

John Jack Call Interview

Interviewer: Well, John, we're really honored to have you with us today. We appreciate making the time and effort to come up to our studio.

John Jack Call: Thank you.

Interviewer: We're going to just talk to you basically about your experiences during World War II. Can you tell us, uh, kind of where you were and what you were doing on December 7th, 1941?

John Jack Call: December 7th, 1941; I was sitting in the car outside of the church after priesthood meeting. And I listened to the radio and that's when I first heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. That became, you know, the speech of President Roosevelt and all the bad things that they did. I was still in high school, so I graduated the next year -- in '42, the next spring -- and I started at the University of Utah that fall in the spring of '43. On May 15th, I was inducted in to the Army. You want me to go on there?

Interviewer: Yea, just give us your thoughts about -- were all your friends wanting to enlist and, was there a big patriotic swell, and what high school did you graduate from?

John Jack Call: Weber High School in Ogden, Utah, that's where I graduated from. We had -- one of my friends, who I started in the first grade, lived in Riverdale, Utah. We went all through high school and into the University of Utah together. He stayed on longer than I did and he finally went in to service and we enjoy a good relationship because -- in fact, yesterday he and I and another friend of mine went to lunch together (laughter).

Interviewer: Is that right.

John Jack Call: Yeah, and it's kind of fun to reminisce about those days.

Interviewer: And you knew him since the first grade?

John Jack Call: Yeah, before that, we used to play in the sand with little trucks, you know?

(Laughter). I had another friend that was in high school with me, and he went into the service, and we corresponded when we went to Europe. We were not together. He was in infantry and I was in the Armored Division. The third letter I wrote to him came back and it says "deceased." So he went on a night patrol, no one came back, and no one knows what happened.

Interviewer: Hmm. Well, tell us about being inducted and where you were and what happened.

John Jack Call: Okay, well, I was living in Riverdale and I was inducted on the 15th of May.

They brought us down to, well, I had to come down to Fort Douglas and that's where I was inducted. They sent me to Camp Grant, Illinois to become a medical aid, and, uh, I was there 3 months. The Company Commander wanted me to stay over and become a cadre, but I wanted to go to school and so I asked for "ASTC" -- Army Specialized Training Course -- and they took me to the University of Detroit for two months, or two quarters. That program was developed to help the universities have a few people there besides all the girls that were left over, and help them financially, I think. But I did take engineering, which was what I had already started in at the University of Utah. After two quarters, they shipped us down to Camp Polk, Louisiana, and I began a course as a private and worked up to corporal as a gunner in a tank. And then when we went overseas, we landed at England, had to clean up the tanks from all the oil and grease they put on them--

Interviewer: Okay, where was your basic training at?

John Jack Call: Camp Grant, Illinois.

Interviewer: Camp Grant, okay--

John Jack Call: Mm hmm.

Interviewer: --and I'll start again with, uh, being shipped over and when you knew you were going.

John Jack Call: Hmm, well, when we left Camp Grant, we went up on the railroad to Boston. And that's where we boarded a transport -- a troop transport. Going over took 13 days to get to England. I remember they had these destroyers all over us, all around us, and lot of boats that you could see. The one we were on was all troops and other freighters with tanks on them. You could see them on the deck and not far away. And I remember every -- well, a lot of people got sick. I got sick a couple days and I got over it. But, there were twins down at the bottom of the steps when you go down into the hold, they were green the whole 13 days. (Laughter). Anyway, we landed in Plymouth, England. And we spent six weeks there cleaning up the tanks. Then we got in an LST, which is -- you back up the tanks in this landing ship -- and went across the channel over to La Havre, and then they drop the nose down and drive out on the shore.

Interviewer: On La Havre, France, and what year was that?

John Jack Call: That was in 1944.

Interviewer: In 1944.

John Jack Call: Yeah, in November.

Interviewer: You arrived in France.

John Jack Call: Mm hmm.

Interviewer: All right, and what happened after that?

John Jack Call: Well, we were on a trek traveling across France. We didn't go through Paris at that time. We went north of it a little to Lorraine, then turned north and went through Luxembourg, Belgium, and to Holland.

Interviewer: And you were in with your tank crew at that time?

John Jack Call: Yeah, I was a gunner at that time.

Interviewer: You were a gunner.

John Jack Call: Mm hmm.

Interviewer: Tell us some details about that tank and, what it's like to be a gunner on --driving across Europe. Were you seeing much action during that time?

John Jack Call: Well, not at that time. That was all taken. We didn't get there in the invasion. It was on through.

Interviewer: All right.

John Jack Call: But, going north, it was icy and snowy and there was, once the tank commander was tired and wanted to get a little rest, and he put me up in the turret, and this driver -- I think he fell asleep. You know, the roads have a tree about every 50 feet on both sides of the roads. Sometimes they're young, small trees; sometimes they're big trees. Well, this guy picked a big tree. He says he hit some ice, but I don't think so. I think he fell asleep and he headed for this big tree. He woke up just in time to pull the break so he could turn and miss that tree, but he

didn't miss it. It hit the final drive on that tank and broke it up. He couldn't back up because it was all mashed up inside. So, we went -- we sat there awhile -- and along came a tank retriever. They're -- they can lift a tank up and take the tracks off. So they did, they put the tracks on the back of the tank and then hooked on the front of it and pulled it on the road.

Interviewer: Now, being a gunner, were you in an enclosed area? Could you see out? Were you exposed?

John Jack Call: Well, you're--

Interviewer: Tell us your position on that.

John Jack Call: --you're inside in the turret. There's three people in there. There's the tank commander which has the hatch he can open up and look out. The gunner is right in front of him sitting on a little stool that drops out of the wall of the turret, and he has a periscope -- so he can look up and out -- and he has a telescope, so he can aim the gun. This is a 76 millimeter gun, and with it, there's a .30 caliber machine gun that moves with the tank -- with the turret, so you use the same site. Then there's a loader who pulls the big shells out of the floor. They have to open it up and put them in the gun and slam it shut. And that's when you get the big gun. You have, he also loads the .30 caliber on it. And down below on the left is the driver -- he has a periscope in front of him if he has to close the hatch. And the ball-gunner has a .30 caliber in front of him, and he can use his periscope. It's kind of about that wide, and z-shaped. So he can look in there and see where he's going and then he can fire his machine gun using tracers. About every fifth bullet was a tracer so you could see where it's going and that's how he aimed it.

Interviewer: So it's a five man crew--

John Jack Call: Five man crew.

Interviewer: --and your job was that 76 millimeter big gun?

John Jack Call: Big gun, uh huh.

Interviewer: Okay, and what, where would you sleep at night?

John Jack Call: Usually sitting up.

Interviewer: Inside the tank?

John Jack Call: Inside the tank if you're in the battle. If you're in -- if you captured an area and there's some houses, sometimes you can go in and get in a bed, but we usually slept in the tank.

Interviewer: Okay, so tell us again where you were -- you were heading up, I guess, towards the front lines?

John Jack Call: Yeah, yea. Well, this town in Holland is where we stopped. We had been pulled by this tank retriever up to there. And, um, on the way, there was buzz bombs going over, and you could hear them run out few, and then down they come. And we finally got to Roermond, Holland, and we were there about two weeks waiting for the river -- the Roer River was near there -- and the Germans kept blowing up dams up stream so they could keep the waters so high, we couldn't build a bridge to get across. Finally, they ran out of dams to blow up and then the water went down and then they built a floating bridge that we went across into Germany from Holland.

Interviewer: How many gallons of gas did those tanks have?

John Jack Call: I think around 100 gallons. We had to fill them with five gallon cans. You could carry two of them, and, uh, just pour them in the gas tank in the back. They were four V-8s. They had about 500 horsepower -- with big, big barrels in them -- and a governed speed of about 25 miles an hour. And they cruise -- I need to tell you a little bit about going up this icy road. One tank was in front of us. See, when you steer a tank, you put the brakes on the side you want to turn. If you want to go to the right, you pull the right, when you want to go to the left, you pull the left one. But if the road's icy, you pull it and it just keeps going straight. It won't turn. So the road made a turn in this town and he, the driver -- was in front of us now -- he tried to turn and he couldn't. He ran right into the house, into the living room. People were sitting there looking up at this tank (laughter). Didn't hurt anybody, but it sure surprised a few of them.

Interviewer: This was a little Dutch--

John Jack Call: I think that was still in France when that happened, yeah, on the way to Holland. Because, you know, the march is going and everybody is trying to stay in line and far -- 30 yards between the tanks -- but the icy roads made a big difference. One time we got on the sidewalk and people were scattering all over, and we finally got back on the road. And then these trees on the sides of the road -- somehow, the driver is trying to turn, and he couldn't, and he got down in the ball pit with one track and one up on the road, and was breaking down trees -- "Bang, bang, bang." They were small trees. And finally, he found a cross road so he could pull up on that and get back on the highway there. And that kind of incidents happened on the way. There was one time when an officer -- he looked like a U.S. officer -- stands in a cross roads and was holding everybody up. He wouldn't let anybody go. I think he was a German dressed as a U.S. officer.

Finally, after a little while, I said, "Let's get out of here," and we just went through and forgot him. And he never did anything else, so he must have not had any authority to be there. So then, we went on, and we had this accident with the tree and they pulled us up to Roermond, Holland where we left two weeks later and went across in to Germany. All right, now--

Interviewer: Did you cross the Rhine River going in to Germany?

John Jack Call: We did, but, this is after we had a big battle and we lost a lot of people and tanks.

Interviewer: Well, tell us about that.

John Jack Call: As we crossed the Roer River we would go through these towns that just got bombed out completely. And the reconnaissance people had been out the day before and said there's no resistance there, so they didn't give us any infantry. Usually you have infantry with the tanks, either riding or walking alongside of you. But we were without infantry. During the night, the Germans found out we were coming -- they had some way of knowing, I guess -- and they put 88 millimeter antitank guns about every 50 feet all around that town. And as we came in, along the road, there were houses with white sheets hanging out the window, like, "We surrender." Inside of those houses were SS troops that had these panzerfausts, and a panzerfaust is like a bazooka, only larger, and bigger explosive, and it would put a hole in your tank. The metal would spread all over inside and, of course, you don't live through that. So that, all those things happened and we were -- I was in number 12 tank and I was a gunner at the time. And I saw a little movement in my telescope I was looking through, and I swung over and here's an SS guy standing in the doorway of a house aiming a panzerfaust right at us. So, I didn't worry about the 30 millimeter. I just -- give me the big gun. And it exploded, took out that whole half side of

the house and he was gone. That's just a matter of a second -- a half a second or less. If I hadn't have got him, he would have got us.

Interviewer: And you had to turn that big turret around to get him or what?

John Jack Call: Yeah, you have to turn the turret. It has a little handle you can turn left or turn right, and I just give it a right turn and it lined it up and got him.

Interviewer: And you had to fire before him because he was aiming as well, uh?

John Jack Call: Yeah, he was right at us.

Interviewer: Okay, that's interesting.

John Jack Call: And then the tank commander -- we could hear a gun go off, couldn't see it -- but he said, "There's a haystack right out there in that field." But it wasn't in that. So I did, and, it was high explosive, but it was what we called time-delayed. So when it hit something, it goes about 25 yards and then it explodes. That's why you get the personnel -- if you are hitting the ground and it explodes, it goes up, but if it goes up in the air and explodes, it goes down. And when that happened, all these German soldiers come running out of that haystack and headed back to town. So we did get that one stopped, but we lost 12 tanks out of 18 in that company. It was Company B of the 8th Armored Division, 36th Tank Battalion.

Interviewer: And how was, you're still in Holland?

John Jack Call: No, we were in Germany.

Interviewer: During the bulge or after the bulge?

John Jack Call: After the bulge.

Interviewer: After the bulge. So it was--

John Jack Call: Rheinberg, Germany was the battle.

Interviewer: And you lost 12 tanks out of 18 in your group--

John Jack Call: Mm hmm.

Interviewer: --and probably a lot of good friends?

John Jack Call: Oh, yeah. We pulled back and regrouped. I had extra ammunition on me. We'd been firing in Holland like artillery. And I had a lot of explosive on the back of my tank and I divided it up with the rest of them. And there was one tank which was an artillery piece, it was a 105 Howitzer, a high explosive. And then we started back into town and we didn't save anything. We leveled every house along that roadway so we wouldn't have a problem, and that's how we captured the town. So, that was quite a long battle. While we were there, they said, "We want to send you back to Belgium for a little furlough." So, I went to Belgium, and when I came back, they took me to Venlo, Holland where all our tanks had been repaired. They made me a sergeant then, and I took these two tanks had been hit. One of them, the front was wrecked and the back was wrecked on another. So they took the good front one and put it with the good back one, and made one tank out of it. That's how I got a tank. And I had my loader, when I was a gunner, became my gunner, and I became sergeant -- a tank command -- and another loader from another tank became my driver, and we got two infantry men -- new recruits, young kids, never seen a tank before -- and they were my loader and my ball gunner. I had four days to train them how to fight (laughter). So, it was interesting.

Interviewer: These were Sherman tanks--

John Jack Call: Sherman, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you ever run up against, uh, head to head battles with German Tiger tanks?

John Jack Call: I never did; well, the only time I had anything to do with a Tiger -- and this was when the war was almost over -- we were going to a town named Paderborn. And they put me -- my battalion leader was Lieutenant Rueben, and he liked me, I think. This Paderborn was supposed to be already taken, but our tank platoon is five tanks. We were in reserve, and two others went up -- the first platoon and the second platoon went in to take over Paderborn. But in the middle of the night, they called us, said, "We need to rescue some infantry people." So we went up to find these people, but on the way, three of those tanks in my platoon were disabled. One of them hit a mine, one went off in a ditch, and the other track came off. So the platoon leader, a Lieutenant, got in my tank and we kept going. It was dark, real dark, and we came to this point where we had a turn to a kind of an angled street, and this Tiger tank was up here on an angle. And when we started to cross that intersection, he bounced an 88 right off the road in front of us and I hollered the driver, "Gun it!" And he did, and one bounced right behind us and hit the road again. And the second tank, the same thing, only he missed as well. He hit the road behind him and we went up to where these guys were in this house -- the infantry -- pulled in the driveway behind it so this tank couldn't see us. I remember there were some French doors, they were glass, and here come some faces. But they didn't look like our people. And all of a sudden, they disappeared, and here come some more faces. And they were yellin' and screamin' and saying how great it was. Well that was the infantry people we were saving. What happened -- they took that area and got in this house, left a guy on the porch with a machine gun to make sure nobody came back, and they went in and cooked some food right there. And I guess this guy got angry and wanted to go, so he left his gun and the Germans counter-attacked and they came in

and our guys went down the basement. So there was the U.S. down here in the basement, and the Germans above on the top floor. And they -- that's the ones that we saved from getting bad deal. So, I guess that was all right. There's a lot of things that happen before that--

Interviewer: Let's go, let's go back to where you just finished that big battle and 12 of your tanks were demolished and you just had the six tanks--

John Jack Call: They replaced the others.

Interviewer: They replaced them--

John Jack Call: --they fixed some of those and they replaced some, too.

Interviewer: Okay, tell us about getting over and across the Rhine River and--

John Jack Call: Well, we went on in through Rheinberg and we got in the middle of Rheinberg. There was one of our tanks on the side of the road and the escape hatch was dropped. They had an escape hatch where you could drop it and get out of there underneath it. All the people were gone -- I remember this driver of that tank had blocked the governor so he could do about 35 miles an hour, which became a deterrent to him because he was going faster than we couldn't keep up. And he went clear through and didn't get hit and went clear into town. And then, we went on past that -- there wasn't anybody in it, they'd been captured, we found out later they were captured, but they weren't killed. They were saved. And then at the edge of town there was another tank, and he must have done the same with his governor, because he was way ahead, and the barrel on their tank gun had been hit with one of these 88 and it just split that whole barrel and went right inside and there was two bodies laying out on the ground. They just went too far too fast, and that was their problem. It's interesting -- their boots were gone. The Germans liked

our boots, I guess, and they had come and taken their boots and left everything else. They were just laying there on the ground and we couldn't do anything, so we just kept going. And finally the column stopped. There was kind of a plain area and they were afraid of mines. And while we were stopped there waiting, five more tanks from somebody at some other tank battalion -- they were black people, African Americans, we call them now -- they went right up past us. And we wondered, "What they were doing?" They got up right in front of us and then one hit a land mine and over the radio, it came over and says, "Hey boss, there ain't been anybody ever here before." (Laughter) Somebody must have told them it was taken there, so they just went past us.

Interviewer: And did the mine destroy the tank?

John Jack Call: The mine just blew the track off. I don't think it killed anybody there.

Interviewer: It didn't kill anybody?

John Jack Call: Mm hmm.

Interviewer: Well, that's interesting.

John Jack Call: Then we went on across the Rhine River, and I can't remember much of the names of the town. We went to the Hartz Mountains, I remember that.

Interviewer: When you crossed the Rhine, did you go on a pontoon bridge that the engineers had made to get over?

John Jack Call: No, I think it was another bridge. It was already there, and we just drove across.

Interviewer: It wasn't the Remagen Bridge, was it?

John Jack Call: No, the Remagen Bridge was down there. The 9th Army took that one.

Interviewer: Yeah.

John Jack Call: Yeah. Then, so I don't think it was floating. I think it was one that they hadn't blown up and it was still there. And, we went to Hartz Mountains. We stayed there, and then we took other towns and we secured them and we had guards on all other sides of roads coming in. There's a lot of things I can't remember now. That's a long time ago.

Interviewer: What was the closest call you ever remember of getting your tank -- or your crew getting killed?

John Jack Call: Well, I told you about the one. That was, I think, the closest--

Interviewer: The closest call, yeah.

John Jack Call: There was another one where we were stopped and there was a house over on the left of the road, and every once in awhile, I'd hear a gun go off -- a rifle. And I said "Pete," -- my gunner -- I said, "Put one in that house, Pete." And he did, and no more guns. Didn't hear any more. But that night we were cleaning our guns. We had .50 caliber cans wired to the back of the turret right behind my head. There was a bullet right through it and it missed me about that far. So I guess that was a close call.

Interviewer: I'd say so.

John Jack Call: I guess that one, Paderborn, and the Rhineberg -- I guess that's about the three I got very close to going. I wrote the story on that, and if you read that, you'll hear how I felt about that.

Interviewer: Well, uh, do you want to just tell us, kinda?

John Jack Call: Well, you know, in those days -- uh, you don't think about this -- but as I look back, there was somebody protecting me. And I feel like for some reason, I was saved. And it just didn't bother me then. You don't -- when you're fighting or traveling with intent to fight, your adrenaline is high and you don't think about the danger. You just get going because you've got to get him before he gets me. And so, later on, when I got to thinking about these, I thought that someone above had helped me stay alive. I guess that's about it.

Interviewer: Well, um, tell us, then -- you were into Germany and it was early '45. Did you hear that Hitler had committed suicide?

John Jack Call: Not till the war armistice was, you know--

Interviewer: Yeah, were you able to get news in the tank?

John Jack Call: Well, they had a paper that we got when we were where we could get one, and that's when it came out, when we knew what had happened. I don't remember much about Hitler shooting himself till later. I remember when they surrendered -- total surrender -- and all those things. I remember that.

Interviewer: How did you get the word of the surrender?

John Jack Call: I don't know. I guess it just came from the head quarters. I don't remember that, I don't remember that.

Interviewer: Can you remember your emotion and the feeling at the time?

John Jack Call: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

John Jack Call: Well, you feel like we made it. We got rid of this bad man. And, you know, I think about how he started out as a paper hire, and got all these people to do what he wanted them to do. And these were good people, they wouldn't do it if they didn't think they had to. He was probably putting out this propaganda about how he had to kill these people and invade this country, and -- you know, you feel like. Well, the German people were good people, but there were some of them that were listening to him, and that was the biggest mistake they made. And we have a situation, or had a situation similar to Hitler, that Saddam Hussein had been the same kind of person. And if he could get the power and enough armor and things to fight, he'd could come over to get us. He could have, if we hadn't got him first. You know, when you're, when you been through it, you think about what people can do now, today, if we don't keep our armor up and all the things that we need. And we've had some terrorists that do some bad things, but we're doing well now not having problems like we did in 9/11.

Interviewer: What would you say to future generations about World War II and your feelings and about what you been through in general?

John Jack Call: Well, of course, war is hell, you know? You don't want to go to war, but there's always someone out there that wants to take over -- they want power. And they'll come up later, they come out now, and there will be someone -- and there still is -- someone that will try to take over and control other people. So you have to stay strong. You have to keep your armor up. You can't let your minds go easy because if you do, they're going to come get you. So you have to keep that control in your own country and not let someone come and take over your country. So I think we've been doing the right thing.

Interviewer: Tell us about your -- where were you exactly when you heard that Germany surrendered, and was there ever any thoughts. Tell us about just what you did and if everybody was cheering when you heard that Germany had surrendered.

John Jack Call: Well, if I had been a drinking man, I'd be drunk. I know that! (Laughter) There were a lot of guys that were. (Laughter)

Interviewer: There was a lot of celebrating going on.

John Jack Call: There sure was. The war in Japan was still going on, and we, uh -- they sent us down to Czechoslovakia -- Pilsen. We went to Pilsen and there was a valley where they must have had 10,000 German soldiers there. We were supposed to guard them with, you know, a company of tanks which you can't do much. If they want to slip away, they're going to go -- you can't catch all of them. We stayed there for awhile and then they came around and said, "If you want to go, you can volunteer for this other tank battalion -- the 709 -- we'll take you to the U.S. for a month, and then you'll get in a ship and go over and fight against Japan." So a lot of us thought, "Well, let's do that. Maybe we'll get down there -- get to the U.S. -- and there will be no war. Maybe we'll win the war before we go." So, they shipped us to La Havre again, where we came in -- La Havre, France. -- and we were waiting for a ship to get on, and then the Japanese surrendered when the atomic bombs hit them. And we were just one battalion and every time a ship came in, there was some general with a division that'd say, "No, that's my ship." So they would get on that ship and go and we never did get on one. We was taken, after being there about six weeks, we went to La Havre, err -- it's the Riviera area--

Interviewer: The Riviera of France?

John Jack Call: Yeah, it's in France, just west of the Riviera.

Interviewer: Cannes or Nice?

John Jack Call: No, I went to Nice on furlough. But I didn't -- that isn't where we were. We were guarding an ammunition dump there in -- Marseille.

Interviewer: Marseille, yeah, okay.

John Jack Call: Marseille. And I did get a week furlough to go to Nice, and had a good time there. And then when I was about to, um -- well, I was still at this ammunition dump. My father had a gallbladder problem and he was having trouble at home and my mother got the Red Cross and said, "We need him home now." So they put me on orders and I went all by myself and went home to be with my mother while they did surgery on my father. Of course, that's kind of a minor surgery now, but in those days, it was serious. Everything worked fine and I came home and I started at the University of Utah, and that's the way it went.

Interviewer: Now, you were, uh, they sent you on a ship then out of Marseille. Did you leave from Marseille or did you have to go back down?

John Jack Call: No, I had to go back down. I had to get on a train and go back up to La Havre, France--

Interviewer: La Havre, France.

John Jack Call: --to go back to get on another boat to go home.

Interviewer: Okay, tell us your experience about -- you went to New York?

John Jack Call: We went to -- yeah, it was New York. But I had to just keep going. I got on a train to Chicago, and you know in Chicago they don't go through. They stop and take you across

town to get on another train and go on home. And I was carrying my own orders, so I didn't have anybody to report to. I just did my own thing.

Interviewer: Do you remember on your way back seeing the statue of liberty as you are coming in to the harbor?

John Jack Call: Yeah, yeah. That was great. Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: And what went through your mind when you saw that?

John Jack Call: Boy, this wonderful country we've got. You know, France gave us the statue of liberty. The people that are there now don't understand what was going on then. They think, you know -- if we had gone and helped before Hitler took France, we wouldn't have lost people like we did. Do you know, in one day, when they invaded France, 47,000 deaths in one day. They cry about three or four thousand people in five years. They don't know what they're talking about.

Interviewer: That was a big sacrifice they made.

John Jack Call: It was. It was a sacrifice, but you -- you've got these bad people. And they're going to come if you don't keep them away.

Elizabeth: Can you describe into New York harbor.

Interviewer: Can you give us kind of what it was like coming in to New York harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty? Where there people waiting for you and waving at you?

John Jack Call: They weren't then. I think, I was not like a whole battalion or division being brought in. I was all alone. I just got on a train. So there wasn't anybody waiting for me. I was

just alone. But the people had been through this wonderful celebration that they'd had before I got there, of course. So I don't remember anybody welcoming me home like they do now, you know, when the soldiers come home now. They make a big thing out of it. But I was all alone so I didn't get the big--

Interviewer: So you got off the ship and headed right for a train, then, to head west.

John Jack Call: Uh huh, right.

Interviewer: And tell us about coming home to Utah and seeing your loved ones.

John Jack Call: Well, I, I came through the train to get on, you just keep going. Then I was supposed to go to Fort Douglas, but I stopped. My wife -- I had married, by the way, before I went over there -- and I stopped in Ogden and went. She was living with her mother and I went and stayed with them. The next day, I went to Fort Douglas. And they said, well, you've got enough points to get discharged. And I said, "Well, I've got to get home quick." So they said, "Alright, you can have your time for a month and then you can come back and get discharged." And then that's what I did. Dad had his operation and everything was fine, and then I went down and was discharged -- just kind of a regular thing.

Interviewer: And then you completed your work at the University of Utah and became an engineer.

John Jack Call: Yeah, graduated in 1950 here. Been a good life, and I've enjoyed all the people I have had.

Interviewer: Well, Jack, we appreciate you coming up here and, uh, sharing your experience with us. We've got a couple of little questions.

Elizabeth: Can you describe what it's like to be inside a tank? Is it hard? Is it cold? Is it cramped?

John Jack Call: Well, it's cramped. You're only -- if you're sitting -- you only have an eight or nine inch round stool that folds up into the wall. And, the tank gun is right next to you if you're a gunner, and if you're a tank commander, you're standing right behind a gunner and you're looking out. And the loader is over here. It's very cramped. And you've got ammunition below you, you got them on the sides of you, and when that engine is running, it's like a cold wind going right down the back of your neck. It's pulling air down from the hatch into the engine. There're two big fans that run air in to cool the engine, and it's cold. If you had claustrophobia, you couldn't get in that tank. I've known people that just couldn't do it. It didn't bother me that way, but it's an assignment you're given and you just do it whether you like it or not. But I didn't have any complaints. It's a protection, although, they did get a lot of people killed in tanks. But I think that I'd rather be a tanker than an infantry man. Those people are in hand-to-hand battle, and I think they've got lots of courage to do it.

Interviewer: The seat that you pulled down, was that a metal seat, or was that a wooden seat?

John Jack Call: It's metal with a little cushion on it. Only about a 2 inch cushion.

Interviewer: But it had a cushion on it.

John Jack Call: Uh huh, just a round cushion. It's spring loaded, so it takes up when it pulls up there and then you pull down and sit on it. And I can remember many, many times, sitting there and you're in battle. You can't get out, but nothing's happening. It's just night time. I remember falling asleep saying my prayers. You sleep sitting up. You can't lay down in that tank, there's no room to do that. So it's -- of course you have, you take turns because if you're a tank

commander, you want to keep your eyes open. And then when you get to trade with a gunner, you can sleep and he can watch for awhile. You've got to keep on your toes.

Interviewer: Well, that was interesting. Natalie, have you got any questions?

Natalie: Well, I was wondering what he thinks about the World War II conflict. Looking back 65 years, what does it mean for World War II and how important was it?

John Jack Call: Well, it was very important. This surprise attack by the Japanese -- and we were trying to negotiate with them and they were sneaking in there. You can't trust what they're thinking or what they're doing. So it was one of those things where the whole country got together and said, "We've got to do something here," and that's what we did. We saved England. We saved France. Everybody in that whole world, and of course, the Japanese, they gave up, finally. It was something we had to do, and everyone knew that. When President Roosevelt said, "This is an act that will go down in infamy -- infam -- how do you say it?"

Interviewer: Infamy.

John Jack Call: Yeah, infamy. He was right. That's what brought our whole nation together and it will happen again if they ever attack us here, people are going to do the same thing. They can realize then the seriousness -- there were people those days who said, "No, we don't want to go over there and fight and get our people killed." But if they hadn't, the Japanese and Germans would both have come in and got us. So it had to be done.

Interviewer: Did you ever come near any concentration camps or see any of them that had just recently been liberated?

John Jack Call: I did. Was it Auschwitz?

Interviewer: Auschwitz was in Poland.

John Jack Call: No, it wouldn't be Auschwitz.

Interviewer: Dachau? Was it Dachau?

John Jack Call: Dachau, that's it.

Interviewer: In Munich, yeah.

John Jack Call: And of course, they had these big holes where they'd thrown these bodies in and they weren't all covered. A lot of them were still just laying there. These -- what do they call them -- houses where they lived were nothing but boards about every two feet and about five high and people had to just lay on those boards, with no mattress, nothing. And of course, Hitler wanted to get rid of the Jews and that's how they took care of it. Yeah, it was terrible looking at that place.

Interviewer: Were any of the inmates still there when you were there?

John Jack Call: No, they had cleaned it up pretty good.

Interviewer: Cleaned it up.

John Jack Call: Uh huh. Yeah, when we marched to Czechoslovakia is when we seen that Dachau. They had these autobahns, which were nice roads, and we just went down the autobahns and we got off and went to this Dachau and went through Austria and Czechoslovakia. Those people -- when we were in Czechoslovakia we stayed with some families. We didn't sleep in the tanks, of course, and we didn't sleep in tents. They invited us in and my crew went in to one house and stayed with them. We couldn't understand their talk very well, but we could

communicate a little. And they were saying, "The Russians are coming in and will take over this part of the country." And we said, "No, they won't do that." But they'd already, I guess -- Stalin in Russia had got with Churchill and Roosevelt and decided that that's the territory they would take. In fact, as I understand it, Berlin was one city that the Russians got that there was an agreement. We wouldn't go that far. We could have beat the Russians into Berlin, if we could have gone, but they didn't let us go. So the Russians took over that whole area.

Interviewer: Well, and I'll bet you were glad that you didn't have to be transferred over to the Pacific and invade Japan.

John Jack Call: I agree.

Interviewer: Would have been a tough duty. Well, Jack, thank you so much for coming in. We appreciate your service and, uh, your effort in coming up here. We got one more question.

Natalie: What you kind of told me upstairs -- how did you defend the tanks from the bazooka-like weapons?

Interviewer: Yeah, you have a picture with all those sand bags around the tanks. Tell us about that.

John Jack Call: Yeah, well after that fellow -- the SS trooper -- that tried to shoot a panzerfaust at us, I thought, "When I get my tank, I'm going to save all the" -- because the armor won't stop those -- and we put sand bags all around. You can't put it in the tracks -- that's one area that's kind of soft, but these sand bags would, when a panzerfaust hits that, that explosion goes into the sand. The sand turns to glass. It stops the explosion hitting the metal. Because it's a burning explosion, it isn't like this, but it's shaped so it goes down and then it's really hot. Well, that's

what the sand bags were for. We never really had one after we put those on -- we never had a panzerfaust hit it. But that was a safety action that I said we needed to do, and that's what we did.

Interviewer: That panzerfaust is a German word, I guess.

John Jack Call: Yes, it's German.

Interviewer: And what would be the English translation to that?

John Jack Call: Well, bazooka is--

Interviewer: Is what the Americans call it?

John Jack Call: --bazooka is what we call it, yeah. If I remember watching on, um, the Military Channel--

Interviewer: The History Channel?

John Jack Call: No, it's another channel -- it's the Military Channel -- and it explained all these weapons that the Germans had built, and the panzerfaust was one of them. And it told how they operated that. They had a barrel that was only about this long, and they fire it, and then they throw the barrel away because the rocket is gone. And they had -- each one of the infantrymen carried two of them, that is in the battle where we were.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

John Jack Call: So, it was a bad machine, but they, that's what the tank -- those sand bags were for.

Interviewer: Anything else? Well, thank you.

End of recording.