

Interview of John H. Dinkelman.

Interviewer: What's your full name?

John H. Dinkelman: John Henry Dinkelman.

Interviewer: And you were born where?

John H. Dinkelman: 1924 in Den Helder, Netherlands. My parents joined the church and when I was five or six years old, we migrated to the United States here.

Interviewer: What year?

John H. Dinkelman: I think it was about 1930, I think we moved here to Utah. My parents joined the church and of course, during that time, there was a big exodus to Zion and I tagged along.

Interviewer: Yeah, and so, you grew up where?

John H. Dinkelman: Raised out there in Granger out in western part of the valley. I went to Monroe Elementary School and Cypress in Magna. Used to ride the old -- Orem they had a street car that ran between Magna and Salt Lake. That was our school bus for the way to get out to Magna. That, and hitchhike.

Interviewer: I remember you were involved in flying school. Was there something -- I'm trying to remember what your family did and what you did.

John H. Dinkelman: My father was a pilot. He was a pilot in the Dutch Navy when he joined the church. It was the only occupation he knew, and he was hired by Thompson Flying Service at the Salt Lake Airport as a flying instructor. My father's English was quite limited, and he told me during those days, they used a tube -- a voice tube to speak to the

students, and my father told me several times when the student would make a bad mistake, they'd get this rattle of Dutch coming down through the tube there. They had no idea what they did wrong until he finally cooled down and tried it in English. But, there were many years later we had people come visit that dad taught how to fly, and they always said when they did something wrong, they'd get this rattle of Dutch coming down through the voice tube. But there was quite a few pilots at the ol' Western Air Express who first were trained how to fly by my father.

Interviewer: So, you graduated from --

John H. Dinkelman: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: You graduated from Granger High?

John H. Dinkelman: From Cypress High.

Interviewer: Pardon me, Cypress High.

John H. Dinkelman: Cypress.

Interviewer: And when did you join the military?

John H. Dinkelman: 1942, about a couple months after Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: Okay, Pearl Harbor. Where were you and what were you doing?

John H. Dinkelman: I was just a student in a school then. And I quit school and lied about my age and tried to join the Navy, but because I wore glasses at the time, my vision wasn't good enough for the Navy. So as a second best choice, the Army wasn't quite so particular.

Interviewer: Yeah.

John H. Dinkelman: So I -- but because I enlisted, I could select what branch. And I selected the tanks because inside of a tank, you were safe. You couldn't get hurt

inside of a tank. Sent me to Fort Knox, Kentucky basic training in 1942, and I joined the 741st Tank Battalion, and that was my parent unit all through the war.

Interviewer: Okay, let me back track. When you heard about Pearl Harbor, we have a number of questions we ask anybody -- everybody that we talk to. Where were you, what were you doing on that Sunday morning, do you remember what you were doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

John H. Dinkelman: I had no idea what a Pearl Harbor was or where it was or no inkling at all, and of course the radio was the only means -- so we were all around that ol' Atwater Kent radio listening for all the news and, like I say, I had no inkling of what Pearl Harbor was or where it was, but the next day, of course, the deceleration -- I was going to NYA Welding School at that time in Murray. National Youth Administration was offering a program for kids that couldn't hack it in school, and they could learn a trade. And I wanted to become a welder, so I was attending that. And it was at the school there the radio class set up some loud speakers. We got to listen to the president declare the war on Japan, and right after that, I lied about my age and enlisted into the Army. And like I say, I wanted to go in the tanks because inside of a tank, you're safe, you know?

Interviewer: That's the theory?

John H. Dinkelman: That was my theory at that time. Little did I know the truth, the bigger target you are, the more they shoot at you. But because I enlisted, I was able to select the branch of service, and I selected the Armored Forces and sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for basic training and from there I was sent to join the 347 tank battalion. We were on maneuvers in Southern California in the desert and maneuvers in Louisiana and several

amphibious training on Chesapeake Bay and from there we went to England, and from England we made the landing at Omaha Beach.

Interviewer: When did you arrive in England, do you remember?

John H. Dinkelman: About six or eight months prior into invasion. We landed in the winter time in England, and I'd say about six or seven months prior to the June invasion in Normandy.

Interviewer: Now, your tank battalion was a very special battalion for D Day. Tell us about what its mission was.

John H. Dinkelman: A tank battalion consisted of three or four companies -- A, B, C, and D company, and it was a service company. Each tank battalion had the three companies, the battalion company -- I guess about 10 tanks per company. And of course, the purpose of the tank was to support the infantry. You provide fire power to support the infantry. The real heroes of any war are the infantrymen -- the guy that's right there and has no protection at all -- anyone that should be honored would be the infantryman. Everything else is involved to support. He's the guy that takes and holds the ground; he's the one that deserves all the credit.

Interviewer: Now, your tank battalion, the 741st, had a very special mission on D Day.

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah, the initial landing on D Day. The purpose of the landing of the tanks was to provide fire power to those enemy gun emplacements because they were raising Cain with the infantry. They were so vulnerable from the period that they get off the boat on to the beach and inland, they're so vulnerable to all sorts of fire. So they're -- the tanks are expected to support them and by suppression fire, you keep the enemy fire down.

Interviewer: And your battalion had a couple of companies that were trained -- platoons that were trained with the amphibious one, too. Tell us about that.

John H. Dinkelman: The unit I was in, I don't recall -- I remember seeing that. They had pneumatic, like large intertubes that inflate on the side of the tank. The tank will float with no support at all; just the margin of error is so close that a tank will float, but just barely. And of course, the propulsion is very limited. The tanks that we had had propellers that was attached in the back engaged into the tracks, and as the tracks turned, it would turn the propellers. It was very inefficient means of -- once they got on to the shore, they dropped the pneumatic envelopes and so forth, that was all discarded as soon as they got on the beach. The tank I was in, there was one tank in each company that had 105 millimeter Howitzer. All the other tanks at that time were 75 millimeter. The old World War I 75 millimeter gun. That's quite a history, and it was a very effective weapon, but the Germans had a very effective weapon called the 88 millimeter. Very high muzzle velocity, tremendous range and killing power, and we were very under gunned against the -- their armor was very good, very hard armor. You would hit a German tank, it would -- you would break pieces of the hull off, whereas ours were malleable. Our hulls were cast, and they would hit it with -- and it would penetrate our hull. They had very effective fire power. Their 88 millimeter was a tremendous weapon. It was not till later we got some better equipped.

Interviewer: Tell us about --

John H. Dinkelman: I'm sorry, I'm rambling so much --

Interviewer: No, no, no. Relax. We're fine because we have all the time in the world.

John H. Dinkelman: You can edit, you can cut all this out.

Interviewer: Absolutely, and you don't have to worry about -- I know you think you're talking in circles, but you're not.

John H. Dinkelman: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: You are doing just fine. And so, what we want you to do is tell us about D Day.

John H. Dinkelman: Of course, it's the first combat we experienced. We suffered a few air raids when we were stationed in England and Germans flew over. We all ran outside and looked. It was a novelty, the German bombers would go over and we would hear the bombs throughout. But our first experience of real combat was right on the beach there. I'll tell ya, it takes your mind off of sex in a hurry because -- the whole world revolves right around that little bit of space that you're taking and for a person who's never been into combat, it's an experience that is very difficult to describe. You know that death is imminent and very possible, but still you can't -- you're amazed at what is happening around you. It's an experience that is just impossible to put into words.

Interviewer: So, you're a loader, correct? Tell us what a loader -- you're a loader, right?

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us what a loader does in a tank.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, a tank, the turret revolves, and beneath the turret is what they call the basket, and that's where you are. You are in this basket that revolves with the turret, and in the sponsons of the tank are containers where it has the ammunition in. You have a few rounds in the basket, but there's not very much room in there. So the turret (inaudible), you have to reach into the sponsons to pull the ammunition out, and you have to --

the tank I was in, it was one tank per company. It had a 105 millimeter gun on it, all the other tanks was 75. Later on, 76 millimeter was a much better weapon. But you have these cardboard containers, and you have to pull the tape off and take the cap off and take the projectile out, and with the projectile comes a brass casing, and in this brass casing are five little bags of powder. There's a basic powder, and five little bags in there. They're tied together with a kind of like a silk string, and the purpose of the different bags is for the different ranges that you fire. If you're not firing so far, you remove all but one bag and the further the range -- (inaudible). And then you select the projectile. You have high explosive antitank, you have high explosive, and you have armor piercing, and you had what was called a shot gun. It was a canister that had balls, like a big shot gun shell. It was an antipersonnel, an incendiary -- high explosive antitank. The high explosive antitank is unique. It had what's called the Monroe Principle. In the projectile is a high tensile -- I call it a core. And it had the explosive around it, and it's kind of a unique -- it had a wind screen on it, so when it hit, the wind screens collapsed so it was flat end of the projectile or the shell hit the side of the tank and then this high tensile steel -- there was a name for it. Sabot?

Interviewer: Sabot.

John H. Dinkelman: Something like that. I can't remember the name correctly, but the principle is, when it hit, it would dry this piece of extremely hard metal I guess about the diameter of your pen or your finger or a pencil, and it would enable it to penetrate through several inches of armor, of course going through generates a tremendous amount of heat. So then it would spray the inside of the tank with molten metal in hopes of catching things on fire inside. It was called the Monroe Principle. I don't know if it's still accepted. Probably highly improved now.

Interviewer: Yeah.

John H. Dinkelman: And then we had a canister where it had like shot gun shells where the hundreds of balls of led balls or steel balls.

Interviewer: So, you sat next to the gun and you did what?

John H. Dinkelman: I was the one that threw the rounds into the -- that, and I had a machine gun and it had a solenoid, so the tank -- the gunner, when he turned the turret, he would elevate the gun, it would also elevate this machine gun. But many times, that solenoid would fail, and so the assistant gunner would have to squeeze the trigger when he would yell and also provide the ammunition, the belt to keep slapping new belt.

Interviewer: And you could see out of the tank how?

John H. Dinkelman: You have what's called a periscope, and it enables you to look out. Your vision is limited, but you can see out and you can turn the periscope so you can elevate.

Interviewer: Is that how you saw most of World War II?

John H. Dinkelman: Well, I saw most of Europe through a periscope. If I toured Europe now, I'd probably feel at home if I could bring my own periscope.

Interviewer: So, okay. Tell us about that day; tell us about hitting the beach. Just walk us through what happened.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, like I say I was in the tank that had a 75 millimeter -- or 105 millimeter Howitzer, so I was a support weapon. So my unit made the assault wave but I did not. I was to come in several hours later, but my purpose of our tank was to provide support fire for the tanks. So the company would be lined up on an assault, and we would be on back, and when the tank would fire into an emplacement or a wooded area or a

building or something, they'd fire and we'd turn that big gun and we'd throw that 105 millimeter -- the roof would lift off the house and burst into flame. So we were support weapon, direct maybe 50 yards behind the tanks that was on line.

Interviewer: So, which beach did you go in on? Did you go on Omaha Beach?

John H. Dinkelman: Omaha, Easy Red.

Interviewer: And tell us about when you actually hit the beach, what happened?

John H. Dinkelman: It was kind of foggy because it was my first combat and first time I had been in any action, a lot of noise. Dust. A lot of debris, a lot of dead. Several occasions, we'd have to jump out of the tank and drag a body -- we couldn't bear to run over a person, even though he was dead. We'd have to jump over the tank, run over, pull him out, and jump back in as quick as you could to avoid running over.

Interviewer: This is at Omaha Beach?

John H. Dinkelman: That on the beach. That and after we got inland, a place called (inaudible). It's a French word. What it means, I don't know, but that was the name for that particular area that we were at. (Inaudible) -- I'll never forget that.

Interviewer: Is that where the hedgerows were?

John H. Dinkelman: The hedgerows. Hedgerow is a unique phenomenon. In France, they did not have fences. For some reason, I guess the cost. And so they, in the early Norman times, hundreds of years before, the farmer would build up to designate his farm or his area to keep his stock in, I'm sure, would take -- build up a hedge with soil and dirt, and then

over the years, it would just get intermingled with roots and that. Because vegetation is very prone in that area, it's ideal growing country.

Interviewer: So these were like walls?

John H. Dinkelman: Primarily dirt. Dirt and rocks, and maybe four or five feet high. And over the hundreds of years, it was intertwined with the roots and that, so it was pretty formidable obstacle. And in fact, it would stop a tank. A tank couldn't get over, because the tank, there was nothing -- it was like pushing against a wall. So they developed what they called a -- there's a name. Duck feet?

Interviewer: A cutter? Hedgerow -- a Cullen?

John H. Dinkelman: I know, but there's a nickname.

Interviewer: A Rhino? I heard them call them Rhinos before.

John H. Dinkelman: No, a Rhino is a vehicle.

Interviewer: But it was some prongs, right?

John H. Dinkelman: They took the steel from some of the fortifications that the Germans erected on the beach, and our maintenance crews worked all night cutting with cutting torches and adapting these -- there's a common name for that. Not "duck's feet." And anyway, it would bolt to the front of the tank, so when the tank hit it, it would penetrate through the hedgerow, and then the tank would back off and it would take that section of hedgerow with it, take it back off and he would jerk back and it would slide off those forks, and then you had an opening through the hedgerow where the tank could go through, and it's a very common name. And it escapes me now.

Interviewer: So, did you have one on your tank?

John H. Dinkelman: Every tank had one, yeah. And the idea was, it would penetrate into the hedgerow, and it would tear the root and that because it was heavily vegetated back off, or sometimes you would push right on through till you got on the other side, and of course, you would have to get rid of it because it impaired your vision because all the vegetation and the trees that was on -- it fails me.

Interviewer: That's okay, what kind of fighting was it in, the hedgerow? Describe the fighting that was going on.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, the Germans were very talented. A German is a good fighter, an excellent soldier. Well trained and I guess well motivated, even though probably their motivation was wrong, but they would dig in from the other side of the hedgerow and leave a little opening so they could sweep that whole field with machine gun fire. The infantry had a very terrible time, because once they were in that field, they were exposed. And this firing coming from over here, it didn't take us long to learn what was happening, so what we used on our inner tanks, we had what's called HEAT -- High Explosive Antitank, and then we had also high explosive. And on the end of the projectile is a little -- you take a little screw driver, and you could turn a little screw to what's called "delay" or "instant." So, when it hit, on instant, as soon as it hit it, it would explode. On delay, it would wait just a fraction of a second before it'd explode. So you set it on delay, it would penetrate through the hedgerow, and then explode on the other side of the hedgerow. And you had a little screw driver to set this little screw in the projectile.

Interviewer: So you were busy, as a loader?

John H. Dinkelman: Oh, yeah. You were -- you don't have time to think. I mean, you get the noise down from the tank commander, he'd be calling for HEAT or -- we had

also -- we had several gas -- white phosphorus. That's the word I was looking for; white phosphorus is a projectile that, when it explodes, it throws this burning material. And whatever it lands on, it's burning very intensely, and many suffered terrible wounds from the white phosphorus. You'd set a house on fire, you could set hay stacks on fire, you'd -- you probably seen in war films where you see a large, white cloud come over. It's the white phosphorus.

Interviewer: So, when was the first time you met enemy tanks and what was that like?

John H. Dinkelman: It was in Normandy. We ambushed a German tank. I remember vividly. But I see more antitank activity during the Bulge in Belgium.

Interviewer: We'll get to that in just a minute. So, the first time you ambushed a tank, and it was --

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah, the Germans had excellent armor; they had a variety of armor. Some was not as heavily armored as -- the big tiger royal tank a tremendous weapon, and I think the United States and other countries copied them after the war. They learned a lot from the Germany. They were excellent tankers and they knew what they were doing.

Interviewer: Just jump ahead to the Battle of the Bulge because, I remember you telling me vividly what was going on and how hard your unit was fighting. Tell me about that.

John H. Dinkelman: The Battle of the Bulge. What I think I remember very strongly is the cold. A tank -- the tank I was in, we got newer tanks later on. But the tank I was in had a right cyclone nine cylinder aircraft engine. And they're air-cooled. They don't have radiators, and so in front of the tank, the engine, is a fly-wheel that has veins in it, and it would

suck air down through the turret past the oil coolers, and it would blow past the engine. And that's the way the aircraft engine was cooled, not by water or antifreeze, but air. The infantry liked it because that hot air coming out from the back of the tank gave them a chance to get warm, a little warmth. But --

Interviewer: You were bathed in cold air?

John H. Dinkelman: Inside the tank, you get that cold draft coming down through the -- very cold. And it's, if you've been in a wind storm in the winter, you know what I'm talking about. It just sucks all the warmth out of your body.

Interviewer: I looked up your unit record for the Battle of the Bulge, and I saw that your unit had a tremendous amount of action in the Battle of the Bulge.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, we did. Yeah. 741st Tank Battalion.

Interviewer: Tell us about that. I want to do this -- you were firing so hard, you started bleeding from the ears and nose.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, with your ammunition, light ammunition, you have little pads for cleaning the gun barrels; I guess it was a cotton material. And you tacked it, and we had also head sets to communicate between the tank commander and the driver and so forth, the noise is so bad. You know, you need -- so I guess we would have some protection from the head sets. But, concussion is a terrible -- people that suffer bombings and that. It brings the blood -- you rupture the blood vessels in your eyes and your passages.

Interviewer: Were you firing rapidly?

John H. Dinkelman: Well, how fast can you fire? Throw a round in and searching for the next round, and depending on what kind the tank commander is calling for, canister or HEAT or -- he determines what he needs based upon what his target is.

Interviewer: What I'm trying to get to, you told me this story when I interviewed you about how heavy the fighting was and what it was like to be in a tank turret during the Battle of the Bulge and how much -- how what a heavy battle it was. I need you to tell me more about that.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, confusion is probably the only way you can best describe it because you really don't know what's going on. You hear firing, the suspense is terrible because you don't know what -- you're afraid to stick your head out and look around. Some sniper get you or very carefully a tank comes out of a pile of hay stack or something, and a big 88 millimeter gun looking down at your throat and it's hard to describe the tension that you're under. The tension is, you wind up like a cheap clock. And you just can't relax for a minute.

Interviewer: And you were surrounded during the Battle of the Bulge?

John H. Dinkelman: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: You were surrounded at the Battle of the Bulge?

John H. Dinkelman: Almost, we were able to get out, and my memory is failing me, but I remember vividly -- we got word that they had broken through and were behind us in this part in a place that was called (inaudible) or Rock Wrath, I think, in Luxembourg or in Belgium. And the Germans had gotten behind us and our commanders wanted us to get out of there before we were completely -- so we were driving at night and the roads were slick. Ice and snow and confusion. You didn't know if that guy that was slapping on the side of your tank was friendly or what. Some of those kids, we try and give them some hot coffee once in awhile if we can get a little -- we had these little, kind of like a Bunsen burner. We could make a canteen with a little hot water in it. The confusion is just terrible. You don't describe the confusion.

Interviewer: Tell me about your friends inside the tank. Were you close to your crew?

John H. Dinkelman: Oh, yeah. We knew everything right about each other right down to the finest detail. Their family, share their letters and pictures and talk about your girlfriends. You develop a friendship, a bond with these guys that are sharing these experiences with you that you can't describe, like a brother, you know. That close.

Interviewer: Do you remember their names? Do you remember any of their names?

John H. Dinkelman: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me their names.

John H. Dinkelman: John Fitzgerald and Jerry Nixon. Youngblood and -- now you ask me. Draw a blank.

Interviewer: That's all right. And you slept in the tank, and you lived with these guys for such close quarters.

John H. Dinkelman: Oh, yeah. We used empty ammunition cans to relieve ourselves. You wouldn't go outside the tank, you had to use empty ammunition can and carefully throw it out the side and hope you didn't drop it on some infantryman that was along side of you using a tank for shelter.

Interviewer: Now, you crossed the Rhine, didn't you?

John H. Dinkelman: Okay, my unit crossed the bridge at Remagen before it collapsed. The tank I was in, we were brought across on a pontoon bridge. The engineers did a tremendous job, but they couldn't save that bridge. It was just damaged so badly that it finally collapsed. The Germans realized how important that bridge was, so they concentrated a lot of

fire on it, and finally it fell, you know, Remagen. But by then, the engineers had set the pontoon bridges over. So the tank I was in, it was a support tank, this tank I was in was basically a support tank. Our purpose was to support the five tanks in the platoon that was ahead of us. They would fire into an object or a target, and we would fire the large gun. We had the 105 millimeter gun; their guns were 75 millimeter guns.

Interviewer: So what do you remember about crossing the Rhine?

John H. Dinkelman: We crossed on the bridge, on the pontoon bridge.

Interviewer: Was it cold? Do you remember the time of day?

John H. Dinkelman: Well, I was -- I was quite apprehensive, because I knew if that tank went down, I was going to get wet. I wasn't looking forward to that, but, yeah. Luckily, we had no problem getting across. The engineers did a fantastic job putting that pontoon bridge across. When I saw the Remagen Bridge, when I saw it hanging down like that --

Interviewer: Where were you when the war ended in Europe?

John H. Dinkelman: I was in Czechoslovakia.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

John H. Dinkelman: After we got to a place called Baruth, I think was the name in Germany, the tank I was in -- it was, things were hectic. So the purpose was to get as quick and as fast as you possibly could into the territory. And the tank I was in, we were going along and the track broke. So, obviously, a tank isn't going anywhere without the track. And so we slid off the side of the road, it was called the ghost columns. For lack of a better word, they called them ghost columns. And it consisted of maybe five, ten tanks -- a dozen or so trucks full of infantrymen, some half tracks, mobile artillery, and a group of tanks. And the idea was to

penetrate just as quick and as fast as you possibly could. So we were driving very fast, and we lost our track. Our track just broke and peeled off and we went off the side of the road because we lost the track, we went down into this burrow ditch. And the whole column just kept on going. And, you could hear the rumble and it was dark, quiet. "Where are we?" And we set up a machine gun; they have a machine gun that you mount on a pedestal on top of the turret. Put that 30 caliber up there, and pretty soon, here the displaced persons. Hundreds and hundreds of persons, all Russians, all women. Pushing their carriage, carrying stuff. Hundreds and hundreds of people were starting coming down on the road. And we couldn't figure out what was happening. Well, what happened, as the Army went on in, they had liberated some of those concentration camps, and some of the many of those in the concentration camps -- from (inaudible) or from France, and they just got out. The Germans fled, they tore the gates open, and people wanted to go home, even if they had to walk. And hundreds and hundreds of people on that street, on that road, walked past the tank. And no food. It was cold. So, my memory -- I remember what happened, but my sequence is probably incorrect. We took a couple weapons with us and we went around to the German houses (Speaking in German). Banging on their door, and we go into their house, and the German family there would line them up against the wall there, and we would scoop up as much food stuff as we could grab, and we had some of these Russian kids with us. And they wanted, of course, they were angry. But we wouldn't let them shoot anybody, but just hold. And they would take the food from the German farm houses, and we would feed as many people as we possibly could. But these canisters with sauerkraut in them, pour the liquid out so you just had the sauerkraut, and a lot of them had sausages just hanging on the basement, grab all those and took them all back and had -- we were using some Russian, I think were Russian teenagers. And they would guard the family while we would grab

all these big, long, sausages and as much food as we could carry to take back. But the amount of help that we did was so small compared with the amount of people that -- man and humanity, man is terrible. I vividly remember taking blankets out of their homes, giving them to the Russian kids and family. Many old women that could just barely walk with a cane. Feel so terrible; what can you do for people like that? And their homes, they wanted to go home and home was hundreds of miles away, and I -- my thought process is jumbled, but I remember vividly many incidents. We would go into the farm house and take their food, like I say. They would have sausages hanging in their basement or -- delicious meat, you know? All life sustaining.

Interviewer: So, when did you hear the war was over?

John H. Dinkelman: I remember, I can remember, the Germans, we were in our tank. And the Germans was coming towards us. At first, just a few. And we stopped and put our guns on. (Speaking in German). "I don't know what you mean." And here, more and more and more come. And we would stop them, they were all walking back. I think -- very few, if any, were armed. They had thrown their guns away, and we had put them into this large field. Maybe ten or 15 acre field, because the Germans, we would hold them with machine gun and the guy would get up on the turret with this -- and they're all saying the same thing. (Speaking in German). And we didn't believe them. We weren't this lucky. And finally we got official word that the war was over. And so, we had a lot of displaced persons, too, called "DP's" until we would stop like a German ambulance or a truck. Kick the Germans out, and put the DP's in them and let them take the truck, see how far they could get before it was taken away from them or they run out of fuel. But, we did all we could for the hundreds of displaced persons. Now we had this big, large, field full of German soldiers. They all wanted to go home, and they had

enough, too. Finally, some other unit comes through that -- military police units, and they took all the Germans. But, every German that comes through that was in a vehicle, he got out of the vehicle, and we put DP in them, and they would drive as far as what gas was in there.

Interviewer: So, did you sail home?

John H. Dinkelman: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: How did you get home to the United States? Did you sail?

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that journey.

John H. Dinkelman: We were in Czechoslovakia for, oh, I don't know how many months before the unit got word we were to go to Marseille, France. And we shipped out of Marseille on a ship called "The Cape Town Castle." Come back to the United States. And they didn't get back to the states till; I think it was around November sometime.

Interviewer: Where did you land? In New York?

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah, I think -- New York, New Jersey. Same area.

Interviewer: What was it like to touch --

John H. Dinkelman: Well, all the boats come out there with banners, you know, and the bands playing. And the conquering hero thing. And I was on the train Camp Kilmer and from Camp Kilmer was sent back to Utah with a big troop team.

Interviewer: What was that like to go home? Tell us about that reunion.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, it was nice seeing the family and the folks and old familiar scenes and mountains and, yeah. It's -- you feel a relief. I don't know how to describe, but you see all the things you recognize. Cottonwood Canyon and the high school and the capital ground, the temple, and all that. You knew you were home then. But, it was still

night. And I wake up, and my mother would say I would sometimes yell out loud while I was asleep. Took awhile to get over with.

Interviewer: Yeah.

John H. Dinkelman: So, I was fortunate. I was able to get a job; work was very difficult to get after the war. I mean, all the important industries was shut down, so all the work opportunities was quite limited. The country was flooded with all these unemployed.

Interviewer: All these decades later --

John H. Dinkelman: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: All these decades later, what do you think of the war? Do you have a philosophy about it?

John H. Dinkelman: A lot of fun, exciting. No, war is a terrible thing. War is a -- to kill another person is, in my mind's eye, I vividly remember -- the tank I was in, you have a 30 caliber machine gun, what they call a coaxial gun. When you elevate the main gun, the machine gun follows the same action, but sometimes -- there's what's called a solenoid that presses against the trigger, so the gunner looking through his periscope would see an object that would call for machine gun fire. He could fire this machine gun that was on this side of the main gun. It was my job as a loader to keep the belt in and to make sure it would function. Well, sometimes the solenoid would fail to work, and so, he would yell "fire" and I would squeeze the trigger. And --

Interviewer: So, how did that make you feel?

John H. Dinkelman: Well, when you're doing this, you only have about that much area to look through your periscope, and many times you cannot see the effects of the gun because maybe you are feeding the belt in or whatever.

Interviewer: But, when you could see --

John H. Dinkelman: It's like, you know, manning a submarine. He fires that. The only one that can see what is happening is the one at the periscope. All the rest of the crew have no idea. They're just waiting for the detonation.

Interviewer: Yeah. So your ideas about the war, looking back?

John H. Dinkelman: War is a terrible thing. We've had wars ever since Cain and Abel, and I suspect man will fight. Man, as long as he is on earth one time or another. However, now a days with the weapons we have now, it's mutual annihilation. Maybe it's because of the terrible -- the reason we are more hesitant now to fight is because of the terrible results of fighting with nuclear weapons. Gas is a terrible thing.

Interviewer: Well, anything we haven't asked you that you wanted to say?

John H. Dinkelman: You wanted to ask me if I wanted a hot dog or a hamburger or something?

Interviewer: (Laughter).

John H. Dinkelman: Smart ass, right?

Interviewer: That's all right; I think we're over now. Elizabeth, do you have any questions?

Elizabeth: Yeah, I do.

Interviewer: She's speaking over the speaker phone.

John H. Dinkelman: I hear a voice.

Interviewer: Okay, can we go back to D Day? I'm a little confused.

John H. Dinkelman: I don't hear, I'm sorry, my hearing is very poor.

Interviewer: Could you tell us more about D Day?

Elizabeth: What are the chronological -- I'm not certain (inaudible).

John H. Dinkelman: About what?

Interviewer: She wants to know the chronology, how it unfolded that day.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, the tank I was in was called the support tank, 105 millimeter guns.

Interviewer: But, you were on the boat. Tell us about that morning and the boat ride.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, we've had several maneuvers or trainings. We made a landing in Virginia, and had a training exercise in England, I think on the Irish Sea or somewhere made a landing on. But, it really doesn't prepare you for the real thing.

Interviewer: Was it -- what was the weather like on that ship, that boat?

John H. Dinkelman: If I remember right, it was overcast. It wasn't warm, but it wasn't terribly cold, either.

Interviewer: Was it rough? Was the sea rough?

John H. Dinkelman: No, I don't think so. Though, we had some tanks that were swamped. Perhaps it wasn't because of the rough sea, but they had these pneumatic big envelopes on the tank.

Interviewer: The skirts.

John H. Dinkelman: Skirts, that help flotation.

Interviewer: I guess what we're trying to found out, again, is -- you're recollection of D Day. We want to know, you're sitting in the seat as a loader.

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah.

Interviewer: And are you looking out as you're coming out the boat? Is your head out of the hatch? What are you seeing?

Elizabeth: The first-hand thing he is seeing exactly.

Interviewer: Yeah, the first-hand thing. What is John Dinkelman doing?

John H. Dinkelman: I remember the debris, burned out tanks, burned out vehicles, and bodies on the beach as we come by. I remember, I jumped out of the tank and pulled several bodies out of the way because I didn't want to run over them with the track. I remember doing that.

Interviewer: Were there other tanks in your boat?

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah, I think it was called -- you have an LCM, Landing Craft Mechanism. Landing Craft --

Interviewer: -- tank, I think.

John H. Dinkelman: LCT, a landing tank. When I was in Vietnam, I run an LCT, and I think you put about four tanks on an LCT. Then you had the large one, LCM, was landing Craft Mechanized, and then the LST, which is a large navy landing ship. It has a large ramp on the front.

Interviewer: So, are you right at the front of the boat, your tank? Are you towards the rear of the boat when you go ashore?

John H. Dinkelman: I think we were at the rear of the boat, then we drove straight out. I can't remember now.

Elizabeth: (Inaudible).

Interviewer: Was anyone firing at you when you hit the beach?

John H. Dinkelman: Small arms fire, small arms fire, which is, to a tank, is insignificant. But to the infantry, small arms fire is bad.

Interviewer: Could you hear the small arms hitting the tank?

John H. Dinkelman: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: What's it like? What does it sound like?

John H. Dinkelman: The front of the tank is about four, five inches of armor, but an armor piercing 30 caliber nine millimeter will penetrate maybe an inch or two into the -- because our tanks were what'd called cast -- the tanks I was in were cast.

Interviewer: What kind of noise did it make when it got hit?

John H. Dinkelman: A small arms fire is not very loud. You can tell it's being hit, but nothing -- you don't get that ear drum rattle, you know, a larger round would do.

Interviewer: Were you ever hit by a larger round?

John H. Dinkelman: We took a round, penetrated.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

John H. Dinkelman: It --

Interviewer: And where was this?

John H. Dinkelman: We were fortunate -- they have; it's called the Monroe Principle. It was developed by some engineer, where you take a projectile --

Interviewer: Right.

John H. Dinkelman: And you put the explosive around it, and in the center is a high carbon steel -- about like a pencil.

Interviewer: Yeah.

John H. Dinkelman: The Monroe Principle is, when it fires, all that energy is concentrated at one little point. So --

Interviewer: Tell us about the time your tank was hit. Where was it? Was it in France?

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah, we took a round, but very fortunate that it hit our track. We had the side of the tank, and then it comes in like this, and then the body of the tank, right where it comes in, that's where the track runs.

Interviewer: And so it knocked your track off?

John H. Dinkelman: It knocked the track off.

Interviewer: But what else happened?

John H. Dinkelman: Well, we all jumped out of the tank and fled because we felt -- we fled to another tank.

Interviewer: Was it an enemy tank, was it artillery? What hit you?

John H. Dinkelman: I don't know, a bazooka, maybe. A bazooka is a hand carried weapon that has a long tube.

Interviewer: So, when you jumped out of the tank, what happened again?

John H. Dinkelman: We ran.

Interviewer: Were you under fire?

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah, I was under. If not, you think you are. I don't remember that, in fact, I really don't remember where I went. I knew we fled the tank and then went back to it later on because they have a large tank retriever, and he comes and pulls you back and then they replace you.

Interviewer: What was the worst day in combat? Do you remember?

John H. Dinkelman: I think the worst is the conditions, the cold in the winter time.

Interviewer: But was there one day that you remember?

John H. Dinkelman: Well, I don't know.

Interviewer: One time?

John H. Dinkelman: I can't tell ya, I don't know. Just, my mind isn't --

Interviewer: I understand. Elizabeth, is that okay?

Elizabeth: Hold on, I'm looking at my notes for a second. I'm looking at, "the battle keeps your mind off sex." Can he expand on that a little bit?

John H. Dinkelman: My hearing is --

Interviewer: I'll repeat it for you. She thought it was funny when you said that, "Battle keeps your mind off of sex."

John H. Dinkelman: It sure does.

Interviewer: Tell us more about that tension of battle, why it's so effective.

John H. Dinkelman: Well, you worry that you don't do your job. I think the worst thing a person can experience is someone dies because you fail to do your job. You failed to do what you were supposed to do, and because of that, the consequence is that somebody else died or suffers, you know? And I think a good fighting man worries more about failing his responsibility. People are dependent upon you. The last guy on the totem pole, the guy above me dependant on him doing this job. I would liken it to a married man with a wife and family, consciously working hard doing all he can for his loved ones. And you develop a bond in Army -- I'm sure in the Navy, too, or Marines. You develop a bond with the people that's with you. I'm sure that that bomber crew, or that crew in that submarine have the -- I can't fail

because he depends upon me, and that's one of the prime thoughts that goes to an individual's mind. I can't fail because people depend upon me, and probably the same as a father with a family and I can't quit my job, my wife and kids depend on me. I can't drive carelessly because my family depends on me. You develop this bond with the fellows that you -- particularly in a tank crew. You have a little Bunsen burner, and each one of us put our K rations in, and we cook our little bit of grub together and then we share equally, you know? And, your letters from home, you share your letters. A picture of my wife, or my sweetheart. Or you tell them about little secrets about you and your sweetheart at home, thing like that. It's your family. If you can't depend upon the people you're in combat with, you are alone. I mean, if you can't depend upon them, you are alone. And loneliness is a terrible thing.

Interviewer: Your unit lost a lot of men?

John H. Dinkelman: I'm sorry?

Interviewer: You had a lot of casualties in your unit?

John H. Dinkelman: Yeah, we lost a lot of good buddies, yeah. The Germans -- a German is a good fighter, an effective soldier. Well trained, well equipped.

Interviewer: And you lost a lot of tanks, you lost a lot of men?

John H. Dinkelman: We lost some tanks, yeah.

Interviewer: How did that make you guys feel, of course?

John H. Dinkelman: Well, when a tank is hit and it catches fire, the tanks -- we used 100 octane gasoline, aviation gasoline because we had an aircraft type engine, nine cylinder right cyclone radial engine. And, so that particular engine requires aviation gasoline, very volatile, high octane. And when the tank was hit and catch on fire, you would drive by a tank that was burning, and the cupola on top of the turret, the hatch is open, and the fire, when it

would ignite, one of the shells inside the tank, it had this big smoke ring come out of that turret. Of course, you knew there was five guys inside that tank, you know? And, every time one of those big rounds would pop off, a big smoke ring would come out.

Interviewer: So you watched some of your friends die that way?

John H. Dinkelman: They were all my friends, even if I didn't know them. War is a terrible thing, war is a terrible thing. I was in Japan, I saw Nagasaki, I saw Hiroshima. I saw it right after the war. I was in Vietnam; I see them bodies floating down that (inaudible) river. I -- war is a terrible thing. Man's inhumanity to man.

Interviewer: Elizabeth, is that okay?

Elizabeth: I am good.

Interviewer: I'm fine, that's just wonderful.

John H. Dinkelman: I talk too much.

Interviewer: Oh, no.

End of recording.