

Interview with David W. Meyer

Interviewer: Tell us your full name.

David W. Meyer: David W. Myer.

Interviewer: And where are you from, originally?

David W. Meyer: Rockford, Illinois.

Interviewer: Did you grow up there?

David W. Meyer: No, my folks came here in 1924, so I grew up in Ogden.

Interviewer: So you're an Ogden boy.

David W. Meyer: Basically, yes.

Interviewer: And you went to high school there?

David W. Meyer: I went all the way through junior high, but I finished -- I came out, we moved to Salt Lake, or this area, Draper. I did my high school at Jordan High School.

Interviewer: Tell us about how you got into World War II and that sequence of events.

David W. Meyer: How far back do you want me to go?

Interviewer: 1941.

David W. Meyer: Alright, basically, I went to Jordan High School and I learned a little bit about photography there. Two or three takes of this. I am just trying to think. They were building a steel plant, and I graduated from Jordan High School and went to Weber College for one

semester. That's when I ran into Jay Heslot, he was just ahead of me. We were in the same dark room, but we just never met each other. Then my mother wanted me to stay home, so I worked in the steel mill for six months. Then my number came up, so I came up to Fort Douglas and that is when I started my military career, 1943.

Interviewer: Okay, 1943.

David W. Meyer: That's right.

Interviewer: So you were drafted?

David W. Meyer: No, they didn't count that as a draft. Like I said, I stayed home and commuted so my mother could have me around. We were living in Sandy then. When I came out -- it was in Social Hall Avenue, then I was called Motor Avenue -- that's where the induction center was. I went through and everyone was home except me, they had a week or two back in the house. They counted mine as an enlistment, and it shows on my card, that I came right to Fort Douglas. So I was up here and I could almost see Sandy from the old barracks that were up there. After we got KP and got ourselves squared around and heard our Army number, we were shipped then to Camp Kohler, which our basic training, but we stayed in the station down there on the train for about a whole day. We spent the night -- these were the old Pullman cars -- before we could get on the main line to go to Camp Kohler. So we pulled into Camp Kohler and got our normal basic training.

I was scheduled, because of my mechanical ability, to become a teletype operator and a repairman. I happened to mention that I had done some work for yearbook, and for some reason it clicked, and the next thing I know, I was on the Overland Limited to Rochester, I mean to SCPC -- Signal Corps Photographic Center -- in Astoria, Long Island City. That was the start of

my war training for the military. It turns out that I became part of a group of about eight to ten men who became guinea pigs because the signal corps just didn't know what to do with us. It was so new -- they knew signals, and they knew radio, and they knew wireless and that sort of thing -- but they never had anything to do with photography before. So one of the first things they did, before they found out that we were not infantry men, they sent us out to Fort Dix.

There were only about 20 of us in that group there. Our lieutenants were not infantrymen, they were newspaper photographers, but they had a rank, so now they were lieutenants. We went out there with a full pack, they had us run five miles, and we would go through the obstacle course on our bellies under the barbed wire and they are blowing stuff out and water is coming down, it was all full of mud. It was interesting because when we got out of that particular hurdle, there were some showers there and they had a large -- you just pull a trigger and then you had a deluge. We just walked under, our helmets, clothes, and all, and we just held it down and took off all our clothes, bit by bit, because it was our laundry at the same time. About a week later, the general commander came by to find out what's going on because he saw the size of it. We were only about 15 or 16 men, half the company was already in the hospital because the lieutenants didn't know what they were doing and they were pushing us too hard. On that basis, it was quite an experience there because they didn't know quite what to do with us.

Interviewer: So you had been assigned as--

David W. Meyer: We had been assigned to the Signal Corps Photographic Center in Astoria because that was the training center. That was the old Paramount Studios. I was in one of the training films and walking around the stage and the set and this sort of thing. That's where we were supposed to get our training, but there was only a group of us, it turned out, that had the credentials, experience wise, so we kind of became the guinea pigs. After about three or four

months at SCPC, with those strange trips out into the wild, we didn't know what to do. I was selected as one of about 8 to 10 men that went up to the Rochester Institute of Athenaeum in Rochester, New York. That is where Dr. Thereonson and some of the others who were developing the chemicals for Eastman Kodak trained us. So we were trained, and they didn't know where we were going to go. We were developing to go -- if we would ever go -- to Alaska or Canada. So we were developing our negatives in ice water with ice cubes floating around to see if we could get it. Then in the jungles, the water was so warm, we had to watch out that we didn't wash the emulsion right off the film. The negatives were dense and we had to print those. So we had a full training of camera and camera use as they thought we might run into.

Later on, because the signal corps got into better shape, they found out that they did not have to have different kinds of processing facilities in combat. As a matter of fact, we were sent up to Peekskill, New York, and took over a park up there. My job, with a couple of other people, was to put black tar paper over all the rooms. We put a whole lab in there, because that's what we thought we might have to do in Europe. It turns out it was alright, it was great, but that isn't the way it worked, actually. On that basis, we had a great deal of specialized training. I don't know if the fellows were still doing it, but when I had the negatives, I didn't know what to do with the darn things. They didn't tell us. As we are sitting in the Rochester Hotel -- I was on the 9th floor, I remember that -- I had a desk there, so I would take cardboard or heavy stock and I would cut a window. I put two of them together and I would sandwich a negative in between so I could pick it up and look at it. Then you had your test material to go with it. So all of my negatives, from start to finish, were all in a big binder with these things here. I find out later that when we left -- they had to hand them in. And they liked the way I did it so well that, as far as I

know, that's the way they're still doing it in their labs. I could see the negatives and put them in a loose leaf binder. But that was about it.

We got back into Rochester, I mean into the Signal Corp Photo Center, and the next thing we knew we were at Fort Dix just waiting. Then we went overseas, this group again of about eight, I think, that had boiled down. We were put on a cargo ship, and it had four staterooms on either side. It worked out beautifully for us because there were two men to a state room. There was a Jewish family on the other side I felt was interesting, but they were going to Jerusalem -- I talked with a couple of them -- and you could just feel that aura they had, they are going to Jerusalem. The thing I thought was rather interesting was that we were still fighting in North Africa, but yet they were heading across the ocean. So we were on this steamer and we were part of a first great convoy. I think there were 80 ships in that convoy because they had just pretty well neutralized the submarine wolf packs. When we got off, we had a couple of submarine scares, but it wasn't much.

Interviewer: So, about month was this?

David W. Meyer: This was in September of 1943.

Interviewer: And you were then in England?

David W. Meyer: Well, we landed in Cardiff, Wales, and we went to call a place in England -- we sort of had a ship to ourselves -- but we got to the Wellington Barracks. We were there for awhile, by the time they didn't know what to do with us in London. Then our assignments were sort of split up and I was one of two or three -- I guess I was the only photographer that was sent to London, the rest were lab people and that sort of thing. So they ran our lab in London at 35

Davies Street, which is about a block from the embassy. Then I worked, and our assignment branch was that way.

Interviewer: So what were you taking photos of at this time?

David W. Meyer: Well, one of the assignments, I remember particularly, was out in the western part of England, west of London. You remember now, in that time, the only combat that was going on was the 8th Air Force, and they're bombing. So what is happening -- those are the only casualties -- but they were coming back with unique casualties because of shrapnel coming in from behind and below. So they were getting back injuries and that sort of thing. That is what I was sent to the hospital to photograph, and I remember two particular things. They showed me some men sitting in wheelchairs, and they had their hands like this and they had a big washer on the finger and a string and various collections of nuts. And they would sit there and they would try to make those fingers work -- you know, by willing them. I remember was one man, they said all the nerves to that finger had been destroyed. He sat there and he willed that finger to move, and they said, actually, what happened is his body actually reconstructed the nerve endings out there to that finger just by exercising these day by day, he was just sitting there moving those hands this way. The other thing I thought was interesting was they said the lung injury men, in order to exercise their lungs, had learned to breathe with any one quadrant of the lungs. Well, that intrigued me, so on the way back to London, I practiced and I can. Today my grand children, I will say, "What part do you want me to breathe?" And they will put their hand on it. It takes a bit of concentration now, I have to practice, but I can make myself breathe here or here or here or there because that's what the fellows were doing as part of their therapy. To me, that was one of more interesting photographic areas I had to go in that respect. I photographed a mile and a half of locomotives all covered in plastic. They were just waiting to

be put on board to be carried across to replace the trains they were blowing up in Europe on the other side of the border.

Interviewer: So this is before D-Day?

David W. Meyer: Oh yes, this is long before D-Day. This is 1943. And that's about the time, I don't know the date exactly, but I grabbed some photographs and drawings I made, when the (inaudible) started coming over, and the V-2s. I was part of a four-man crew turned loose in England, in London, to go and photograph these. We are going back in to the origination of what the duty of a photographer was. When they started to put these men out on the field, many generals wanted to have some PR work done. So nobody had defined what a combat photographer was to do. So that was part of this business when they pick me and one of my buddies to photograph the incidents because we were photographing the blast pattern and the trajectory and this sort of thing. They became aware of a lot of that lab work -- they no longer did that PR work for those generals and for history and that sort of thing, personal things. That's when the photographer -- that's when they saw that they could apply the technical aspects of filming. I drew in the cartoon, if you want to see it later on, I show myself in a Jeep -- the fellows going out in a jeep. They gave me command car, I don't know why, but I had a desk that would come up from behind the front seat -- it all opens, you know, over the top, heavy wheels -- and I would pull that desk up and over my lap. Then we had an idea from some phone calls. I would guide us across London and around. A couple of interesting things happened there. One of them was the typical brash GI, was one who hit in the London docks area. Now I didn't know anything about London docks except there was a gate there and all these boats and all these good, wagons, and box cars. And we went and drove up to go in and they wouldn't allow us. They said, "This is a restricted area." Okay -- brash GI's. So we went and turned around, but

they had something going on and, a fire truck had to go in. Well, what better do we need? So I just told the driver and we found a fire truck and pulled up and got a ways out to there, and there was this great hole and a lot of trackage. So I climbed up on what I call a boxcar and I was snapping away and all of a sudden I start seeing here was a man in a trench coat, there was a man in a trench coat, over here was a man in a trench coat. Well, they were the CID. They came up and were gently urged me down, and we walked in -- and ended up, they took my pictures, the folders. Then they called the CO and said, "What's this guy doing down here?" They let this assignment officer know that there are some areas in London you just don't go without a clearance, so that was that. We still kept photographing that day, and I know of another bomb that had dropped at Waterloo Station, so we drove around there. I could see where the blast was. An interesting thing -- the embankment at that time above the road was about 10 to 15 high, and the tracks and other things were up there and the station was farther back, but I could see parked right at the road, still there, was a London bus, a big double-decker. That blast was flat enough, and the land was flat enough, they had just taken the top right off that bus -- just sliced it off -- and there sat the lower half of that bus. I think I got a shot or two of that. I got up around in and I was -- it was a nice pit there, a nice, big hole -- and I was down in the hole because they wanted the markings, whatever could be evidence to give them some clue to what this was, how they were constructed. I just started reaching down and I could bend down and go right back up like that, and I put that up like that. About the fourth time, I had a pretty good hunk of stuff, I saw a pair of black shoes, and the shoes go like this. It was British Air Force blue above that, so I had invaded another private realm because the Air Force was the ones that were supposed to get all those pieces. They were supposed to be doing all the research, so I was an interloper. You know, they said something interesting about the yanks. I don't know if it was ever on film before

or not, but, remember now, all at the same time, a lot of the GIs are coming over and they are starting to flood these little towns as they built these big camps. There were three things they used to say about the Yanks, they said: "They're over-paid, over-sexed, and over here." That was the view of us, guys like me perhaps were contributing, but that was about the kind of stuff we were doing at that time. Oh, two more things as I remember. I was sent out to East Anglia, it was kind of a strange assignment. Again, my assignment was to go take pictures of stuff. They didn't have enough data to go to this, go do this. They figured you as a photographer knew what they wanted. I got out there and that was where Patton was cooling his heels because that's where the tents were there, there was no people. There would be a group of men assigned and they would walk around. And that's what Hitler was kept waiting for, they were going to go across the Pas de Calais. That's where they were supposed to go. It was the shortest distance between the cliffs of Dover in England, I mean, France. But that was all make believe.

Interviewer: So you photographed these false units?

David W. Meyer: Some of it, as I remember. I snapped some because there was nobody there. You know, I was down behind an embankment and here's an airplane and all cardboard, as I remember it. Now, I may be a little bit wrong on that, but it is vaguely in my mind, there was stuff that was not real, just got the photographs of it and realized, there's a couple of divisions out there waiting to come across the Pas de Calais.

Interviewer: So what kind of things weren't real?

David W. Meyer: The men, it wasn't a real camp. There were tents there, and they had men walking around and trucks driving around.

Interviewer: Did they have, like, cardboard tanks?

David W. Meyer: Well, as I remember, something like that, or we photographed to look like that.

Crew: Can I intercept, I'm sorry. Can you have them say that, "The men weren't real, blah blah blah."

Interviewer: Rather than me, yeah.

David W. Meyer: The men were real as far as I -- there was maybe a company or something so they could be seen walking around. But, as I understand it, it was their job. Now somebody may cut me on the ears for that, but that was the understanding I had. What I saw, I got there and there wasn't much there, but I got some records of it. The other thing that was interesting was -- then I got back to the assignment desk and they said, "Meyer, go here." So I ended up at the 801st. I don't remember what it was, why I was sent to photograph, but I must have got that because as the lieutenant was walking me by the stockade, the stockade was square steel wire with boxes about that square. Here stood two pyramidal tents right at the corner and here stood 12 men -- dirty, disheveled, long bearded, dirty clothes -- and they came over to the wire because we were walking right close. The lieutenant said, "Well, there's our dirty dozen." I wish I would have had some pre-knowledge because I would have photographed them because they were something else, again. They had earned the name, they worked hard to become "the dirty dozen," the uncontrolled sort of thing. They went over, apparently, there was a plane loaded with them as I understand it, they were in jail because they were malcontents, disobedient sort of thing. They were still the 101st Airborne-trained. They still went all over, as I understand it, there was some mix-up about whether the pathfinders dropped their flares, and a German had sabotaged, flooded some fields, and that sort of thing. Some of those planes, as I understand it, the scuttlebutt that I got was that those men never got out of the plane. It went down, and they

never became what legend made them become, which was great, but they actually existed. I didn't take a picture because, at that time, you know, who wants to see 12 dirty prisoners standing in a wire? They hadn't become famous yet. But that's the kind, some of the things we were doing, and I know that I say I survived D-Day.

Interviewer: Tell us what led up to D-Day and what you were going to do.

David W. Meyer: Well, I was still operating out of the assignment desk, and most of the time it was just "do this" or "do that." I remember one thing, again, I was sent to photograph Sir Thomas Beecham, the leader of the London Philharmonic. Stars and Stripes had said, "All we want is one column," but he had just recently been married a second time, as I understand it, but the gal wanted in the worst way to be in that picture. I don't know quite what I told her, but I got her to stand at a certain place and then while I took the picture, I just snapped the shutter. All they wanted was a one-column, and she was kind of, as I understand it, she was kind of eager to - - she was newly married to him and she wanted to share that. Then I came back, as I say, and the assignment desk was different. I was sent down, and the thing I found was interesting, I have a nap sack, the officer's nap sack -- I've still got it -- and that's all you carried. You carried a change of under wear, and some film holders, and that was it, and whatever your jacket was. They sent me down to Southampton. I had an order, I don't remember what, because you get a lot of those paper orders, and they sort of disappear. The paper was rather coarse and like kids use in school to draw on. So I just showed up at this camp and it turns out, that's where all the troops were waiting on the embankment over Southampton.

They had been in those tents, and it had been raining for two or three days. Well, I finally found a squad tent that had one bed, so that was my bed. I had my duffel bag with me and I had been

transferred in that respect. So I sat it down by the door -- there was about this much between me and the door, and the door was open and it was raining like crazy -- and I spent about two nights there. I remember the people at the steel plant had made me a mirror and done a lovely work of turned wood so I could shave with it, but they glued it. They also made me a special box I could open up for my v-mails -- stationary box. Well, I went to open it, I was going to shave, and I went to open it and it had been so wet that all the glue came apart and that mirror came all apart in my hands. About that same time, I guess it was in the second day, it had been raining all that time, and it was damp right around that area, somebody came up from the orderly room and said, "Meyer," he said, "Here's the orders. You are to report back to London." So I got a jeep and--

Interviewer: So you were set to go in on?

David W. Meyer: I was waiting to go on wave two. I was sitting there, the fellows have been down there a couple of days already. They were sea sick, and they said there was vomit and, you know, it was miserable waiting for the order to go. So here I was, the minute they say said "go," those men were gone. Well that meant the fellows on the hill were right down the edge on the next set of barges. That's where I was supposed to go and they didn't tell me that on my assignment. "You report down there." Well, you are supposed to be using your head, you are a photographer, and you go take pictures. At any rate, I got back to London, and our head quarters were right in Mayfair, the heart of the best part of London -- the fashionable part of London. If I had thrown a rock three or four times and I would have hit Buckingham Palace. So we were billeted right there on Hartford Street and the houses were not too big -- had one door, about a bedroom wide -- but they had little bay windows on them. Well, our boat was number 35. So I had come home, out of the car, out of the Jeep and he just dropped me off at the hours or the billet and I went to bed. The next morning, I came out and it was a nice day. I heard, the

windows were open -- it was a British unit next to us -- and that was when I heard Winston Churchill say, "This morning at 6: 30 am, our boys hit the beach at Normandy." Well, so I leapt on up to Berkeley Square and up to our headquarters, and the assignment desk said, "Meyer, here's your orders. You go over to the embassy," which was only about a block and a half away. They've got this, I forget what it was he said, but that's where I had to go. When I got over there, here was, I don't know what was (inaudible) that was in that pile or not, but I remember that William Randolph Hurst was in it, and a few others. So you had the elite of the American press in that room. They turned us all out and put us in a bus and I think it was Biggin Hill we went to. Here was maybe about a 20 or 30 foot square map of the southern half of England and the English Channel and then the northern half of France. Then there were dots around -- they were all of the encampments -- and then there was a string, or knitting yarn, from that place across the channel over to France where they were supposed to land. So there it was, it was happening just hours. The press was given the information, "They're on their way." Well, I filmed that particular bunch again, I don't know where they are. You take a bunch of pictures and then you're gone. So that was why I say in a sense I survived D-Day because I, in a generous use of the word survive, I did. Had that call come in maybe only a half hour or an hour later, I'd have been down off the hill and boarding those barges for the second wave. So that's, that's that part of it.

Then, where did I go from there? I went back and I apparently I had some assignments in and around London after that, because the next thing that happened to me, I walked into the assignment room, and here's the orders, and again the orders and I forget what it was, but I ended up at the 82nd Airborne Division. Again, as I say, they didn't tell me what I was getting into, the assignment desk, and the supply sergeant saw me and said, "Meyer, it's going to be cold where

you're going." So I had to go to the supply room to get a sweater to put under my jacket because it turns out that I was going to be in the tow plane of the first wave of relief for the Airborne invasion troops who had landed in Operation Market Garden. Our troops, the operation was going into Nijmegen.

Interviewer: This is in what country?

David W. Meyer: Holland. So, we took off, and you just do what you do as a photographer. Interestingly enough, and this I think one of the reasons I want to get back--

Interviewer: Describe what you did in this plane and how you were--

David W. Meyer: I will, I will get around to that. But as I say, I saw them also loading up a glider. Now mind you, there will be an airplane and then a coil of bungee cord and then a glider. There were two rows of C-47s and two rows of gliders, and outside that was another row of gliders waiting to load up the second they got back. That picture there, that was almost -- I can imagine that thing was extended about a mile to a mile and a half. There were all those planes, tail to nose, so we got a shot of that. I happened to, as I was getting in, saw them pushing into one of our guiders -- not the Horsa, which was one of the big English, but these were American gliders -- they had the front up and they were backing a Jeep into it with a twin-mount machine gun on it, 50 caliber. I looked at that and thought, "I like that. That is a pretty good picture." So I took it, and then I got in the plane. Let me finish that story off about that, because years later when I went back to the National Archives to get some work I wanted to get done and doing stuff for the Eisenhower thing, I was looking through all these pictures, and all of a sudden, "Hey, that's a nice looking shot." It was the glider being pushed into the thing. I turned it over and sure enough, there was my name on the back. Because all the pictures, when they came

through the lab, one thing the cameraman had to do was write a card with the names, dates, places, and who was there. So they had a special way of doing that, and on the back, every picture carried an ETO, a dateline, we called it, and there it was, "Dave Meyer, Sergeant Meyer." I had taken that picture. So that took care of that. But now we got on the plane -- C-47, no door. It was interesting because they had us wear a parachute and a flack jacket, and then we tied a rope around our waist so we didn't fall out the door. As I look at it now -- I had a buddy there shooting motion pictures -- we laugh because when we released those guiders, we were down around 500 feet. If we got hit, we could just see our untying the rope, throwing off the flack jacket, getting out, jumping out, pulling the thing, and hoping that thing will open before we hit 500 feet. So we laughed at that. Some of the idiosyncrasies of military -- you've got to do it this way, you've got to do it that way. The interesting thing was, as we came across onto Holland and I was looking out the window to the west and south, I saw as they have lot of straight roads and they have trees parked at definite intervals. These were rather young trees because they were a nice blossom, but I could see the trunk, and the thing that I thought was interesting, I could see a black bar behind every tree and they were fox holes. The Germans had already dug their fox holes. If we came across those roads from the sides, they were already dug in. The other thing was, as far as I could see, were men riding bicycles going the same direction we were going with rifles across their back and the German helmet on. So the troops were already getting there, waiting for us to land. As we went farther inland, we started to pick up flack. I think there's some remarkable footage of all the shows that came out of the war -- "A Bridge Too Far" has done the best job of documenting it because in that film General Gavin of 82nd Airborne was talking about how there were reinforcements. They were waiting for the reinforced Jeeps to come in with their machine guns because they were going to be their scouts to find out what was

going on. That hit me because I was supposed to go in the co-pilot's seat the next day when we got back.

The other story was, as we kept on going in, we were having flack and you'll see that in "A Bridge Too Far" right out the windows and out the door. Here's that black puff. Well, the flight engineer came back and said, "Are you guys all right? We've been hit." He said that some of the shrapnel knocked out the (inaudible) and the pilot was cut with some flying Plexiglas. I said that as far as we knew, we were all right, and we finally went back in. A little while later, I had been taking pictures of what was going on, and I had my legs crossed just like this. I was changing my film, and I had slipped it in here and I stood up and when I uncrossed my ankle I heard a "thunk." A hole about that big around was right where my ankles were crossed. It went right through the front of the seat, the seat, and out the side of the plane. So in that respect, we looked at it, now we have an air conditioning sort of thing, and what about taking our pictures. The interesting thing was that when we started to release, now Nijmegen, they had a little bit better chance, they were better organized. They had a little bit better drop zone than they did for Arnhem. So the fellows had put their parachutes on, and to remind you now, they have been on the ground two, almost three days waiting for the fog to lift, waiting for their support, waiting for the cars and trucks and the munitions they needed. What those air troopers had done, they put some in that area where we were dropping their graves, they had made their rosettes out of their parachutes. So, they would be standing down in the bottom of those parachutes waving at us because here came the relief. I think I got some pictures in the stills where I saw, when a glider would break loose, it would bank and it came in to my scope of my camera. You can see the banking to come back and land to where they were. So in a sense, they had a little less problem at Nijmegen than they did at Arnhem, which was a terrible fiasco up there. I got back into the --

we turned around and I got the impression that we were in the air six to eight hours, three hours over and three hours back, something on that order. We were tired and I remember as I got out of this plane, I stepped on this step and I got on the ground. I stamped my feet, just to get some circulation back. I was hearing liquid running water run, and that wasn't right. So I took a couple steps up forward, and I looked up under the starboard wing, under the body of the starboard wing, and there was about the size of a pencil was gasoline hitting the deck, which indicated that we could have flamed out anywhere along the line. Of course, I went back to the day room. I was through. I had made my trip, I was through, and I was ready to go home and back to London. So I got out of there and got back to London and then I was in London a little while. But then again, the assignment desk said, "Meyer, you've got an assignment here." They were always so complete to tell me everything I was going to do. All he said to me was, "Meyer, you've got to catch plane and fly to Paris and you find out where is Patton Army," because he was moving so fast after the fiasco with Market Garden that they weren't quite sure where he was. So I did, and I showed up in Paris because our headquarters by that time was split. Our headquarters was there. I walked into head quarters and the first one I saw was Colonel Jervey, I think it was, and he said, "Meyer, what are you doing over here?" And I said, "Well, I'm on my way to Patton's Army. I've got to find out where he is and find Patton's Army." And he said, "Oh no you're not. You're going to stay right here and open up an art department for me." So that's when my second M.O.S. came into being because I worked in the art department as well in London. I was tarrying back and forth and that type of thing. So that's when I started my stay in London and the first assignment was to do whatever it took, but a pictorial history of the war for then General Eisenhower. It turned out to be four leather-bound volumes of one hundred pictures per volume. And what we did then, rather than try to use a printing press, we just glued a

glossy photograph on each page with a caption underneath it. It was bound by a regular binder. It was interesting because he was the Supreme Commander of the whole war, so you don't give him anything shoddy, so we used leather. We found some leather -- maroon leather -- and I had a pattern designed for the cover to emboss something. The bottom line of that was the man who was my contact, Henry Martin, was an artist in himself and he put me into contact with all these good people. It turns out that the man who did the dye for us to stamp that design of the SHAEF badge and the eagle and the five stars was the official engraver for the Bank of France. So that who made that. Then I had an interpreter to help me and we were having a little trouble getting that leather and getting a permit for it. So Jean Rowe took me to an office where we had to get the permission, and we went in and talked to the people in charge, "Hey, where's that leather we need?" They said, "That's been permitted. You got your permit." But she said, "It's been mailed to the next people who have to sign it." "Okay, fine." So Jean and I were walking down the hall and he said, "Sergeant Meyer, by the way, that next department is right there three doors down and across the hall." So we finally got it.

Another interesting thing, Jerry had been gone, by that time, only six months out of Paris. The funny thing was that the only place we could buy that leather was on the black market. An interesting twist, we said, with Jean there, (inaudible) because that's exactly what it was. It's all part of the war. All the confusion, all the strange things were going on -- all part of the war. I have a photograph of Champs-Elysees, taken from down around the Grand-Petit Palais which is almost at the bottom of the street there, and there is not a soul or a car to be seen all the way to the D'Etoile and the Arc de Triomphe, which is unusual for Paris. So, on that basis, that set me up. I spent my time then receiving. What happens in the military, by that time, as we settled down and the D-Day material was over and we were well into France, on our way to Germany,

all the photographers would take their pictures for every day and they would put their captions into a box or container and it was shipped to the lab in Paris. Sometimes they would never see their pictures, but that's was the way it worked. All the photographers in our Army -- and they were all part of the Pictorial Service, and that was all of them -- all their photographs came to the lab which was across the street from me and into my hands about anywhere from 18 to 24 hours after they had been taken. That was my job to go through and code them and organize them in a manner that made sense chronologically and then get them to the printer and get the books made. When the first volume was delivered by a lieutenant, Ike was quite a man, and I had a letter from him saying thank you, he appreciated that. By the time I got volumes up to three and four done, the war was over and I was able to take and present them to Ike myself at the I.G. Farben Building, and he was a gentleman. I quite enjoyed him because he was sitting there -- it was a Sergeant who let me in and just said, "Go right on in, Sergeant Meyer" -- and Ike was sitting there in his uniform ready for the day, but he was reading the newspaper. As I came in, he looked at me, and he folded his paper and he said, "Come in, Sergeant Meyer." We had a chance to visit for a minute, and he quite enjoyed them. Of course, the interesting thing about Ike's books was that they were made for General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander. When he became, just retired, then he went to where he retired in Gettysburg. But the news people found him, researchers found him there, and then he finally got to be President. Then, of course, he had his library in Abilene. Even when we were in Gettysburg, I think the same archivist went with him, but they told me when I worked at the library in Abilene that those were the most used books out of the whole museum, the whole library, were those because they were eight by ten photographs with the captions and it was stitched with thread, it wasn't miracle bound, and heavy

leather and we had a rayon inside, lovely brocaded material. They were gorgeous, and they had just been plain worn out.

So, later on, I made a stop by when I heard about that and on my way to do some other work at the archives, so we put them in a desk and I scanned all those in. They're all digitized now and they are there for people to make use as they like and they can see. It's all there and, as I say, if you want to look through a little bit of them here, you've got the whole thing from the time he started the meeting with the Governor of Luxemburg until he was waving goodbye on his plane as he left the continent to go home. They're all there. That was my job primarily.

Interviewer: Okay, and that leads us in to that really interesting job that fell into your lap.

David W. Meyer: Well this was, as I say, all the pictures were coming across. I had an art department -- we were split, but I was by myself. It was an interesting setting. I'll give you a couple of other things to give you some idea. It had been taken over by the "Jerrys." They were in good condition, a beautiful spiral staircase as well as an elevator to get up to the fifth floor. I was on the fourth floor and my windows, right before the drawing room, and I looked over the (inaudible). But there is the Tory race track and I could watch the horses on the back stretch. Right down below us was this square box of a house that was the lab, but two or three houses up was the house in which the Windsor, the Duke and Duchess Windsor had that house. That was the house Diana was going to move into before she lost her life. So we were in a nice part of Paris because we just took over what Jerry had taken over. That was where I was, and the lab was right across the street. It wasn't in the same building, and so, within hours, I had these things on my desk and they were bins for them I was sorting them in. Well, all of a sudden, one day -- in early May, I think was, or April -- at any rate, the first of the atrocity, the concentration camps

came across my desk. It was quite a jolt, and those pictures were only hours old. I started to put them in a box, because I looked at them as they came in and said, "Alright, this is this." It was there I had no directions on that yet. It was too soon to know what to do with all that stuff. Nobody knew about it. Ike didn't get up there for about two or three months before he made his that this should be documented. He saw those bodies there, and he was there with Marshal and with Patton and a little bit of the press, we have a photograph of that. He also had been shown how the Nazis hanged these people here in the gallows or bend them over a table and beat them as part of their torture. It was then when Ike was standing in front of these bodies -- they had railroad track in there and it was spaced apart with logs and in there were the bodies. That was to keep the fire burning and the bodies being consumed. By that time, it all cooled off. Ike was just standing there and it was a matter of record, he said to the people, "You right now get all the pictures you can get. You get all the interviews you can get. You get all the photos you can get." He went on to say, "The people in this town around here, they should be made to walk through these ovens so they knew what was going on." So he's on record of saying that in about, third or fourth or fifth week of whatever is going on. Well, that went on and so by, I think I had a 100 photographs came across my desk as the Army moved across. As each camp was liberated, then the photographers covered that and the stuff came to my desk. It lasted, I think the last picture came in about the 17th of May, and we were down in the far corner. It was the 3rd Army, and that was Ebensee in Austria. And on that basis, then it came to me, that was it. So I just let it alone and nothing happened. Then about the 19th of May, '45, General Rombow sent an order to me through the channels that he wanted those hundred pictures put into a volume, into a story, he said, "like Ike's." So the upshot of it was, I had maybe a week or two, but then the next day, in came an order that that hundred pictures and that book had to be

prepared and ready to be picked up by a courier who was going to fly the same day to Washington, D.C. , and it was for President Truman. So I had to pull out all kinds of stops, and we didn't know when it would arrive. We checked years later to find out, when did they land. Well, they didn't have a date on it. So I went through, I started to read my letters home and suddenly I recreated, I was describing to my mother what happened. That's where I had the date that that book had to be completed and then had to be delivered the next day. Well, then when the Truman library found out that, had that much lead, they went back through all the appointments that President Truman had and there, on the 24th, was Colonel -- I can't remember who was there, I never met him personally, but the Colonel from the Signal Corps had an appointment with President Truman -- and that's when the book which I put together for them and called it "The Truman Report" had been categorized by date and by camp. When you look through the book, here's the date they liberated that camp all the way down, till we go down to May, and then it was all over with. That became then the history of the atrocities, and they have people who have researched and the like of that who indicated, and those people who did that book on a safe haven. They recorded then something rather interesting. They had everything Ike did, and Ike's -- not Ike, Truman did. I'm sorry, I'm an old man. Everything that Truman did. So it was interesting for me with the material they sent me from the Truman library from 1939, when the British were pulling out and going to cancel their mandate to sort of supervise Israel and Palestine, the Senator from Missouri, Truman, had read in to the Congressional Record that that was not a good thing for them, it was not in good faith. He kind of chastised the English government, and that was in 1939. Then in their records, there's nothing until 1945. Here, then, was when the date of that book hit. There was nothing happening then for about another, about another three weeks or four weeks, something in that order, six weeks, maybe. Then all of a

sudden, here were the day by day by day reports of what Truman was doing to implement and get the United Nations to say or to set aside or whatever use of the word a gathering for the Jews in Jerusalem. From then on, for seven pages, here are all the people who came to see him and what was going on and the book now again as I read it here just a few days ago, is documented. That man then, basically, as a result of having seen all these pictures -- they mentioned in the people who wrote that book that about the 16th, there was a newspaper article or some news magazine had a picture or two. That was different. That was just a picture and some information. They didn't have very much because they were always in the front lines. What Truman got was 100 pictures bound into a volume, and he took off with that. Nobody had ever seen those in that kind of a context where page after page after page was the description and was available to them. So that's in their library now.

Interviewer: So, what you're saying is, your book going to Truman was the spark--

David W. Meyer: --the catalyst, many people think that was the catalyst that crystallized, that gave him the ammunition he needed because he did what he could in '39, but nobody was doing anything.

Interviewer: The spark, the catalyst to do what?

David W. Meyer: To go ahead and get a homeland for the Jews, to settle that problem in Jerusalem, in that area. So that was the start of it, and the United Nations did go in finally. It is interesting to see the history behind those. Who came to see him and what he did and he even had to fight the State Department. But that was the thing that got the United Nations to finally -- all the nations to finally come together -- and say, "This is a homeland." I am paraphrasing like crazy. But that's the gist of it. Now the Jews had a boundary to go into to call home. By no

means settled as of this date, but certainly he had that done. Now as far as the war was concerned, they had a homeland.

Interviewer: So your photographic book that went to Truman--

David W. Meyer: That's right -- was the catalyst. They're saying that basically back at the library. It just dawned on them, they realized when they looked at it. But that's it -- that took off. Who came and who didn't come and it's amazing. It's amazing. So that's what a photographer does in the war, when you wore two hats as a photographer and as an artist.

Interviewer: Now, why don't you show us how this camera works.

David W. Meyer: This is a speed graphic. It was the envy of -- it's a news camera designed and was used by newspaper men in the United States for years. It was assigned -- now mine is one I bought when I got home. If you can imagine this all in black, that's what it was. You have a flash lamp, but this was it. This was your finder, or you had another finder here. In our training, the newspaper men, you see a lot of them holding the handle and they have a flash lamp here. That allowed for a lot of wiggle. So a lot of men held the camera this way against the shoulder, and look in to the view finder this way. But I found for me, for my work, I like to hold it this way because it gave me a lever here. So I could carry it this way, I could carry it that way, I could carry it over here, because it gave me a good, sturdy shot -- a place to shoot from. Then you had two shutters: you had the shutter on the front, which was released from a release from here, or you have in the back of the camera, two rollers. It's a curtain you can change the size of it, and it's the speed between this roller and that roller that gives you pictures of about a thousandth of a second. But you can have your choice of whether you want to use here and synchronize it with a flash, or you can use this one back here, it can be synchronized, but that

gives you a different kind of exposure. The film, and for people who are using cameras today (laughter) -- that contains two pictures. This is a slide. It has a light side, and a dark side. So when the photographer reaches into his pocket and he pulls out this thing, and you jam it into here, you have to pull out one of these slide and stick it in his pocket and he takes his picture. Then he takes the slide and he turns the black slide like that and puts it in the back of the camera, he takes that out and puts it in his pocket and he takes out another one. You can see it was rather laborious. They finally did come out with a film pack about twice as thick as this, and that went in to the back of the camera. I think I get this, so you get some idea of what this was. Actually, I had it unlocked this afternoon. Let me get it unlocked here. It is locked there. Well, it's not going to do it for me. Anyway, this back opens up. You not only have a ground glass thing here, where you can see your picture. This becomes our view camera, but this whole back would come off and you have a thicker back. Back then the film was all thinner film and it would go out and it would roll around and it would have a paper tab. So you pick up this tab and then you pull it out and then you would take that picture from up front, run it around and run it back on this side. So now you have 12 pictures to a roll and you had to have a couple of these film packs to go along. What is interesting about this camera, this has a rising and falling front. That's what the view camera has. It also has a tilting front, so that you can, you can drop this bottom and get a wider angle lens and you have the swings here. So what you have in this camera, and this is one of the things they worked so hard at Graflex, to learn about these tilts and these switches, you have a view camera which you will sometimes see photographers have them out here and they are peeking through here with a hood over their head. But the combat photographer, if you needed it for copying documents, or paintings in museums, he had this chance to make a still camera of it as a view camera. They say you have all kinds of -- and the interesting things here

too, is, this used to have a range finder when we bought it. But when you bang that range finder, it wouldn't work. It was out of jam. On our flash guns, we had a little light and you point that at something and with the range finder, and here is how you change the focus. You can see that working there back and forth. That's how you focused. Here's a gauge right here to show an arrow and what it's focused on those various things. So you had a chance to do all of these things. But the interesting things with the photographers were, a range they quit trying to use a range finder. I could tell you right now that that's eight feet to that stool. So, what do I do? I just rack this out to eight feet and I pull that up and I take a picture because you learned distances so that you always were in focus on that basis. You also learned something else: to be sensitive to the amount of light that was out there. I remember when we got the morning, whoever was first and started to move around, somebody also start to wake up and say, "Hey, what kind of a day is it out?" Mind you, we're in London. We're in the west end of London. Well, the first guy goes out to the bay window and says, "It's a 10th at 45." Well, that told us it was a cloudy day. Why? Four-five is the largest opening you can get here in the lens. Now 10th of a second is how long the exposure was going to be. But he walked over said, "Oh, it's 100 at 16." That means you stopped your lens way down to 16 and you could shoot it at 100th a second with the film we were using. So the film became very much oriented to light and what kind of light it was, and so, like I say, sometimes we would never see the pictures we took. I know there were pictures I took that I never saw while I was out there because, and I could probably find them in the archives like I saw that one I had. But other than that, this is the camera that was used in combat. As I say, the British photographers just drooled over it because this was a unique camera. I remember one -- we used to have, anyway. A camera about this size, they had one photographer standing next to me and his camera was about this thick, but there was a cross belt

like this, a ladder. And he pulled the front out so where I have a billows, he had a billows, but this was solid and there was a scissors. His lens cap sat here, but there was a little chain -- a round ball chain, you know, like you see on wash basins with his lens cap hung down here. But at the back of his thing, he flipped a thing up like that and you could see the curtain and there, and he'd move and point it across the back of that curtain because that would regulate the side of that opening and that was his press camera. Awkward to use and I saw some of the stuff that he did later on and the same stories we were covering. Beautiful stuff. So again, he knew the light. He knew the speed of the film. He knew what to do. It becomes a sense, and that's what the cameraman had, they had a sense of how dark to this is, how fast are these things moving. Do I need to change the camera speed to stop the action, or do I just get a good picture sort of thing. So basically, this is the camera. That was used and I showed you the film, these are the holders that they used. Only two pictures at a time, and you can imagine if they got dusty, what do you do. You see?

Interviewer: So, in combat, for the guys that you were getting the photos from, this was really an ordeal to show them how to use this camera.

David W. Meyer: It was a chore. Not any more than carrying a rifle and carrying some grenades. Yes, it was an ordeal, you had to know what you were doing. You were trained to do it. As a matter of fact, I have a piece of film in this. So there's a piece of film, and what you would do, you lay that back, and there's your piece of film. Now this one, I had two slots. I think that was. Anyway, what they sometimes do in the lab, they would shoot some high contrast film and they have, they give it a number. And sometimes we tape on this thing here, we would tape this little, little piece of film that had a number. So when we went look that, that number would imprint right there. So it helped us identify for the people in the lab who were writing the captions what

that negative number was. Otherwise, there was no way to identify that negative if they ever got separated from its caption sheet.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Crew: I have quite a few questions here. Missed opportunities and all that kind of stuff.

David W. Meyer: There weren't any.

Crew: No difference.

David W. Meyer: When I say there weren't any. There weren't any because the combat photographer went out and took pictures, but he did not do anything more than write the name, date, and place, the information on the caption of who they were, what they took a picture of, what their home town was, and what was basically there and his name and date. That was all and that was shipped back, so that's all he did. Now the journalist comes in and he's going to write. The fundamental difference is, the photographer, or if it's motion picture people, the same way -- they expose their film, put it in a can and send it to the lab. So there's no commentary written except for captions. Now the captions were important. Otherwise, they would be useless. So on that basis, the correspondent or a journalist, they were there to write the spoken word. Sometimes they would carry a little camera, but other than that, they would rely on the photographer and the archives. That's what basically the combat photographer did, except in my case, and there were people kind of admitted that for some reason, I must have walked to a different kind of drummer because my assignments were different. I was in and I was out. I hadn't been shot in any one of them, but somehow things just didn't work. I came out of it without being shot and being killed. Apparently they liked what I did enough that they set up an art department and I worked right with the commanding general in that area to do things. Some

of my art work and things were slides and things to be that were displayed in theatres down on the Champs Elysées. We had motion picture theatres projecting film from home all the time, but every now and again, the commanding general would say, hey here's how to find your lost baggage, or here's what military courtesy is. So they were communicating and had me doing the slides for them on any one of the slides. It was filmed in full motion picture, but the picture was my art work there. So they had special things for me to do in that respect, which I marvel at because when I was doing all this stuff, I was a 22 year old buck sergeant. I had never had any formal training for drawing, but apparently my cartoons -- I remember I met Charlie Addams, the Addams cartoon, and he quite liked my style. A couple others there at the Paramount Studios said, "Do you want to come here and do some of our animations for us with these training films." But I never got that way. My art work was different otherwise.

Crew: Can I ask another question, David?

David W. Meyer: Yes.

Crew: When you saw these photos, you were the archivist, the organizer of photos from the camps coming in. You saw some pretty graphic--

David W. Meyer: It was gruesome.

Crew: Tell us, if you can, and if you will, I'd like some emotional reaction to things now.

Interviewer: Tell us your feelings about you were seeing when you first saw them.

David W. Meyer: I'll do my best because I don't, I'm not given much to feelings, does that make sense?

Crew: You're what?

David W. Meyer: Not much given to feelings.

Crew: Certainly, you thought and felt something at the time, no?

David W. Meyer: Well, I did, but if you are trying to get me to be loquacious and a lot of people are, very emotional about it--

Interviewer: No.

Crew: You don't need to be emotional. Just what were your thoughts?

David W. Meyer: Well, I have seen a lot of stuff, you know? And I have been there and I've been shot it myself. So to me, it was appalling. The first ones I saw were from Nordhausen, as I remember. Here are these people laid out on the ground all twisted and turned and part of them gone. It was a shock, but as a camera man, you are photographing these kinds of things all the time. So you are half way geared for it. Nevertheless, this was something different. No, it was - - I don't know that it changed me in any respect, but it was evidence of the bestiality of man when turned loose. These poor people, and I look at them, and I was curious because there were some of things I saw, I wondered about, why did they reveal only part of the body? One of the men had "Pollock" written across him, and they were stacked in stacks in some places. There were piles of bone in other places. One of the reasons why some of those pictures, you see stacks of bodies or wagons, and the fact that we were liberating them so fast, we actually caught some of the people still feeding the ovens or doing their dastardly deeds, if you please, because we were just moving faster than they could get out of there and close it up. People say it didn't happen, well, it did happen. Some of our photographers were there to record it. But no, they were laid all over the place, stacked. You have to see them to understand. One of the things that I was pleased about -- when I say "pleased," it gave a certain amount of satisfaction to me -- to

realize that when the Army came in following General Eisenhower's edict, if you please, they, to see, I have pictures there of a whole town with crosses on their shoulder, there must have been two, three hundred people there lined up, I think two or three abreast, and they were walking out of town to where graves had been dug to rebury all those bodies and giving them a burial. We have pictures of them being congregated around the church where they received multiple funeral services because some of them may have been Christians, some may be Jews, this sort of thing. But the people for the first time, and there was a couple of pictures, particularly, I remember where two sisters, I know they were sisters, but they were carrying the first coffins, which were shaped this way and long, so the body just laid there in an open coffin with square ends, put they put a handle in front of it and on the back so two people could carry it. There were four women, and the two are definitely sisters, and there are two behind there that were not. So here is the body stretched out on the hillside and they are being loaded into these coffins, and here are these girls were coming toward the camera, carrying, and you could see that it was repulsive because there would be an odor to that. They had been exhumed or some of them had been laying there in the air in the open because they hadn't had a chance to bury them. So as I look at these two and then realize I have some other pictures where the people are walking along, men and women carrying these about a mile to where they're going to be buried. They had that body, that cadaver there, and I thought, "Man, it would be interesting to go back now and see if there is anybody in Germany who would remember the impact, if they were a child 60 years ago." That's a long time. Nonetheless, it was something else. But I think, in a way, when you, when you are in a war, you expect to be killed. When you're in a war, you don't run away from it afraid, not if you believe that your life here, you are going to die anyway sort of thing. So you better die in a good cause. You really didn't think, you just went in, and if it was your time, it was your time. In that

respect, as I looked at these things, this is what happened. Yes it was bestial, but I was merely recording it. It wasn't my job to do anything more than to just record it and see it was clear and understandable to those who might come in later. So we went ahead, and I'm pleased in a way that it had something that was worthwhile come out of it, such as the establishment of the homeland for the Jews. Other than that, no, it was not fun. It was not enjoyable. Each day brought its own version. Some of the men, I remember the first photographer, he came back and he was almost babbling and I remember the name was Nordhausen, because I think we had a scrounger out, which all military people do. It says he came back talking about they'd been underground at this one place and there were tools, machine tools, and that's where a lot of the work was being done, maybe on the V-1 bomber, flying bomb. But again, when they came back, some of those photographers just couldn't express themselves very much. That's what, I have a photographer friend who J.M. Hesslop. I have a few of his pictures taken at Ebensee, and they were standing with their knees, they were knobby and they had not much in the way of clothing, but they were standing up and they'd almost cry when the military came in. As Jay said, you had to be there because here's a dead body that had been laying here for three days, and the aroma that was there and the filth, and then these men just crying for relief when they realized that something was happening. So it's hard, yes. A little bit of that as you go back.

Crew: David?

David W. Meyer: Yes.

Crew: Did you also see photos of the marches of Americans out of prisons. How long were you archiving and organizing photos?

David W. Meyer: As long as they were coming, they were being taken by our photographers.

Crew: And how long was that? Can you talk about, like you saw--

David W. Meyer: Well, my dates now are a little hazy because it was just a job, and so I cannot give you the dates. As I say, the photographs I've got are in the Eisenhower collection. There are four hundred collections set aside volume by volume by volume and those do have dates. All those photographs have the dates of what was being seen and what was being photographed and where it was. But for me to remember those, it's almost impossible. So I have a volume, it's one volume that I have, my own personal volume, of all the pictures. So I have a record of the archives, I can reference it. But they have them in and they're dated and there are four volumes and they start in '43, I think. I do not have anything of D-Day because my assignment, none of that early material -- I came in about the time when they decided what I was going to do, we already liberated France. All of that is in the archives, but that is not part of mine. Mine started as I say, with the, we had pretty well overrun France and we have pictures of Eisenhower meeting the presidential people of Luxemburg and Belgium and all the policy things that were being done on the international level. But then, as we started getting closer to the where the Germans were starting to dig in, then it's my dates. I can show you a date if I open the book.

Crew: David? Was there a process of censoring photos?

David W. Meyer: Was there what?

Crew: Was there any process of censorship?

David W. Meyer: I only had to censor one of my photographs. They were censored, yes. There was a censor there. But I think what happened later on, the censorship was only there before we made the D-Day.

Crew: Can you look at Jeff and tell me what, in what circumstances were photos censored?

David W. Meyer: They would go with a pen and mark it out, or just write on the back and say whether it passed or not. But they would actually put a mark on it, a pen, something to destroy it, and say "This is censored." I had one shot taken of the gliders again, and they didn't pass that because off to the side, they could see a skyline. They could identify where that field was because of the skyline. So we just put a straight line through it and said it was censored. Now if we had gone through and printed that without that, the photography would have worked -- been accepted.

Interviewer: So mainly, what they were censoring things were things that the enemy might gain knowledge?

David W. Meyer: Yes, they would determine -- it was part of D-Day, because then they would know where to send the buzz bombs or the V-2s and that sort of thing, so they would know where to bomb if they could. So that was sensitive material, there was reason for it to be sensitive. But after we got going, I don't remember any censored marks at all. Once we hit the beaches and started to move, I don't remember any censorship at all. I have pictures of the surrender, when it was done, with juggling those fellows, all of that is there. All of it is photographed. So the archives are pretty sound in that respect.

Crew: You can wrap up to the end of the war.

Interviewer: Tell us about coming home, the end of the war and you coming home.

David W. Meyer: Well, my coming home was a little different because I am different. I say that, I don't want to use the word peculiar, but it was just different. Let me think about it. We came

home, I finally left Diep, and we were short filming Diep, and I got on a troop ship and I got home to New York. I stayed in New York a few days. One of my friends was a lieutenant in the signal corps and he and his wife had just been married a few weeks, he had been home six or eight weeks before I did. I slept in his apartment. It was a small apartment because I had my head in the kitchen and my feet in the dining room. It was in New York, one of those high rises, but they had me spend my first night in New York with them and then I went to see a friend up in, up in Batavia, New York. Then there was nothing else for me to do, so I somehow hitched a ride, I somehow ended up in Chicago at the Midway Airport. They were jammed up with planes to get people across there and some were saying, some fellows are buying cars and driving. Well, so I happened to run into a lieutenant and his wife, and they had bought a new car, but they had a Jeep they had to deliver west. So I went with them and we drove across Kansas and everything else back to Salt Lake City. I finally met my family at the Hotel Newhouse. The man and his wife came there and they took their Jeep and they went on into Los Angeles. So for me, it was just a coming home. It was -- you stop to think about it. By that time, I had a year and a half in London and I had almost two years in France, in Paris, and I also had about six or eight months in New York City, so the big city, I knew about how to drive in those areas and this sort of thing. I remember I had a driver in France, and the way you got your intersections there, at least during the war, was you come to the intersection and the first man to honk gets it (laughter). A lot of the streets over there, they've got two by fours that are standing on their end. So if they have a street go up, there \ was concrete under that and they were going to take the two by fours and restack it. But the two by fours get worn when it is raining. They get slippery. And we had a snow storm that was kind of a dilly one day, and so I had this French drive that was going along and he honked his horn and we were in a little bit of an open space, I had to reach down

and pull his foot off the throttle because he was just going on it. I couldn't get him to slow down because he was starting to fish-tail a little bit.

Crew: David?

David W. Meyer: Yes?

Crew: As you were driving that Jeep across country, I'm sure you had lots of time to think, and I am going to ask for sentimental here. Give me a sentimental of you thinking back on your--

David W. Meyer: All right, when I was driving, there was nobody left. Everybody is going home. There was a skeleton crew of the signal corps unit there, but I had to write my own orders. I had the books to take and that was it. So I had a buddy there, Johnny Horne, and he was a T-4 too, and I said, "Alright, we're going to go." I had a Jeep from the motor pool, and I had to go and so we had the orders we needed and so we took out. The first place we stopped was Metz, it is going to run together on that. Here comes some of the memorabilia, we stopped at Metz because we could pull into a unit there, the MPB unit, and get a bed and something to eat. It just so happens, and I found out about this a little later in detail, my dad was in World War I, and he was one of 100 GI's asked to stay at Metz for a certain ceremony. It was just happenstance that he was in the engineer band, and so that's why they played. What the French were doing is they, we had won the war, now they were having their formal ceremony to take the black crepe off their flag they had been sitting there since World War I when the Kaiser came and took Alsace and part of Lorraine. So all of a sudden then here I am where my dad was fighting over the same piece of ground a war earlier. When we drove we stopped by Verdun and we could see the World War I trenches that are still there, but there were C-rations in the trenches from our war. Then we drove on into Mayence and into Wiesbaden and we stayed

there. So I was covering as an American citizen the ground my dad fought for. As a matter of fact, I learned, as I started in my own history, that my great-grandfather was in the Franco-Prussian War. When Kaiser Wilhelm made the iron cross for his decoration, my grandfather got one of those iron crosses. So, there's my grandfather, my great-grandfather, and my dad and me -- three generations of Germans coming from about the same area of Germany fighting over the same piece of ground.

Crew: And how did it feel being an American coming home?

David W. Meyer: Well, I don't know. By that time

Crew: For you.

Interviewer: Your feelings, coming home to the statue of liberty.

David W. Meyer: Well, that's why I say, it's difficult for me because my life, I was raised in the Great Depression. I was accustomed to going to school, not for long, but for a time or two I had to put newspaper in my shoes because I had holes in the bottom of my shoes. I remember particularly when we would eat Cream of Wheat. My mother would make a big batch of cream of wheat, and we'd have that for mush in the morning. Then we'd come home in the evening and she would have put that in a bread tin and it would solidify and she would slice that up and I remember her frying that in lard with a sugar syrup on it, and that was dinner. I also remember, because we had irrigation fields and irrigation around there, that we would go around the ditch banks and harvest the asparagus. I remember, we had a lawn and by that time, the railroad was going through the Ogden area, and Gypsies would be going through there as well and they would come and ask, knock at the door, and ask if they could dig the dandelions out of our lawn because they were eating the greens. So having that experience -- and the fun part of it. I'd

forgotten this. Here I am, a country boy, and, we get to New York. There are four of us or five of us. We knew where we have to go: SCPC. So we get a cab from the station and got off at SCPC. It was a Saturday afternoon, and Sergeant Yagaloff was waiting for us. He was the first sergeant. What they had done behind the studios was a parking lot, and they had room enough in there for three of those normal World War II two-story building barracks. We were assigned to one of those barracks, but nobody was around. So the first Sergeant told us we had a "Class A" pass, and we didn't have to report back to the base there until 5:30 for revelry, or 6:30, Monday morning. Well, that was Saturday afternoon. He told us about going to the subway, and it will take you to Time Square, and if you go to 99 Park Avenue, there's where all the theatre tickets are for the theatres and all kinds of good stuff. So that sounded good to us. Before he left, he gave us a list of the prophylactic stations in Manhattan, and handed us a prophylactic kit. Now, you're on the town (laughter). Well, that took a little getting used to (laughter). Another entertaining experience, I went to 99 Park Avenue, and I wasn't interested in a night club, but they said, "Radio City Music Hall." That intrigued me. So I left from 99 Park Avenue, and I think, I forget how I walked up, but I came in from the east side of that block where you see Radio City Music Hall where NBC stations are, but I was about a block away. I started to walk, and the people were standing there two and three deep, but there was that long line of people, but they had ushers. They started off, and as I say, I must have been a quarter of a block or so away to where that line was, but it was "servicemen this way." "Servicemen this way." And then I got to the corner where they rounded off to go in to the box office, "Servicemen this way." They walked me right by the box office, right into the lobby. "Servicemen this way." The man at the first door on the right hand side, "Servicemen this way." He walked me down to within two rows of the front seat. Then I sat for a full Radio City Music Hall show. So here comes the

orchestra out of the pits, and the Rockettes came out and danced. Then, in this particular show, the stage went up one more and the orchestra slid back across the stage. Then a hot dog and a bun came out. They were using black lights, so all you can see was the dog and the bun doing the ballet in the slippers. Then, of course, that orchestra went on back down and down came the screen and then we had our film. On each side of that auditorium were those big Wurlitzer Organs. To me, that was a thrill. So whenever I get back, that is one of the first places I go is to Radio City Music Hall. I was aware when I went back in later years, I would sit in the same seat almost in the front row there, with the girls there right on top of my. And I noted some of those girls must have been there all those years because I noticed a couple girls, one particularly, she was a little older in the face and she was having a little hard time kicking that high. On that basis to me, Radio City Hall for me was the place to go and be.

Interviewer: This is great, we've done a good job here.

End of recording.