comes up--ppshew... And that's a signal for the German fighters who are up there circling around waiting for the flak barrage to be over with. And so at that point our airplanes tighten up our formation. We see the green burst, so the airplanes just slide together as close as we can manage, and that means... Every airplane has thirteen 50-caliber guns on it, so that means there's a bristling mass of guns out there, and these fighter planes have to, you know, engage the enemy no matter what. That flak burst went off and we were ready. And I remember a Messerschmitt 109 often called a BF 109 came diving in on us and was tracking us. It was a fighter plane. And brrrp, brrrp, brrrp... I get about six rounds off a shot, and as I swung around, all of the sudden I saw tail guns fly up in the air like that, so here we're under fighter attack and the tail gunner lets go of his guns and the barrels go up. Well, that only means one thing-- that he's hit.

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] Gas was flowing in the bomb bay doors. A spark could have blown us up. We were getting spared all that. But the formation left and we were out there all alone-- crippled airplane, 1-1/2 engines, so we held the altitude as much as we could and headed towards the Yugoslav mountains where the partisans were. If we could only get there, we might be taken care of and might get back to the base in Italy, but we didn't make it.

[Bob McGregor:] So I just start to go into the cloud layer down below, and seven German 109 fighters jumped us. They gave us frontal attacks, from the side, rear, about ten minutes, about six passes. I had already lost one wing tip and one engine due to flak.

[Ray Matheny:] So I knew from the impact, the explosion and everything, that that airplane was not going to fly anymore. And eyewitnesses say that here we had these airplanes stacked like this, three stories of airplanes. Our

airplane did a roll that was as high as the high echelon and came around and entered into a flat spin.

[Bob McGregor:] So by then we're still going-- trying to hold the right wing up and going on two engines with no tip, no rudder. And finally I told the other pilot to bail the crew out.

[Richard Burt:] So he told us all to bail out. We were still about 18,000 feet, and I snapped my chute on and we got the ball turret guy out, got their chutes on and opened that back hatch and I says-- I stood back and I says, "After you guys." I couldn't hardly make myself get out of that, but there wasn't any other option. I had to go.

[Ray Matheny:] And I ripped off my parachute. By that time I'm being mashed down into the floor of the airplane. And I pick up my parachute and I hook on to the right hook. I reached, trying to pick up the parachute and pull it up to the left hook, but I can't lift the parachute. It weighs too much. We're in a spin, and centrifugal force has induced these forces on there and it makes everything weigh so much more than it normally is.

[Bob McGregor:] Everybody was out by then, so the second I let go of the wheel, it started to spin and I was trying to get out. And it went over in a great big barrel roll and then we went into a flat spin. The centrifugal force was terrific--you can't... It's just something terrible; you just can't move.

[Ray Matheny:] I remember the co-pilot, I could see his left hand reaching back trying to get to his parachute, but it was just, you know, hopeless. He couldn't even raise his--his arm.

[Bob McGregor:] So you finally pull yourself out on the carpet or anyway you can get out. So I went out through the bomb bay and then I jumped.

[Ray Matheny:] And the pilot, you know, he's 20 years old now, and his duty, you know, is a different duty from everybody else's. And I could see him working, you know, the controls, trying to right the airplane so everybody can bail out. But there's no--no chance. A totally uncontrollable airplane at this point, and the last I saw of them, both of them were leaning over like this and being scrunched down into their seats, unable to help themselves or do anything. And I can remember black smoke just coming in like this, and in front of me is the navigator, Lieutenant Doty. He has a steel helmet on, he has a flak suit, and he's the only crew member that has a steel helmet and a flak suit. And he had this awful premonition and-- and talked about it too much. He knew he was gonna die, and so he tried to get this protection. But he was on his back like a turtle. He had a backpack parachute, and he was on his back and his arm was out trying to get to the escape hatch. But there's no way he could do anything. He couldn't even turn over, you know, it was just... And I could not help him, that's for sure. There's no way anybody could help anybody else in those moments. So I crawled up to the escape hatch, so I pulled that and I pulled the hinge pins out. Well, the escape hatch is supposed to fly off into space, but because the

airplane's under this terrible stress, it locks the door in place. So by that time, I am flat on the floor. My whole body's just mashed down on the floor. So the last memory I have, I propped my arm up like this, my elbow on the floor, I reach up and grab the handle that is at the aft end of the door-- a normal, bullet-shaped handle. And I pull it down and it stays down. And the last thing I remember I was beating my fist on the door trying to force it open. And the airplane blew up.

[Rick Randle:] And that's what freed you.

[Ray Matheny:] That ejected me right out of that airplane.

[Bob McGregor:] I had the seat back parachute instead of the chest back because I knew it would be with me if the ship blew up. I pulled the rip cord with one hand, nothing happened, and I thought, oh, shit--excuse me. So I got it with both hands and it popped clear out to here and then it opened.

[Ray Matheny:] And out came this beautiful white silk--it shhhheww... And then it popped open really hard and it pulled up on this right hook and that's all that was needed.

[Bob McGregor:] And the harness was a little loose. I'd cleared the plane a ways, and the harness came up and hit me in the jaw and knocked me out for about, oh, maybe 30 seconds. And then I came to and looked out and I was floating down and everything was nice and quiet.

[Spencer Felt:] It was a very peaceful... Floating down in the chute was a very peaceful sensation, it really was, although you're thinking so--so intensely.

[Bob McGregor:] You could hear this bomber winding up below, these putt-putt-putt, the fighters all around. They cued up for another frontal attack. And I thought, oh, no, they're not gonna shoot at me! But they were. Seven of them made a frontal attack, firing machine guns in short bursts-- I guess maybe 1,200 rounds.

[Heber Butler:] Now, some guys would get the killer instinct, and most pilots didn't. Most pilots it was airplane against airplane-- me against them, and to my knowledge, none of our boys over there in the 82nd fighter group ever shot at a man in a parachute or in a dingy in the ocean!

[Bob McGregor:] And they missed me, but they hit the parachute. But I was crawling this shroud line and crawling that to get an oscillation swing and try and get it to vary its descent. They missed me. So I had a hold of the parachute, so I hit awful hard when I hit the ground.

[Ray Matheny:] As I was coming down in the parachute, the debris field of my airplane swept past me, and it was shaped like a-- like a Christmas tree-- little pieces, thousands of little pieces of airplane, and that scared the heck out of me. Big pieces were flying through the air-- and I could hear big

pieces flying through the air. And as I got closer to the ground, uh, a Messerschmidt 110 Night Fighter came and he kept circling me and he kept waving at me, and I thought, oh, man... I didn't know what to do. I was scared to death, and so I just hung limp on one hook, you know, and I didn't respond to him. And finally he left, and later on I realized that he was radioing the ground crews that there's another parachute coming down that somebody has to pick up. So I got closer and closer to the ground. There was a piece of burning wing with a parachute wrapped in it and a man's body lying in the snow, so that's another crew member. And then we came to-- I came, uh, very close to these power lines, high tension power lines, and I saw that parachute was drifting right-- right towards it, so I tried to control the parachute. I wasn't very successful because, uh, we had only gotten a few minutes of parachute instruction. And the favorite saying was, "Well, when the time comes, you'll know what to do." Well, that didn't help because I had to guide the parachute past these power lines, and I was just going to drift right into them, and so I just climbed up the risers, collapsed the parachute and fell straight down, and I let go of the risers. And just as the parachute started to inflate again, I hit the ice of a canal, broke through the ice went down in the water. And then-- It was January 5th, so the canal had been drained except for about two feet of water. So I just crawled up on the ice and, uh... You just can't hardly imagine, uh, what it felt like. I was alive, you know, and-- and I just-- just laid there.

[Ray Matheny:] An elderly gentleman came over a slight rise of ground, a little hill there, and he picked me up, and I couldn't stand. He, uh, we fiddled around with the harness, and between the two of us we got the harness off and I was free. He helped me hobble in towards the village. I had a gash in my forehead and I was bleeding and I couldn't walk, and I guess I looked a mess. So as we approached these two girls, I made the old gentleman stop, and I reached in my flight pocket and I pulled out my comb and I combed my hair. You know, here I was 18 and had just gone through such a terrible experience and all of my companions are dead except one, and, uh, I can't shut off the hormones.

[Richard Burt:] I saw the B-24s overhead flying south coming back off the mission. I was down there, I look up there and see those guys-- in two hours they'd be home to a warm meal and a warm bed, and here I am and I don't have a clue where I am or what I'm gonna be doing, what's gonna happen to me. I was a scared kid.

[Bob McGregor:] Got into town-- it was a little town with cobble rock roads and all of that like you see in the pictures of European villages. And by then the civilians were just a little irritated. You can't blame them. We'd bombed their towns many times before. There was a cute little gal about my same age there. I winked at her as I walked by and she spit right in my face. And they'd throw stones and rocks at you and sticks and slap you with everything they could. So they (civilians) took me away from the Austrian military put a rope around my neck and up over pulling, just starting to pull it up. Just then the Germans came by and saved me. To this day I don't like a barber shop

with a towel around my neck.

[Ray Matheny:] So we got on a streetcar and rode out at the edge of town to a place called Dulag Luft. It's the Allied Interrogation Center. And this is the place where the bomber crews and fighter pilots and everything got shuffled through.

[Bob McGregor:] There was a German major, and he could speak just as good as English as you or I could, and we talked at some length, and he said, "Oh, you're from Salt Lake City." I hadn't told him any name, rank and serial number. Well, it seems they keep you there for about five days it takes to get their intelligence records, so they're all brought in, then they've got everything right there. They tell you, "Your name is McGregor, "you went to East High School." In fact, he showed me a copy of this picture out of the Tribune with my picture in it, that I went to Stewart School, East High School, University of Utah and my picture...

[Ray Matheny:] And I said, "Well, how did you get this information?" And he says, "Aaahh, we have friends in America." He said, "We have a clipping service... every time there's a notice about a soldier, or an airman who graduates from a school or something and it's in the newspaper, our friends clip it out and they mail it to us." I was totally shocked!

[Rick Randle:] The experiences of our American airmen taken prisoner during World War II have been made famous by movies like "Stalag 17" and "The Great Escape." But the reality of being delivered to a prison camp was quite a bit different than Hollywood showed us.

[Gale "Pat" Patterson] The next morning was November 1st and we moved into our quarters, which was a 15-man room 15 men with three-decker beds made out of 2 x 4s and slats of wood and pretty rough. Very little insulation and it was cold. Man, it was cold. We never had enough fuel, never had enough to eat, so the weight started dropping off.

[Ray Matheny:] Bread was short and food parcels weren't coming on time, and people started to fight over this bread that came to our little section.

[Richard Burt:] It was a small, dark bread and it had sawdust in it and it had a chemical with it to help you digest the sawdust. I used to think that was phoney, but they actually did have sawdust in the bread.

[Ray Matheny:] And they were fighting over it, so I just waded right in and I said, "Here, I know how to divide that up." So I--I very carefully measured out the cuts so that over time, everybody gets the good cuts of bread. So I charged a fee to cut this bread, and they were very satisfied by my divisions.

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] I was in the west compound, and beside that, through several layers of fence and laser wire and whatnot were the English compound, and that was the compound where the "Great Escape" occurred.

It had occurred on March 24, 1944. They'd been digging since May '43 on three tunnels called Tom, Dick and Harry. We could see them and occasionally we talked. We had to throw things really high. Usually you put a stone in it or something to get it over the fence, but we traded items back and forth--cigarettes and... I ended up with a battle jacket of the British. It had a black diamond on the left sleeve in remembrance of the people who were massacred because of the "Great Escape."

[Bob McGregor:] A few times there were attempted escapes in the middle of the hall, so they'd have a roll call. We played around as long as we could and just screwed up real good so they couldn't get an accurate roll call. So finally the SS Troopers came in with about five machine gun tripods and set up five 50-caliber machine guns-- I think four or five. Colonel says, "Okay, boys, you do as you're told now," and we did.

[Ray Matheny:] When you're a prisoner, the other guy is so in charge. You know, you just don't know how... In the movies, you know, Errol Flynn and his grand escapes and everything-- all this heroism and everything. Man, it's really very different when you're on the other end.

[Rick Randle:] The experiences of American citizens of Japanese descent fighting for their country is uniquely powerful. Their loyalty was doubted, but these native-born American citizens-- the Nisei generation-- would forge one of the most honored combat records of the war. A unique tribute to the servicemen, some of whose letters to family members arrived at Japanese/American internment camps throughout the United States.

[Jim Tazoi:] The original group mostly were from Hawaii, but there was a lot of these fellas from the mainland United States that-- they were kicked off the west coast, the Japanese were, and put in these internment camps, and those people-- when they asked for volunteers for the 442, they volunteered out of the internment camps.

[Shig Matsukawa:] They asked for volunteers, and they got way more than they needed. They were classified 4-C until Roosevelt created this regiment to be formed, but 4-C classification is enemy alien, so we were enemy aliens at that time.

[Jim Tazoi:] The 100th was already over there-- the 100th battalion. That's one of the battalions of the 442, and they had been fighting in Monte Casino. They had a monastery there, and they finally drove the Germans out of there. And then, by that time, the 100th had established some kind of a reputation. They used to call them the "Purple Heart Battalion." They were going through France, you know, real fast, so the war at that time when we got over there was way up in the north of France already, getting close to Germany. That's where we got into it to rescue the Lost Battalion team. They called it the Lost Battalion, but everybody knew where they were. The Germans let them come through without much resistance, and after they got so far back in behind the German lines, then they cut them off so they

couldn't come back out.

[Shig Matsukawa:] When I joined them, they were up in the French Alpines, and they were on a holding front line living in caves. The veterans told me not to make a mistake, and I thought, gee, everybody should be allowed to make mistakes, but they said, "No, you don't make a mistake because if you make a mistake, somebody's gonna get killed." They had a church call, and everybody from all over came down to the company headquarters. I don't care what they were-- Buddhists, Atheists, Agnostics, Christians-- but they all came. And the chaplain drove up and jumped out of his jeep and read a scripture and jumped back in his jeep and he was gone. That was church call up on the front, but everybody came because they couldn't take a chance, for in the next hour or so they might be dead.

[Jim Tazoi:] I got wounded on the 29th of October, and I think that was the middle day of the rescue. We were all pinned down. We were so close to the enemy, we were just kind of firing from our hip. I kind of looked around to see if I could see any movement up there, you know, among the enemy. And I just happened to look down and there in that trench was a German soldier looking right at me, but I think... I don't know whether he had a gun or not. Maybe 10 seconds before that he could have been firing on us, but he was hoping that I wouldn't notice him. But when I looked down and I saw him, I raised my gun and he let out a squeal, and I still remember that. And I had presence of mind enough that I didn't want to shoot him in the face, so I put about four or five rounds into his chest hoping that I could kill him right away, immediately, and then I left right after that to a different position. And I was just getting ready to crawl under the pine tree when I got shot. Right after that, I must have been lying there on the ground, then they started throwing hand grenades. One of those landed right on top of me. I was laying on my back at that time, and it exploded just as it hit. After that for awhile I was listening to the prettiest music I ever heard, and I had presence of mind enough that I kept telling myself, "Hey, try to stay awake because you might be getting close to going off to the other side." But then anyway, I passed out again, and so I don't know when-- who took me out of there or anything.

[Rick Randle:] Uh, there's a term made famous by the 442nd called "Reverse AWOL." Can you explain to us what that is.

[Jim Tazoi:] Well, that means some of these guys that got wounded, and it wasn't too serious, but they were anxious to go back up on line, and so they took off and went back without permission or anything like that. That's "Reverse AWOL."

[Shig Matsukawa:] We were just handed the concept of doing well, and, I think that samurai spirit was inborn in these young men too.

[Rick Randle:] Jim, your unit suffered very heavy casualties and you fought so valiantly and were so dedicated. What did your mother say to you as you

left for the war?

[Jim Tazoi:] I remember her telling me, "Well, die if you need to cuz you're going to war, but do not bring shame to your country or to your family."

[Louis Slama:] We were like, you know, like two brothers. I mean, we were much closer than brothers, I think, and we protected each other. And I always say to myself, well, why did I let him get separated from me? You know, if I didn't, he might still be alive.

[Gil McLean:] When you've had buddies that you're been with, trained with for months, been in combat with-- to have them die in your arms, shot up or a piece of bullet and you're trying to hold... No matter where it happened to be-- banged up, kind of riddled with ammunition, you're trying to stop the bleeding. Those are very tense situations.

[Briton McConkie:] I had the best men in the Army. It's kind of a family affair. I loved everybody... ..and I wanted everybody to love me. I didn't court marshal a single man in my outfit from the beginning to the end. The old Colonel wanted to know why none of my men got ever court marshalled, and all I did was say, "I like to treat my men the way I like to be treated." Couldn't complain about that.

[M.J. Eschler:] When I became a commander, I was a conscientious person. I thought, I'm in charge... I'm responsible for these boys, and, you know, it weighed heavily on me. Uh, you know, when you make a wrong turn, hit a mine, you do something... I make a goof off and we're a statistic.

[Brit McConkie:] I'm so grateful that I didn't have to tell anybody, go out and kill anybody... and I think that'd be quite a rarity.

[M.J. Eschler:] My captain come--Hockinson. He drank whiskey and chased the Italian women, but he was a good CO. He come up to me and said, "Sergeant, I want you to take a volunteer crew and I want you to go down here..." And he showed me on a map, and those maps were not good. "Down here," he says, "the Germans are playing hell with our infantry. You go and get 'em." And, uh, he gave me a map. Well, I stood up... He wanted me to get a volunteer crew, and my gunner, my assistant gunner-- a guy named Steve Toth-- he's out of Jeanette, Pennsylvania... "Chief," he said, "Where are you going?" And I said, "Well, I gotta go on a little mission here." "What?" And I told him and he said, "We're your crew. "You don't want..." Excuse me. "You don't want volunteers." And, uh, right then... And the whole crew went with me. And so right then I says-- "these boys are with me."

[Epifanio Gonzales:] I sort of took a responsibility like a father to them, taking care of them. In fact, when I was coming home, I remember Wynoscus, he was crying, said, "You're like a dad to us. "Don't go home." I says, "I gotta go home." But I--I took that responsibility like of a father responsibility to my men, you know, I was that close to them. And I would not let them take the chance only if I had the chance to help them, you

know, and I did.

[Shig Matsukawa:] I think it was tremendous camaraderie to uphold your duty and to look after your, uh, your buddy.

[Louis Slama:] Lambert and I was so strong bonded. Uh, he was kind of a southern boy from the south. Same age--we were both, uh, 17 when we came in, and, 18 when we first got into combat. And, uh, we told the commanders, I said, "Look-- where he goes, I go. You're not gonna separate us." I made sure that we were together all the time when we jumped in Holland. And we went into a patrol into Nijmegen. The whole company went on patrol. Lambert and I got separated, and we got into town and, uh, we hit everything that you can think of. The Germans, you know, they were all sitting in their houses waiting for us. And then, uh, Burns, you know, comes running over to me, he says, "Lou," he says, "Lambert got hit. You better come over." So I ran over, and, uh, he got hit. A sniper shot him-- shot him through the neck. (fighting tears) He kinda died right there. I sat there, couldn't figure out what to do. But, uh, at that point in time I was trying to figure out how I was going to tell his mother if I lived. But, uh, so, I wanted to take his dog tags, but they wouldn't let me take his dog tags. But, uh, I cried like a baby at that point. I couldn't... To me it was disastrous to see him laying there, you know, just like he was asleep, so, uh, I figured... Lieutenant Pollet came and said, you know, he said, "You gotta stay with it." He said, "You gotta remember..." (I always remember that) He said, "You don't shoot the guy. You shoot the uniform to kill him." He said, "Survival of the fittest." He said, "You kill them first so they can't kill you." Uh, I think at that point in time my life changed, you know. I really got angry. I got, uh, I got to be like a maniac basically. I mean, nothing mattered to me, you know. This is where you live or you die.

[Rick Randle:] Early summer 1943, a 25-year-old bomber pilot from Benjamin, Utah, finds himself on an air force base in Benghazi, Libya, on the northern coast of Africa. He was training to knock out Germany's precious oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania-- refineries so vital to the Third Reich that only Berlin had more anti-aircraft defenses. From this point on, Walter Stewart, a graduate from the University of Utah, would be known by the name he proudly gave his B-24.

[Walter Stewart:] I'm proud of this state and the old Utah Man, and have you seen the thing? An Indian throwing bombs. Yeah... And that's why I named it "Utah Man." The night before the mission, my commanding officer said, "Now, as you all know, this is a real rough mission, and it's the most important mission. It'll shorten the war-- there's no question. It'll shorten the war if we do it." And he said to me, he said, "You, Walt Stewart, you're my deputy lead." And that's when I first heard about it. And he said, "We'll go over that target tomorrow if we go over in flames. We're going over, and if we don't make it, YOU take us over." "Yes sir, yes sir." I'm saluting him with both hands, you know. We all met that night, and they were all-- most all of them making out their last words, 'cause you just knew the mission was

gonna be tough. "You will bomb the target from 50 feet above the smoke stacks." Anyway, we got off, and 178 bombers took off.

[Rick Randle:] The huge bomber stream flew across the Mediterranean over the Alps into Romania. Due to confusion and misdirection, the assault force raced to their targets from the wrong direction.

[Walter Stewart:] We started making our turn, and my navigator said, "No, no, no. We're turning too soon." I said, "That's the railroad." He says, "That's the wrong railroad. That's the Orient Express." He said, "We've got 40 miles to go. We're gonna bomb Bucharest!" And we were shocked. And all of a sudden, my wonderful waist gunner said, "Look at 9 o'clock." There were the targets. You could see the smoke about 40 miles away. We were missing our target, and so the big thing was to turn, but I can't turn. I can't go alone. Finally, our commanding officer made his turn, and we were cheering like mad. And finally we started making our other turn to get into the target, and we're now ready to go right down to low level. Well, at this time we're down to about-- about 100 feet, and I'm right on the Colonel's wing, and I'm getting right as close to him as I can, and all of a sudden they started firing at us off to the side and we're firing back, and, boy, I'll tell ya those old 50s-- we had 50s on top and flexible guns on the side. So we're firing right back at 'em. And we're getting hit. We know we're being hit. I saw a piece of flak go over my legs and down. And, of course the Colonel's up here, Lieutenant Porter's right next to him, but I'm way down over trees. Even got leaves on my bomb bay when I got back from scraping the top of a tree. Just about that time we were approaching the target, and Lieutenant Porter, between me and the Colonel, pulled up, broke in two, two men fell out (actually we found out later there were three), they got out and they were high. He was getting them up to bail out and broke and the airplane smashed. Well, at that point I moved right over on the Colonel as we were going, and remember I told you that he said, "If we go over that target, we go over in flames!" Guess what? Number three engine on his right side-- the other side from us-- was shooting smoke. He'd been hit. He'd been hit hard, but he bailed. He crashed and lost 11 men. All 11 were killed. We pulled back to about 50-60 feet above the smoke stacks, no more than that, and the bombardier hollered, "Bombs away!" And we were told the day before "Don't bomb oil wells and don't bomb tanks, they can fill them, bomb buildings!" Two bombs go in buildings, and an incendiary's on the roof, and, of course, that explodes and the smoke is immediate. We were being hit real bad, but we pulled up to 50 feet or so higher than we were, and we were supposed to turn right and go back where we came. Well now, I'm the leader, and I thought, we've been hit like mad back there. Why should we go there? There's some mountains over at the left, so I made a left turn.

[Rick Randle:] Riddled with hundreds of holes and leaking fuel, Stewart's bomber cleared the European Alps and finally sighted the blue Mediterranean.

[Walter Stewart:] And I said, "Okay, you guys, if your lives are worth as

much to you as mine is to me, if you want to we'll belly land in the water as close to the shore as we can get." And I said, "Or else we can try to make it. and you've all heard we don't have any idea how much gas we've got." And I said, "We'll take a vote." Just then the voice-- Sergeant Richard Bartlett from Montana, said, "You call that a river... or an ocean? We got rivers in Montana wider than that! Let's go!" And the vote was about ten to nothing. We voted to go. You know, you're alive, you're running, the engines are turning, so we started about 450 miles on the Mediterranean Sea very low. Finally my navigator brought us right in, believe it or not, and there was our runway. And we landed on that with the wind behind our back. We rolled about 300 yards or 500 yards, and BANG! out went that tire we'd fixed that morning. It had been hit with flak. And we pulled off to the side and we got out and loved each other and we kissed the ground. It was just the most beautiful place on earth. Three missions after I left, on the 13th of November, 1943, the "Utah Man" bombing Bremen, they were shot down. They were all killed-- Larry and Cummings and all those guys... The guy that said, "We got rivers in Montana..." One man got out. So the "Utah Man" died in Denmark.

[Bill Shanley:] We landed in Glasgow, Scotland, and went down to Wales, South Wales. And we spent seven months in South Wales training for the invasion.

[Don Buswell:] We loaded our troops on the 4th of June. We didn't know whether it was another practice or what.

[Bill Shanley:] And they'd... Two different times they loaded us aboard ships and took us out in the English Channel, and the next morning just brought us back. And the third time they did the same thing, only that was the real thing. But we didn't know. Nobody told you. That morning the landing craft started coming back to the ship with wounded, and we knew that was the-- that was the day.

[Bill Rice:] I became an engineering officer, and a mine sweeper, and the orders were to cross over to the other side and start the sweep D-Day minus 3-- H hour minus 3. So it's dark then, but it's also safe, and it also can create a path for the, uh, armada that was coming across too. So we were there-- we were there first, and, uh, it was-- it was very dark, but the weather was pretty good by then.

[Steve Poulos:] We didn't know where we were going until we got on the boat that morning and got on the cargo ship. And they handed us some French money. I thought, uh-oh, here we go. It looks like we're going to France. Of course, I said that's suicide.

[Don Buswell:] On the morning of the 6th, this huge mass of ships hit that English Channel.

[Bill Rice:] When the sun came up on D-day morning, the only expression that I can remember was, "Holy Mackerel!" As far as you could see-- in back, in front, by the side of you, and that was-- that was what I saw.

[Don Buswell:] Overhead we could hear the bombers. The weather was such that they-- that they really couldn't bomb like they'd wanted to because the visibility was so poor.

[Steve Poulos:] You had to go down the ropes to get onto Higgins boat.

[Don Buswell:] Now, these LCVPs and landing craft, they're just a... They carry about 50-- 35-50 troops, and they were the ones that hit the beach first.

[Steve Poulos:] When you're on the boats going over on those Higgins boats, that's all you can talk about is, "How do you feel, Sergeant?" "How do I feel?" "I'm not going home!"

[Don Buswell:] What we could see was our big ships, our battleships and cruisers pounding that beach, and literally, it's hard to believe, but I saw that beach bounce. I could just see it vibrating.

[Steve Poulos:] The guy that took us in with the Higgins boats said, "I'm afraid to take you guys in too much onto the shore. I think there are mines out there, and if we hit a mine we all go up. So here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna drop the gate clear out here in the water... way out."

[Bill Shanley:] And so the ship was rolling around quite a bit. The landing crafts would just bounce up and down like a cork. When some of the guys got too far down... that landing craft come up and just smashed them-- smashed them against the side of the ship and they'd just fall in the ocean. And then if you jumped after starting down again, well, then you'd have that much farther. Some guys broke their legs, and that was-- it wasn't easy.

[Don Buswell:] The way an LCI operates, you know the grade into the beach, and you approach, and as quick as you land, then you get into the sand.

[Bill Shanley:] And then they went into the shore there and dropped the ramp and went off the ramp and went clear under. The landing craft must have hit a sand bar or something.

[Don Buswell:] With ours, we knew there was gonna be these holes, so we had this line and anchor that the soldiers could hold onto. And sure enough, they'd go in the water up to their waist and go another 10 or 12 feet and drop down in a hole 10-foot deep. But holding onto this thing, they were able to walk out. A lot of them didn't.

[Steve Poulos:] We had 150 pound bag on us. It was really heavy. So I go in, I had my machine gun on my shoulder, on my side, and I says, who needs that? I gotta save my life! So I let it go in the water. Then I had a bayonet on me. I was going down, down, down, down, down. I wasn't coming up! I said, "This has gotta stop!" So I took the bayonet, and cut everything off, even my shoes, my shoelaces... It was cold, cold water-- real cold water. I got on top and I started swimming to the beach with nothing-- no weapons at all. So I got on the beach and I didn't know what to do. I had to do something to protect myself, so I jumped onto an American soldier, which I believe was dead, and took his rifle... and part of his clothes cuz I never had too many. They were in the water. So I got equipped on the beach, and they were hammering on us from the cliffs-- the cliff, right down there.

[Bill Rice:] We could see like a small block away. We're sweeping and they're trying to get ashore. You could see, uh, groups being blown up. You could see a landing craft being blown up, and, of course, the men with it.

[Steve Poulos:] There were 5,000 airplanes, American airplanes in the air hammering the beach. Some got us. Some got the Germans.

[Bill Shanley:] When we were down on the beach, that was... There was nothing but bodies all over the beach-- bodies and parts of bodies, and you just had to go around or maybe even climb over one to get up on the beach.

[Don Buswell:] I guess the bravest man I ever saw was the commanding officer of this group. When our men hit the beach, they dug in. They just fell right down, you know, but not him. He didn't even get to one knee, and he'd blow his whistle, give 'em the signal and they'd get up and go. He saved so many lives because they were able to get up in the protection of that sea wall.

[Bill Rice:] We were listening to the BBC while we're doing SI. If you're not on duty or you're not getting shot at, why, you can listen to the BBC. We would get reports like, "All is steady on Utah Beach, and Omaha Beach is having a little trouble, but we have it under control." And we said to each other, "What are they talking about? These guys are getting killed over there!" Really, it was-- it was disgusting. Why didn't they tell the truth? Well, they probably had their reason, but Omaha Beach was a disaster for a couple of days.

[Steve Poulos:] Uh, they told us, you've got no time to save anybody. So I took their advice and I went and went and went and went and went.

[Bill Shanley:] We had to get up off the beach, but there was a mine field. The whole side of the mountain was mined. And they'd put paths through the mine field just maybe that wide. We were in--go single file. And then they'd get under machine gun fire and they'd have to change the path.

[Steve Poulos:] So I actually crawled until I got onto a hedgerow, which was very, very small, and I stayed there for three or four hours.

[Bill Shanley:] And we bivouacked that night up off the beach. And that night-- the order that night was to shoot anything that moved.

[Steve Poulos:] The Germans were in the trees, they were all over. You couldn't see 'em so we had to do what we had to do, and it was fire, fire, fire and kill what we could kill. It was a terrible night, a terrible evening, and that night there was a... The airplanes come over and helped us out a little bit-- the American airplanes.

[Bill Rice:] Omaha Beach was the one that you had to go up ladders, you know, to get on the beach up there, and I remember saying to myself, "Boy, I'm glad I'm not walking to work with this one!"

[Rick Randle:] In December 1944, our soldiers, having survived D-day, thought they might be home by Christmas. The Nazis were falling back across a broad front that could surrender any day. That was the rumor. The reality was one last, mighty blow from a dying German war machine-- an unlikely strike in an unlikely place at an unlikely time. The largest land battle in U.S. history that would be known not by its location, but by its shape.

[Ernie Mettenet:] Uh, the initial drive at the Bulge was armor, and, uh, their whole idea was to move quick and get to Antwerp, Belgium, the port that supplied the majority of supplies for the guys that were in the European Theatre. That was the whole idea of the German drive.

[Louis Slama:] We knew the Germans were there. We could hear their tanks moving, and we knew they were building up for a big offense.

[Ernie Mettenet:] Come the early morning hours of December 16th, all hell broke loose-- hours and hours of artillery-- something we hadn't experienced before. I can't begin to, uh, describe the intensity of that artillery fire, and it lasted for hours. Then after that, of course, came the hordes of the infantry.

[Louis Slama:] We got there, we had no winter clothing. We had our jumpers, our regular outfit. I mean, it was cold! I have never been that cold in my life.

[Briton McConkie:] It was the worse weather that any of those natives had ever seen. It was cold!

[Louis Slama:] If you ever try to walk through about two or three feet of snow, at the same time being attacked and people shooting at you, it's--it's, uh, you know... They just fall as you're walking, you know. The Germans are picking you off. The heaviest equipment we had was 30-caliber bazookas against tanks at that point in time.

[Ernie Mettenet:] There was a breakdown in our communications. There was just utter chaos-- unit chaos on the front lines, and it's kind of every man for himself.

[Louis Slama:] All hell broke loose. We said, "If the Germans start attacking, set all the haystacks on fire." We had them all set up. At night time we could see when, you know, you set the haystacks on fire, you can see whatever's happening. And, uh, it was kind of a half-moon day, you know. It was very calm, no wind. You could see the snow sparkling, and you knew, it was a night for death, you know. And we knew that somehow or another we were gonna have to do something. So sure enough, we set that haystack fire. And all of a sudden we heard a lot of banging, screaming and yelling, and they had the tanks, you know, the Panzer tanks started rolling up on the infantry. And what they had, they were like... When we looked up it looked like 10,000 white ants. They had all their white uniforms on, you know, and everything else. And they started to attack. We saw the tanks coming up. Everybody was yelling "medic, medic!" You know, guys are dying, saying, "I want my mother," something like that. So I went back to the foxhole and I started firing. We fired so hard that machine gun was glowing in the dark, you know, from the heat of the thing.

[Ernie Mettenet:] We were hearing burp guns, machine guns, artillery along the entire front. just a massive, massive attack.

[Briton McConkie:] We were ready for them. By this time I had my guns all in a position for them, and so when they came down toward us, they came down in rows. Those Germans, they just kept coming, we kept shooting.

[Louis Slama:] Finally the tanks overran the infantry and they ran right over the top of the foxholes. I could feel the tank riding right over the top of my head, so as we got... I was trying to figure out what the hell to do, and I'm looking at this gun, I'm trying to get some ammunition. So I'm looking there and I look up, and about 25-30 feet, a German jumps up and points this thing at me. And I look up and I look at him and he points this thing at me, and I take the machine gun and I zoomed it out and I cut him right in half and went down.

[Ernie Mettenet:] At that time you had to do what you had to do, and it was

survive.

[Louis Slama:] We were told at that time that this is where we make our final stand. Uh, we either, you know, we die or we beat the Germans and be able to go on our offensive at that time. All of the sudden, daybreak started coming. I was sitting there looking down-- the barrel of the gun. It was smoking, and we could still hear the cries of the Germans out there, "American, American, save us!" you know. Uh, "comrade" was a big thing. I looked out there, and in front of us there was maybe 75-100 Jerries laying down in the snow with their white caps.

[Briton McConkie:] You know, we killed so many people and wounded so many people that they spent their whole evenings, all night picking them up.

[Louis Slama:] We got orders not to shoot. Uh, the commander from the Panzer Division asked if they could go and pick up their troops, you know, their dead and stuff like that, so we allowed them to come. I went out of the foxhole after I killed this guy and they were all laying there. And I turned this one guy over, you know, that was laying on the snow, and I turned him over. He couldn't have been more than 15 years old, 16... We took, uh, we took a lot of casualties, but we stopped them. That area we probably lost, uh, 35-40% of our people at that point in time.

[Ernie Mettenet:] After the, uh, the initial barrage, we heard small-arms fire all around us. And we were firing the mortar in support of the company, the rifle companies that were in front of us. Suddenly, we heard small-arms fire behind us, and, uh, if you've ever heard the rattle of a German burp gun, you never forget it, and we heard a lot of burp gun fire to our rear. We only had one tool that we could use, and that was the 81-millimeter mortar. I ended up planting the bipod of the mortar into the side of the foxhole in order for the tube to gain the necessary elevation to bring the platoon in range. We fired a couple more and, uh, he said "we're on target." The command then was "fire for effect." That means you just drop. You just drop shells into the tube, and, uh, the burp gun fire stopped. I could actually see-- observe-- the flight of the round in the air, and ordinarily on a mortar round it goes "poof" and it's gone. But we were...I actually was seeing the flame and, of course, screams of the guys that were out there, the German platoon.

[Briton McConkie:] It was the first week-- that's when the Germans made all of their progress. Then in the second week, and the third and the fourth week, we pushed them back, and we pushed them back into Germany.

[Ernie Mettenet:] Within weeks, mid-January, all of the real estate that the Germans had taken during the Bulge had been retaken.

[Louis Slama:] We went on the offense up through the Ardennes into the forest, you know, through the Siegfried line, 'cause we stopped them cold right there. That was the... I think that was probably one of the battles that turned, in our estimation, turned the, uh, Ardennes and Battle of the Bulge around.

[Ernie Mettenet:] The casualty rate in A company with friends of mine uh, as a result of the Bulge and later was over 80%.

[Louis Slama:] People don't realize you had 80,000 casualties in three

months. 80,000 casualties... That's, uh, that's unbelievable.

[Rick Randle:] After their defeat at Battle of the Bulge, the Germans attempted to destroy all the bridges across the Rhine River into Germany. The one they didn't get was the Ludendorff Bridge near the city of Remagen. Under very heavy fire, the 99th Infantry Division became the first American foot soldiers to walk that bridge into Germany.

[Ernie Mettenet:] We crossed the bridge going through what they call dead man's corner. Uh, the Germans had 88 guns mounted high on a bluff. They had a rail tunnel firing point blank on the bridge. Uh, it was quite an interesting setup. It was rain, cold, dead man's corner across the bridge. I thought during that evening, uh, I was going to meet my maker. No question about it. It was probably the most concerning point personally, uh, in my career. Uh, it was all over. Walking in the dark, tie by tie--railroad ties-- with the Germans firing at you point blank from above and from the tunnel straight out. We lost a handful of guys at the bridge. A lot of fire fights-- it was quite a show really. Better than a movie.

[Rick Randle:] The end of the war was near. In the face of a massive Russian advance, American and allied prisoners of war were forced to walk remote roads for days-- in some cases, 1,500 miles to get back to the west. Pushed to the limit with sickness, inadequate food and clothing and near-zero temperatures, many did not make it.

[Richard Burt:] We each had one blanket. We rolled it and put it over our shoulder to carry. We traveled in twos because that way they had body heat in the evening with each other, plus the two blankets together.

[Ray Matheny:] It was hard on us, and we had a lot of men start to fall out because we'd been rather inactive and poorly fed, and no medical attention whatsoever.

[Richard Burt:] I lost my two combine partners. One got sick. I put him on the sick wagon and that's the last I ever saw of him. I lost another one a little later on--same deal. They'd fall out, fall behind, and if the Haptan Master wasn't able to run 'em forward... The idea was if the Haptan Master could sic the dog on 'em, if the guy could get up and run away from the dog, he was not sick enough to ride the sick wagon. But if the dog just held him, why, then I guess he was sick enough to ride a sick wagon. But the sick wagon always got periodically emptied, you know, as you go through places...

[Rick Randle:] I've heard that they actually shot some of those...

[Richard Burt:] Oh, yeah...well...

[Rick Randle:] So if you got on the sick wagon you were most likely not to make it.

[Richard Burt:] Yeah, yeah, we all knew that. Nobody wanted to get on the sick wagon.

[Rick Randle:] How many days were you on that march?

[Richard Burt:] We ended up 86 days. That's like walking from here to Cedar City and back in the middle of winter. By that time Germany was so chaotic, and we're not the only camp on the road.

[Ray Matheny:] We ran across a group of about 3,500, we judged, uh, Hungarian Jews. Uh, they all had their long coats on and they were carrying

suitcases. Uh, we had Hungarian speakers with us. A good American group has all kinds of speakers with it, and there were dead people, dead men and boys lying along the road. Their suitcases were open-- those that had died-- and others had rifled their suitcases for whatever they could get, and inside were photographs of their families and articles of clothing. And out in the field, you know, it was early in the morning and people just died in the night out there in the field. And then there's that awful scene that never, never leaves my memory... There were men and boys on their hands and knees with their faces down to the ground eating the new shoots of grass that were coming up. And one man looked up to me as though he was an animal, a sheep or something, and he had green grass hanging from his-- from his lips, you know. And, uh, you know, that really touched me. We learned from them they had been on the road for two weeks. They had come from Hungary. And, uh, the Germans had not fed them anything, and they were, they were in very, very bad shape. And so we told them they were being taken to Mauthausen-- a killing camp. Well, they passed the word real fast and they started going crazy, and, uh, the Germans started to shoot 'em. They started to shoot 'em with small arms, and uh, as we were marching on, they engaged a heavy machine gun. And we could hear that machine gun a long time as we marched away from that scene. You know it's uh... one of those nightmares.

[Rick Randle:] The reality of the Holocaust was burned into the minds of young U.S. troops when they stumbled upon German concentration camps and witnessed the horrific scenes of starvation and death. One can only imagine the thoughts of a Utah farm boy as he watched the desperation and joy of liberated camp survivors.

[Don Breinholt:] We turned onto another, uh, dirt road and went up about 400-500 yards, and there was a great big huge compound fencing with barracks on the inside of it that way, and we didn't know what it was-- had no idea what it was. And the Lieutenant was in a jeep ahead of us that way, and so he told us to... We got to the compound that way, and he said, "You stop here and cover me." He said, "I'm going on the side, and from the looks of it, there's not going to be any firing." And we saw then, uh, prisoners coming out of the gate. The gates were open and they were coming out of the gate. And he went on inside there, and these prisoners come down to our tank that way. And one of them climbed up on my tank and put his arms around me and gave me a great big kiss. And he's jabbering-- jabbering in a foreign language that I didn't know-- so glad to be liberated.

[Lee Tucker:] We had a stand-down day, so we got a jeep and we decided we'd take a little ride and see some of the country around here. We were up near Weimar, Germany, at that time. And, uh, we came to this one road and here was a big barbed-wire fence and gate at the end of this road. And the smell--you could tell something was bad because of the terrible smell in the air.

[Joel Shapiro:] There's a railroad spur that came into the camp, and, uh, where the trains came-- boxcars mostly--and people would be unloaded from the boxcars and marched into the camp. But when the German army retreated, there must have been a couple of shipments come in of human

cargo. And the boxcar doors were open. Uh, those people in the boxcars were simply machine gunned because the back of the walls of the boxcar show the bullet pits.

[Norm Tanner:] Cars lined up there, the general and I climbed up and looked at one of them and he said, "Tanner, go down and check three or four of them and the last one and see if they all have bodies in them" and they all did-- the ones I checked anyway. And the bodies were about three or four of them on top of each other and uh, they, it was a horrible sight. It was the worst part of the war for me.

[Joel Shapiro:] Dachau-- it's a huge installation, and things were not, uh, being well done and well planned. Uh, there was GIs at the gate just standing guard, not to keep me out, but to keep, (the irony of it all), the prisoners in because they couldn't allow these thousands of people to just dash out into the town. So the big problem was whatever supplies, medical and food being brought in.

[Lee Tucker:] Pretty soon this little, uh, young boy came out and said, "Are you Americans?" We said, "Yes." He said, "Well, we're in Camp Buchenwald." And we asked him what it was, and he said, "Well, it's a camp for Jewish prisoners and Russian prisoners of war." And, uh, he said, "The Germans are all gone and we're waiting for the Americans." We went into camp and he showed us around. He showed us the furnaces that were still hot. The Germans had left maybe a day or two before. And, uh, he showed us where they shot the Russian prisoners when they put them in the shower, and where they gassed the people--the gas chambers. We had, you know, a couple rations with us and a canteen of water and things like that, and candy bars and cigarettes. Uh, we gave them everything we had. It was a terrible thing. I had nightmares about that for awhile.

[Joel Shapiro:] These people for the most part, who were still alive, were in the last extremes of starvation. Uh, I had the sense that everybody looked alike. That sounds crazy to say, but when you see those emaciated, devoured bodies walking around, and you see nothing but tendons and bones, everybody looks alike. This young man who had picked me up and was taking me around asked me, "Would you like to see our hospital?" And I said, "A hospital?" In that so-called hospital were people in all stages of the end of life, and I would say 20 or 25 percent of them were already dead. They were just lying there. Again, it was chaos. Uh, none of them could move. As I walked down the aisles, these bony things would come out just to touch my skin, touch my uniform. Uh, it was a terrible experience. In a way, I--I felt I had to do it, and believe me, I couldn't wait to get out of it.

[Don Breinholt:] It was devastating to me to realize the inhumane suffering that those prisoners had suffered.

[Joel Shapiro:] There were not just Jewish prisoners. There were others. There was Polish, political prisoners, gypsies, gays, the elderly or the weak. You know, Hitler decided to clear out from the people anybody who didn't fit. From the zyclon B gas room, a short few paces were what I have described as two stack rooms when I saw them. Bear in mind, this is just a couple of days after the German army has left. These two stack rooms were rooms that were maybe 18 feet square, something like that, in which the bodies

from the crematoria, after having been gassed, were literally stacked in piles. So the irony of it is that the American GIs, being helped by healthier inmates, completed Hitler's task. The bodies were placed on a gurney, a steel gurney which is about two bodies long, two at a time. The gurney went down a track into the furnace room where it was received by workers, tipped sideways into the furnace. These last people, who were maybe gassed yesterday or the day before, again went nameless into the furnace and the smoke went up the chimney.

[Lee Tucker:] But it was a terrible thing. In fact, the army-- they were so incensed when they got there that they marched all the townspeople up there and made them go through the camp and look at it and everything to see what the Germans were really doing to these people.

[Joel Shapiro:] We still have Holocaust deniers, and whatever witness that I am, it's my duty to tell you that there is no exaggeration. I saw it! I was there. I touched it, I smelled it, I heard it, and I took pictures of it with my own little camera. So those who deny or those who say there was exaggerations strike at my heart and they strike at my memory and they strike at the hearts and memory of all civilized people.

[William Christensen:] Well, my parents lived on 9th Avenue and C Street, right between B and C, when I was younger, which was just above the LDS Hospital. And so as a youth I used to go up on the slopes there just above the Veteran's Hospital and ski down on little short boards. I was probably, uh, six or seven years old.

[Frank Mjaavedt:] Well, my folks-- they had about 19 ski jumpers that came from Norway that came to the United States to put on exhibitions. And when we lived up on 25th Street, three or four of the guys would come... My dad--boy, he got in with those guys right away, you know, invite them up to the house. So they'd come up and have dinner on Sunday, and the funny part-- they'd talk about war that might come and stuff like that.

[Jim Powell:] (sings) Ninety pounds of ruck sack, a pound of grub or two...

[Rick Randle:] Trained at Camp Hale, Colorado, soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division specialized in mountain and winter warfare. Many were eager for the adventures of alpine combat, but unprepared for the reality of the fear and danger of fighting in the rugged Apennine Mountains of Italy.

[Jim Powell:] We weren't too sure what was going to happen, but we knew we were going into real combat, and we were excited.

[Frank Mjaatvedt:] Our unit went over about a month before the main body went over--the 10th Mountain. And I remember we went on a patrol to feel the area out, you know. It was a daylight patrol to see if there was Germans in this area, you know. Just beautiful, beautiful country. And, uh, I remember a skier by the name of Reinich. He was lead skier and I was tail skier, and Reinich gets to the top of this big ridge and he looks over and there's a... He said there was at least a 50-man German patrol coming the other way. So we used to have skins on the bottom of our skis, you know, so we could climb, you know, and, uh, he passed it on, he says, "Skins off! Let's get the heck out of here!" So that was the best, I think, I ever skied. We went straight down that mountain and it was like going down Wild Cat-- straight

down, you know, at Snow Basin. And we got to the bottom of the hill and got where we were safe. We all got into a group and we was sitting under a bunch of pine trees and we all looked at one another and started to laugh.

[Rick Randle:] The first major challenge for the division was to secure Mount Belvedere by rerouting the Germans entrenched above on Riva Ridge. On the night of February 18th, companies of the 86th Regiment used their climbing skills to scale the ridge, surprising the Germans.

[Frank Mjaatvedt:] We had to use ropes in places to get up, but it got real foggy. It got so foggy that we surrounded one stump— thought it was a German on the way up at one time. But we got clear back up on top again looking down into the valley below on the other side of this Riva Ridge, and all of a sudden that fog started to rise up. And I was sitting with Captain Neimender. They was about a block-and-a-half away down below us, and I says, "Are those Italians?" I says, "pisanos?", I said to the captain. And he looks in his binoculars and he says, "Well, if they are," he says, "they're carrying German burp guns." And then--then all of a sudden everything... God, tracers and bullets were flying. Well, you should have seen it. That whole place looked like the 4th of July. The reason we were successful, I think, in getting up there was because the Germans didn't expect us to come up-- up the cliffs, you know, like we did.

[William Christensen:] The terrain was such that you couldn't ski anyway. I mean, it was very, uh, steep.

[Jim Powell:] We had been well-trained in rock climbing. The snow was pretty well melting-- the spring snow, and it's fortunate for us that, uh, we didn't have snow. We were not anywhere near the capable ski troops that the Germans were. Our commander decided to make a night attack up the face of a mountain that was called Belvedere. It was a horrible night, and, uh, we were sitting ducks for the Germans. But at dawn we had a standard attack with flanking and frontal assault, and we took the mountain, but it was very costly. I saw whole lines of my buddies dead... and, uh, I was just lucky. I got a bullet through my head on Mount Della Spe, and, uh, had a pretty exciting time. Everybody thought I was going to die, as you would. Uh, the bullet went through here like that and went through my throat. As it turned out it was not serious. It just broke my jaw.

[William Christensen:] The Po River, being one of the largest rivers in northern Italy, came through that area, and because of the width of the river and because they had blown a lot of bridges, we had to go across the river in small boats. But as we went across this one morning, why, we got in the middle of the stream, and the Germans opened up their 88 aircraft guns.

[Frank Mjaatvedt:] And that sky just got black with anti-aircraft fire. I couldn't believe it! You know, the artillery fire. They shot air-bursts.

[William Christensen:] And fortunately again in my boat, uh, no one was injured, but we couldn't get close enough to the shore because of the depth of the water, so we had jumped out and waded to shore and we had packs on our backs with all the ammunition so some of them just sunk right down to the bottom and hopefully they came to the surface, but I didn't wait to see.

[Frank Mjaatvedt:] But we got across the Po and they brought in trucks to

go across. And they says that we were gonna go in trucks and head for the Bremmer Pass to try and blockade the Germans from retreating. He says, "Lieutenant, Mjaatvedt take your squad around and feel that place out before we bring the main body around." We came to a place and it looked just like, uh, being way up above the mouth of Ogden Canyon looking down at the Rainbow Gardens. It was where these Germans had fortified and we started down that. Got around to the other side, and no kidding you, bullets all around our feet... Not one of us got hit, but there were bullets everywhere, you know. We didn't know where it was coming from. Of course, these high mountains up ahead of us. The hill was so steep and they told us to get an A-20 (30 caliber) machine gun up on top. And I looked and we was just about to the top of the hill, and here comes Richardson running right up the side-- right up and stands right up in front of me. And I said, "God, Richardson, get down!" And I grabbed him by the ankle, and he got a bullet right through his back. I dragged him down and sat him and he bled through his nostrils. Richardson got killed just an hour before the damn war, you know, ended.

[Jim Powell:] I was sent back to combat, but the war was practically over.

[William Christensen:] We caught up with the Germans fast enough they were surrendering. We had hundreds of Germans that were just in a single line walking along the road.

[Frank Mjaatvedt:] I was out sitting by my foxhole, you know, and a few minutes later, a guy by the name of Robertson-- he had a field phone, and I was sitting right with him, and he says, "God," he says, "give me your pencil," and he wrote down. He says, "But don't yell!" And he hands it to me and it says, "Cancel all patrol cease all fire!" And a few minutes later, the church bells started to ring. The war was over.

[Briton McConkie:] The Germans, in the last two or three weeks, they were just giving up. Everybody was giving up, and soldiers were picking up what souvenir guns they could get.

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] We were there when Patton's army came through-- the 14th Armored Division-- and they crashed through the gate.

[Rick Randle:] What were your thoughts when you first saw American soldiers again and knew you were rescued?

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] Oh, what a wonderful... We knew that was-- we were near the end, but when we heard the fighting two or three days ahead of time, we could hear all the artillery, we knew that we were about to be rescued, so we were getting very jubilant by this time.

[Ray Matheny:] A jeep comes into camp driven by an American captain. He drove right up close to where my friends and I were. He got out and jumped on top of the hood. He says, "Come around here!" He says, "All right, you guys, you're free!" That was the liberation!

[Richard Burt:] We got back there and the British, as soon as they saw us coming, they says, "Okay yanks, take off your clothes--all of them. Put them in that pile over there." And they took a stick and lifted them like this and put them in a fire. We were so full of lice and fleas.

[Rick Randle:] You hadn't changed your clothes for how long at that time?

[Richard Burt:] About three months. Three months. Three months I didn't even have my clothes off. And, uh, so they issued us... put us in the shower and we scrubbed each other raw with GI soap and brushes for at least a half hour. It was a nice, hot shower. I couldn't believe it. And then they issued us nice, brand new British woolen uniforms, and, oh boy, did they itch! And they fed us `till we were just about to bust. By that time I was-- I was really sick. I had dysentery so bad. I just-- I was all bloated up. I couldn't button my pants. I had to get a piece of string and tie the belt loops over my shoulder. I looked like I was about eight months pregnant. So they sent us back from there and we ended up in an airfield and I was getting sicker every day. And I thought, you know, at the time ...that I'd gone through all of that and still might not make it. That would have been the real irony.

[Epifanio Gonzales:] I wanted to come home. I was beginning to flinch. When you start flinching when you hear explosions, that means that you're getting a little nervous, you know--bomb shelled, they called it. And so all I could think was home. So I told them, "I don't want your commission, sir. I want to go home."

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] And as we got on the troop ship, the bells and the whistles went off and all this noise. We found out it was V.E. Day. It was the 8th of May, and everything-- all hell broke loose as far as the noise.

[Richard Burt:] So at the airfield we found some verry pistols, you know, and some shells, and we celebrated with the verry pistols.

[Lee Tucker:] So that night the doctors broke out all the medicinal whiskey and...

[Rick Randle:] Everybody had a party.

[Lee Tucker:] Everybody had a party. We all celebrated. Everybody was ready to go home. Of course, we didn't go home right then.

[Ray Matheny:] I'll never forget this either-- Dwight Eisenhower came up and he had his "Ike" coat, you know, it was kind of short, cut off at the bottom. And, uh, the only thing I can remember what he said, he says, "Thank you, thank you for your sacrifices!" I think he said.

[Rick Randle:] Though victory for Europe came on May 8th of 1945, the real end for the European troops came in August when the Japanese surrendered and ships heading for the Pacific with tens of thousands of troops turned toward American shores to be welcomed by the Statue of Liberty and millions of loved ones.

[Louis Slama:] When we finally started coming back and saw the Statue of Liberty and I knew I was home, and it was, uh, kind of a feeling, you know. It was hard to visualize-- I finally made it. I know that a lot of the guys, buddies like Lambert-- he didn't make it.

[Don Breinholt:] On the ship there was-- They decked it out with flags and coming into the New York harbor, and they had some USO boats coming and they're playing all the patriotical songs, and I looked over there... These greeting boats came in and played the patriotical songs and over here we saw the Statue of Liberty. It was beautiful. (tears)

[Crit Killen:] It was a great liberty town. People treated us so nice there. I gotta say that New Yorkers just made it... The service people, all the service people feel so important and so welcome, and they seemed to be so

grateful.

[Lee Tucker:] Just like we were conquered heroes it was kind of funny really.

[Robert McGregor:] Dirty old harbor and planks and that... just about everybody got down to kiss the ground when we got off that gangplank.

[Norm Tanner:] Uh just glad to see land and be, be back to New York knowing I'd be seeing my wife soon, that was an important thing.

[Don Breinholt:] I drove up in the driveway there in the taxi, and I got out of the taxi, and when she saw me... Gladys and her mother was out raking leaves in the yard that way. And when she saw me get out of that taxi, she started running towards me. And just before she got to me, roughly there, why, she fainted dead and I caught her!

[Gladys Breinholt:] I was just as thrilled to find out that, well, when I saw him, that it was over. For me, it was over!

[Heber Butler:] We lost a lot of good people. We lost a lot of good German people... and Italian people.

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] I've had a lot of thoughts on how things were, and I would not wish anybody else to go through those, although it was something I went through and I was a changed person, and in many ways the better.

[Epifanio Gonzales:] I only know we were fighting to survive. We were fighting for a cause and we gave it our best shot.

[Louis Slama:] There's a lot of guys with graves out there in Normandy and Holland and the Battle of the Bulge and stuff. Those are the guys that are heroes that fought for this kind of a freedom. And that's exactly what kept a lot of the guys alive, you know. The thought of coming back home and being able to know that we had just destroyed the army that wanted to control the world.

[Rick Randle:] Success in Europe was achieved by a skilled and brave air force, a rugged infantry and armored divisions made up of men and women willing to risk their lives to destroy Hitler's Third Reich. The war in the Pacific would need that same dedication and more. The Pacific Ocean, the largest battle field in world history, was laced with islands of dense jungle, malaria-infested mosquitoes and a battle-hardened enemy willing to fight to the death.