

Interview of Lawrence W. Stimpson

Interviewer: Okay, we are going to start, everybody. What's your full name?

Lawrence Stimpson: Lawrence William Stimpson.

Interviewer: And you were born--

Lawrence Stimpson: November 18th, 1919, in Riverdale, Utah.

Interviewer: And what did you parents do?

Lawrence Stimpson: My parents, my father was in the milling business. Mother was at home and they ran a small mill there in Riverdale for as long as I can remember until he retired in the 50's – '50 or '55.

Interviewer: And where did you go to high school?

Lawrence Stimpson: Weber County High School, but I was a high school dropout. I had trouble with my eyes, and in school the biggest trouble I had was the strain. I had to strain all the time. I was 30 years old before an eye doctor discovered what my problem was. It was a stigmatism. In the Army, while I was in the Army, I complained of my eyes, and they said, "Oh, you have 20/20 vision." But they were still bothering me and I was 30 years old when a doctor fit me with those glasses. It was like my eyes lay down in a nice, soft bed. It just felt wonderful.

Interviewer: (Laughter). So you went through World War II with a stigmatism?

Lawrence Stimpson: That's right. I could see 20/20, but my eyes, if I did any close work, or if I looked at anybody directly in the eyes for just a few minutes, I had one of the worst headaches you could imagine.

Interviewer: Alright, tell us about how you got -- where were you on Pearl Harbor day? What were you doing, do you remember?

Lawrence Stimpson: I remember, I was just coming home from church and I was driving over the Riverdale viaduct listening to the radio in the car and I heard they bombed Pearl Harbor. And I thought, "Man, what are we in for now?" It wasn't long after that that they declared war. At that time, I was -- the draft was 1-B, I think. And that was on December 7th. So on February the 9th, before that, I was a 1-A (laughter). I was called to active duty, and went to Fort Worth, Texas for my basic training. I was there, and it was there I decided to go for the parachute troops and I went for that and passed the physical.

Interviewer: So tell us, was there an announcement on the board? What was it about the paratroopers? Had you heard of them?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yes, I'd heard of them, and that extra 50 dollars a month, when you're making 21 dollars a month, that was kind of an incentive in itself. I was taking an airplane ride there in Fort Worth, Texas one day, and I thought, "It wouldn't be bad jumping out of one of these planes." The first time I had to jump I thought, "What was I thinking of back there in Texas?" (Laughter). It was out of Fort Worth, I think, that I took that plane ride. And 21 dollars a month, you didn't take many plane rides at that time.

Interviewer: So, you were--

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, I was in, uh, I went through jump school in class number 11 -- the 11th class. Immediately after we graduated on July the 11th, 1942, they put us right in the 82nd Airborne Division, B Company of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. And that's where I was until after the war, was in that same regiment. Now, a regiment consists of about two

thousand men, something like that, I think. And a company is usually about 120 to 150 men per company. A lot of people refer to a company and they have no idea what you're talking about.

Interviewer: So what company were you in?

Lawrence Stimpson: B Company of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Interviewer: Now, we have a photo that you lent us of all those guys that started out with, correct?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yes.

Interviewer: And we will get to that -- just to make it clear, how many of those guys survived?

Lawrence Stimpson: I can't tell you how many survived. I was the only one, actually, that never missed a day of combat after the jump in Holland, after we parachuted into Holland. There were two of us after we left Italy, and he got killed the day we jumped in Holland. I was the only man out of the company that never missed a day of combat, and we had some of them wounded two or three times. They'd keep coming back. But then -- actually, on one chart I think I did have marked the number of deaths, but I didn't think it was over about 15 or 20 that were actually killed, but there was an awful lot of wounded.

Interviewer: And how many combat jumps did you make?

Lawrence Stimpson: I made three: one in Sicily, one in Italy at Salerno, and one in Holland. The rest of the time we spent on the line just like regular infantry.

Interviewer: And you made some amphibious invasions correct?

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, just on the Anzio beachhead. We came in on what's called an LSI -- Landing Ship Infantry. And that was, uh, the first time we came in that way.

Interviewer: Oh.

Lawrence Stimpson: Most of the time we were on land. Like in Italy, they would just pull us off the line for awhile, and then they'd put us back on the line in combat.

Interviewer: All right, well I will go through this chronologically now. So, you get into the 82nd Airborne and what happens? How did you get to England and how did you get over there?

Lawrence Stimpson: All right, they first took us to the Port of Embarkation in Brooklyn, New York. And it was from there, on the George Washington, we sailed from New York to Casablanca in a convoy -- Casablanca, Africa. After we were in Casablanca for a couple days, they moved us to a little town inside -- I forgot what it was -- it was about 200 or 300 miles from Casablanca to a little town called Oujda. At Oujda, we were just out in the desert training for a month or so, I guess. It was kind of rough training. We trained mostly at night there because it was so hot in the day time. And while we were there, we actually -- I was able to, I was on the honor guard when President, or uh, General Dwight D. Eisenhower visited us one day over there at Oujda. And that was quite interesting. In fact, I was on the first line. I got to look him directly in the eye. It was close, within about two feet or less.

Interviewer: Did he say anything to you?

Lawrence Stimpson: Nope, not personally. He just went up and down the line checking us and said, "Looks good men," or something like that. Remember, this happened 60 some odd years ago. This old man can't remember everything (laughter).

Interviewer: Well, you're doing a good job.

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, thank you. After we left Oujda, they moved us in to a town called Kairouan, Africa. They moved us up by rail into Kairouan, and that was about a thousand miles. I think we were put on that train about a week. And they'd go like the devil to a town and then they'd stop. Sometimes they'd be there an hour or two or three, I guess. At first, they moved us in what they call "40 and 8" box cars. A box car holds 40 people, or 8 (inaudible), which were horses. They had so many of us in the box cars that, regardless of how we lay down, not everybody could lie down at exactly the same time. Somebody had to stand. That was for about the first two or three days, then we were on top of lumber. We were on top of lumber riding the rest of the way, and believe it or not, there's some really beautiful country there in Africa. I was surprised by some of the country we went through. Some of the grape vineyards, oh, gosh, they went for miles it looked like. I always thought maybe I'd like to go back to Africa sometime and see the beautiful country. With all of the tunnels we went through, you'd just hope that cars would sway right as we went through the tunnel. And we had to tie ourselves on in case we went to sleep so we wouldn't fall off.

Interviewer: So, the lumber -- are they trucks or are they rail cars?

Lawrence Stimpson: Rail cars on the railroad, on the train. I think it was on a narrow-gauge railroad train, if I remember.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: You know what a narrow gauge train is, don't you? Okay.

Interviewer: So you get into Kuran--

Lawrence Stimpson: Kairouan.

Interviewer: Kairouan, pardon me. And where do you go from there? What happens then?

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, we go back to training again. We only train at night because at Kairouan, in the daytime, the temperature would run around 128 degrees Fahrenheit. It was so hot that these "Jerry cans" -- green cans that would hold five gallons of water -- you'd have them sit in the shade, but the breeze was just enough that if you wanted to take a drink out of that Jerry can, you had to have a handkerchief. You couldn't touch it, it was so hot. The only way we could cool the water a little bit was we got a clay crock, like wood or something, we could put water in it, hang it in a tree, and the evaporation would actually cool that water down quite a bit. But other than that, you were drinking hot water. You would make coffee or anything you wanted out of it (laughter). But it was, uh--

Interviewer: So were you guys eager to get into combat at that point? You were young men. Were you eager to--

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, no, not really. I remember when that plane was taking off when we were going in to Sicily. I thought to myself, "Do I really want to go into combat, or do I want to go back and have more training?" And I thought, "No, I don't want any more training. Let's get this war over with one way or the other." But I was sick of training, to be honest.

Interviewer: Describe that night. You took off at night, is that correct?

Lawrence Stimpson: We took off just before dark -- I think it was about 8 or 9:00, something like that. We flew from Africa -- Kairouan Africa -- and we passed over Malta. It was dark when we passed over Malta heading for Sicily. My company, my regiment was going in for

support for the other troops that had landed the night before. We were coming in as a reserve for the Red Army and the parachute -- the 505th Infantry Regiment jumped on the first night in what you call "D-Day", or "D-One" or something. Anyway, I know about the time, just before we got to Sicily, they had us stand up and hook up to get ready to jump. I guess they figured if there wasn't any trouble, we were going to jump, which we did. I know I was about the third man. I could see the door real clear that I was jumping out of and pretty soon I could see these sparks flying. And I thought, didn't they put a shroud over that exhaust point of that C-47 so it wouldn't show sparks at night? Then it dawned on me, those sparks weren't going parallel, they were going directly towards us. About that time, we got the signal to jump, and that sky looked just like the 4th of July with the fireworks and it was not the enemy that was firing on us -- it was the Navy, the English, the Army, and all the Allied forces were firing, shooting at night. I understand that there were bombers bombing the beachhead at the time. They kind of got mixed up in our formation. One of the guys said he saw a bomber go underneath us just about we were getting ready to jump.

Interviewer: A German bomber?

Lawrence Stimpson: A German bomber, yes. So we were supposed to land on an airfield. And we come down -- this is at about 11:00 at night -- I looked down after the chute opened, and I could see big trees and little trees. I didn't see any airfield. The little trees turned out to be a vineyard, a grape vineyard, and the big trees were olive trees, if I remember correctly. We had around 400 men killed that night from friendly fire, and that's pretty good ratio when there's only 2000 men to the regiment, if I remember correctly.

Interviewer: This is while you're in the air?

Lawrence Stimpson: No, it was when they got on the ground. Some of them got killed. -- the planes were shot down, and some of them died in the planes as the planes went down before they had a chance to jump. It was chaos that night, believe me.

Interviewer: Could you see those planes on fire?

Lawrence Stimpson: I didn't, after you jumped -- when you are jumping from an airplane, at night especially, you are only about a thousand feet or less above the ground. So just a few seconds from the time you leave that airplane till you are standing on the ground. And you don't have much time to see what is happening to the other planes. It's, uh -- we had some men that had to kill Americans to keep them from killing themselves when they got on the ground.

Interviewer: Really.

Lawrence Stimpson: So the next mission we had -- this is getting ahead of ourselves -- but they had us go around with regular troops showing them our uniform, that we were on their side. We were going to jump at Anzio -- we were scheduled to jump at Anzio -- and so to make sure that they knew what parachuters looked like, we had to mingle them with them so they know what we look like, that we were not their enemy. But, after they got on the ground, they did have to shoot some Americans to keep from getting killed themselves. After we got on the ground, our biggest trouble was finding where we were at because when you jump out of an airplane, and you land, you are on an island like that, or any place, you don't know what part of that island you landed on until you get some. We had plenty of maps to tell the place, but we didn't know what part of the map we were on. So, we had to, uh -- well, it was about 2 or 3:00 the next afternoon, we saw a Sicilian coming down on the street and one of our men could speak Italian, and then he told us that there was such and such a town just down the road a few miles. And then we spotted

it on a map, and then we knew where we were at, but until that time, we had no idea where we were at. The Germans were strafing us. They had one of their planes come in and strafe you with machine gun fire. That's a lot worse than having a rattlesnake at you (laughter). It's no fun. They strafed our chutes, and then about the time we got assembled with the rest of the company and the rest of the regiment, we were strafed a few times, and that's no fun. Do you want me to go on?

Interviewer: Absolutely, you're doing wonderfully.

Lawrence Stimpson: After the, uh -- we got assembled with the company -- they started marching us along the coast of Sicily. And we'd marched from early in the morning till late at night. I know some days we'd walk along and I would think, "If I could just get wounded, then just lay in a nice, soft sheet and a cool breeze in a hospital ship," or something, because in three days, we made 150 miles. They did shuttle us a little bit of that, but not much. The biggest problem was not only walking that distance, but the Italians would set up a pillbox. Now a pillbox is a cement structure with peep holes out of it or holes they could shoot out of to protect them. And we would come up to them and they would deploy us, pull us off the road to attack that pillbox -- or what we called a pillbox -- and the Italians would surrender. And we got to get on back on the road and start marching again. And lot of times, you'd just wish and pray that they'd stop and fight for a minute so we could just sit down (laughter) because after the third day, we were so tired. We came to a place and we had somebody's swimming pool there. We just emptied our pockets and jumped in (laughter). It was miserable. There're a lot of things worse in combat than getting hit, and some of the miseries you have to go through, it's kind of a blessing to get hit if you don't get hit too bad.

Interviewer: Describe the terrain of Sicily to people who've never been there. Describe why it is so hard to march over in that hot sun.

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, where we were going along the coast was just small hills. There were no big mountains or anything, it was just small hills. The people were greeting us real friendly and waving flags and happy to see us, and that was one of the nicer parts of it. But the marching for three days -- that was torture. After that, we went around on the other side of the island. They took us in trucks over just beyond the capital of Sicily.

Interviewer: Palermo.

Lawrence Stimpson: Palermo -- yes, I couldn't think for it for a minute -- into kind of a little bay and we were there for a few days. That was really nice swimming in the Mediterranean. The water was nice and warm and we really enjoyed that. However, one day, they had us go into passage in Palermo, and one of the drivers of one of the trucks bringing some people back from Palermo drove into a minefield. That was quite disastrous. They had quite a few men hurt real bad that day. I don't know what that driver thought, but I knew he was really chewed out and I think he had it plaguing him the rest of his life -- the men that were killed that day or were wounded.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: So after a few days there in Sicily, then flew us back to Africa to Kairouan again where we could resume our training. I can't remember just how long we were back at Kairouan, but then they flew us back to Sicily. We were in Sicily preparing for another jump farther up the coast of Italy. I think this is before the Salerno beachhead -- it was a little town called Capua. We were to go in and take the town and then send out a patrol to meet the forces

coming from the sea. But then for some reason they cancelled that jump. I might mention that one of the fellas that was in our company kept volunteering, "I want to be on the patrol to meet the troops coming in from the sea, the ocean." He was volunteering for everything. Well, the first time we got into a real fight with artillery and that, he was our first psycho case. It was such a shock to him to find out what war was really all about that that he just went all to pieces. And he went and left the company. I understand -- the last we heard -- they wouldn't even allow him to carry a gun. He was real conscientious. After they cancelled our Capua jump, one night, there was -- I mean, they made the Salerno beachhead, but the Salerno beachhead was in trouble. They called us in right quick to help out, so we loaded on planes and jumped at Salerno. The plane I was in lost contact with the other planes and I think we were the only plane that hit the drop zone. I didn't want to come out of the plane that night. I could look down and I could see dark area and light area. And this was about 2:00 in the morning, I guess, when we jumped this time. I thought, "Well, the dark area is trees, and the light area is desert." So I thought, "I'll try to go to the desert," but we don't have much control over the chutes. So I prepared for a tree landing -- landing in the trees, which I thought -- and that is where you hold your legs stiff and brace yourself going through the trees. But that wasn't trees, that was water about up to my chest, and it was cold water (laughter). Quite a shock when I hit that. Anyway, I was able to walk out and it was only about up to my chest. About to my chest -- right about up to here, I guess. So then we got out, we were finally assembled with the battalion and the regiment. I don't know how they did it, but there was a hill, Altavilla -- they called Altavilla. It was not in the city off to the side, but these were hills that more or less controlled the beachhead. We infiltrated back through the enemy lines in single file and set up a defense on these hills. The next day was real pleasant -- the sun came out, and the clouds came out past the valley below us,

and after that clouds came in, a German 88 start firing on us. When they fire, a German 88 has muzzle velocity of an M-1 rifle. You hear the -- by the time you heard the shell, I mean, it's -- you hear the shell before it leaves the gun. In fact, that 88 could shoot level or it could shoot planes out of the air. It was a wicked one. Anyway, they, uh -- I know we suffered about 40 percent casualties there in about 20 minutes, I think. I know one guy got both legs blown off. He of course didn't live very long. But this one fellow I told you about, that volunteered for everything, he was a psycho case in no time at all.

I can't remember all who were wounded at that time, but we stayed there. This hill had about 800 bodies laying around of these dead Germans and Americans. And these Americans -- one of the American divisions took the hill a couple of times, but had been pushed off. That is why they called us in to help, because the hill pretty well controlled the beach head. We had a naval officer with us and he was directing fire from the ships inland. So the Germans didn't like us on that hill at all, and they tried to take it, but, we, uh -- a lot of time, we figured our kill ratio: how many of them got killed to what we got killed. Well on that hill, our kill ratio was eight to one. We killed eight of those to one of men getting killed. And then after we were there about a day, I guess they moved us to another hill, and on the way over to that hill, I was a radio operator for my lieutenant platoon leader. And they start shelling at us and I hit the ground and, we had one shell land, oh, maybe 20 feet from us, and he got a slug in the side, so that took him out. But I didn't get hit, I don't know why. So we moved to the other hill and it was quite comical. Over there, we were just in a holding position. We didn't get hit with the Germans, just with the artillery shells. They averaged about 50 round an hour at us. They would come in as a barrage, and then they'd quit. And you'd -- after this barrage came in -- you'd hear digging: "Dig, dig, dig." And pretty soon everything would get quiet -- another barrage -- then, "Dig, dig, dig."

This went on for 24 hours at least. And we had enough food to last us for, well, let's see, about three days, I think. We were running out of food. There was a chicken running loose there one day and I laid down my rifle and tried to catch that chicken. I never did catch the chicken, and I never did find my rifle. There were rifles laying all over the place and there were dead bodies all over the place. It was -- I must admit, one of those guys was digging a fox hole, and after the barrage I was digging mine because I had a line of trees right in back of me. And it sounded like the shells were going through them trees. I didn't want to move, and every time one of those shells would come in and hit that tree, I'm hurting -- so I kept digging deeper and deeper. And finally, one guy made a salad one day and brought it around. I don't know where he got the greens for us to eat, but we didn't have anything to eat. And it was behind enemy lines, of course, so they didn't bring us any chow or food.

Interviewer: So, could you see the bay from where you were? Could you see Salerno?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah, you could see the bay.

Interviewer: Describe what you were seeing during that invasion out there in the Bay of Salerno.

Lawrence Stimpson: Out there, what we could see is just -- it wasn't very clear. I mean, you had a lot of trees between us and there, but you could see the ships out there firing. You could tell when they fired because they'd have a smoke ring coming out. It would take a few seconds before you heard the blast -- the firing of it. And it was quite peaceful and nice there, to be honest with you, except for the artillery shells. They kept coming in for 24 hours, about 50 rounds an hour.

Interviewer: So, when did you finally link up with other forces? You were there for how many days at Altavilla?

Lawrence Stimpson: I think we were there for three days, three or four days. Then they finally -- the Germans finally pulled back and let us have the hill. They found out they couldn't take it. In fact, the Germans were pretty surprised by how many men we had that kept them from getting it, because they came up there with a pretty big force. They didn't want us to get a foothold on that Italian mainland. Then they took us out and we were on the beach there at Salerno. This fellow that I told you was a psycho case, he went AWOL from the hospital and came back to us. And every time one of those Navy ships would fire -- you could see the smoke ring and you know the sound was going to get there -- he went completely to pieces. And he had to go back to the hospital and that's the last we saw of him. But after we were there for -- I don't remember just exactly how long we were there -- then they loaded us on LSIs -- Landing Ship Infantry, I think that's what it was -- and took us up the coast of Italy. We were on there an hour or two, I guess, and then they put us inland again. They set us up on another hill and we took it.

Interviewer: I think they took you to a place called Maiori?

Lawrence Stimpson: Maiori? I can't remember just exactly where it was at. They used to keep track of the hills we were on by the number of them -- 17, 1205. We just held that hill there for awhile. We had to stay in our fox holes all day long and it rained on us and you take -- you put your blankets back, because this was in September and October, and the steam would just pour off of them in the day time. If you come out of your hole, it was target for the enemy. So you had to stay in that all day. You could move around a little bit at night, but that was all. I forget how long we were on that hill. Then they put us on another mission, and I know it was raining. They brought us up and I thought, "I will hang up my clothes that are wet here on this bush to the side of me to get dry." Well, it rained all night, so nothing got dry. And the next day, we moved in. We went -- we were about 14 miles, I think, behind enemy lines just checking things out back

there. We were there about a week and it rained every day, every night. Well, not every night, but everything was sopping wet that you had. At nights, you would lay there in that fox hole and you'd shake your legs to try to keep warm. It's the only way you could to keep anywhere near warm. Of course, you didn't light a fire to keep warm. In fact, one night, it was so miserable, and I didn't have any assignment that night, and there was a corral there with cows and rats and everything in it. I crawled in there anyway. It was at least dry in there and I stayed there that night. The next morning, I got out. Anyway, at the end of that week -- before we went there, we must have been there about two weeks. Most of our missions lasted about two weeks. But we still lost about 25 percent of our men, not from enemy fire but from frozen feet or pneumonia or something. They moved us back to Naples for awhile. After you'd shaken your legs so much at night -- they put us in a school house there -- it was nice and dry for a change. At night, you'd lay down and try to sleep and your legs, you'd keep getting charley horses in them. You been shaking them so long you just couldn't relax, and you end up fighting charley horses all night. It took quite a few days for us to get used to sleeping without shaking our legs. One time before that, I think after -- I forget what hill it was -- but for awhile, they made us police. We had to police the town of Naples for awhile. I know one day, I was assigned, I went out there and this guy was complaining. He had a house of ill repute and I had to go in and run the guys out of there (laughter). That was kind of interesting. Then after Naples, I think we went onto a hill 1017. I think while I was on Hill 1017, one of our guys went down below the hill and there was a German "S-mine" there. Now, a German "S-mine" has three prongs on it -- I think there are three -- and you bury it in the ground. If you happen to hit one of these prongs, it will bounce about three feet in the air, or something like that, and then explode with all kind of shrapnel or rocks or steel or whatever in it. One of our fellows stepped on one of those one night -- hit it --

and me and another fellow had to go out in the minefield and get him. That isn't much fun going in a minefield (laughter). You worry about stepping on one yourself.

Interviewer: Those are called "Bouncing Betties," is that another name for those?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah, I think they were called "Bouncing Betties." After that hill, I remember they, they took us in trucks back at Naples. And after you're back in a town like Naples, or any city of any size, they set up regular chow lines and give us regular food. I know there'd always be people -- older women, mostly, and sometimes young kids -- begging for the scraps after we were through eating so they could have something to eat. So we just dumped the mess kits into whatever they had, a bucket or something. That makes you realize how desperate people really get during time of war. But after Naples, they took us up to a hill and I remember getting out of a truck and thinking, "I'd sure hate to climb that thing," because it was just about straight up and down. Well, about three or four hours later, I was sitting on top of it. And we actually lost two men that I can remember on that hill. One of them was a replacement who never got to us -- he slipped and fell off. One morning, we woke up and there was a guy that was supposed to be on a gun there and we couldn't find him. And we thought, "Did he desert or something?" But later on in the day, they heard moaning from over the hill, and he'd fallen off the hill during the night.

Interviewer: That's just north of Naples? Where was that?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah, it's between Naples and Rome. Uh, I'd have to see a map, I don't know where it was.

Interviewer: Up near Venafro, and places like that -- San Pietro, that area?

Lawrence Stimpson: I think San Pietro, yeah. I know we could look across the valley at the abbey, Monte Casino Abbey. We could watch them bomb it -- we could see that clear from where we were sitting.

Interviewer: Did you watch the bombing of Cassino?

Lawrence Stimpson: I can't remember whether I did or not. I know it was standing and we could watch it real close. While we were on Hill 1205, they took us off the hill one day, one night, to attack a hill down below us. That hill was cone-shaped, just like an ice cream cone. It was cone-shaped, and there was absolutely no vegetation on it, except rocks about the size of your shoe, maybe. That happened to be Christmas Eve of 1943. We were taking this hill, but they had a machine gun set up there that was in the back of a pile of rocks that really gave them a lot of protection. Anyway, I know I was lying on my back that night watching the tracers go over my head and I could say, "What a heck of a way to spend Christmas morning." (Laughter).

Anyway, the sun started coming up -- it started getting light -- so we had to pull off that hill and we pulled off into kind of a (inaudible) where we were protected. Later on, about 10:00 that morning, the Battalion Commander Colonel Williams came down and asked for sniper protection to go out with him on that hill. He said the Germans had pulled off from it, so I went out. I was about 30 or 40 yards ahead of him. I walked right past those pillboxes. Pretty soon, I heard a shots hollering back there and the Germans were still in the pillboxes. Why they didn't shoot me, I have no idea. Then he told me, he said, "Go check out that house." And that house was, oh, two or three hundred yards away, and I really didn't appreciate going to check out the house in enemy territory alone. On the way to that house, I heard somebody hollering at me. It was kind of a brick wall or a rock wall there. This German soldier was laying there by that wall and his buddy was hit and was dead with him. He kept pointing at his forehead and said "shoot."

And I said, "C'mon." And he said, "Next boom?" And I said, "Next boom." And so I sent him back to the Colonel back there with them.

Interviewer: What do you mean when he was pointing?

Lawrence Stimpson: He was pointing to his head and saying something in German. He wanted me to shoot him in the head. And there's no way could I shoot a man that was not fighting me. It's a different proposition. If he's over there and got a gun and was shooting at me, I could shoot without any qualms at all. But a person like that -- no way could I shoot a man that was, you know -- that I had the drop on, you might say it. I said "come," and I sent him on back to the Colonel. Well in the meantime, I saw another German that was bringing supplies or something in the barrow. I started chasing him (laughter) -- I really didn't want to go to that house. While I was chasing him, I got away from the Colonel and whoever was with him -- I don't know where they were -- but the German finally started firing back at me with mortar fire. They will go and shoot at one spot to try and get your range. So I thought, "I better get out of here." I went over and up a draw there. Now I'm all alone -- I have no idea where anybody else is at, any American soldier -- and here I come up and there are three drunk Germans in a hole asleep. So I say, I wake 'em up, "C'mon kids, let's go." And I didn't know it at a time, but there were three more about 50 yards from them watching me. And so I got them and took them back too. And I was sitting that afternoon eating my K-rations, and I thought, "You know, this hasn't been too bad a Christmas after all." (Laughter). I don't know why they didn't shoot or something, there was nobody around to stop them.

Interviewer: So you took them prisoner?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah, I took six prisoners -- seven actually that day that I took. But I guess it was Christmas Day and they didn't feel like they wanted to fight or something. I thought, "Well, it's a pretty good Christmas." And after two weeks on that hill, we had, one person who could carry up a five gallon can of water a day. So we got one canteen cup of water a day. And after about two weeks, we were getting so dehydrated they had to get us off that hill. That's when we finally got pulled off from it. The German artillery shells -- I can't remember, I know we lost about 20 or 25 percent of our men again. Just standard operating procedures to have that many men wounded, or get sick, or frozen feet or something.

Interviewer: That's a good question -- you're in Central Italy. It's December. Describe the weather and what it's like being up there.

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, some mornings, we woke up with snow on whatever we had on us. It was pretty cold. It got pretty cold at night. If the sun came up in the daytime, it wasn't that bad, but at nights, they were cold. Parachute troops have a shelter half and I think one blanket with us. We didn't have any heavy clothing to take either with us. So we were -- it wasn't the most pleasant experience in the world.

Interviewer: I understand in that area that often times you'd be on one mountain and the Germans would be on another mountain, but it wasn't very far -- it was, as a crow flies, it might be just a couple hundred feet -- but you'd have to go down. Did you have that experience?

Lawrence Stimpson: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, I can't remember very well, but I know a lot of times, uh, we'd send out patrols at night to see where the enemy was. They were usually quite a ways away from us. I know, uh -- I have to relay one experience we had. That pulled us off one of these hills. And they put us back in a house, I think that house had about three stories to it, and we got pretty good rations back there, but we were still in range of the enemy artillery. I was on the top of the roof one night and I looked out and it was bright as day out there at night. I looked out another window and it was bright as day -- all four windows were in fact bright as day. I thought, "Well, that fire must be above us." Sure enough, the guys had had a fire down there in the basement in one of those old fire places, and it got that creosote on fire, and that was coming out of that just like a blowtorch. And the first sergeant was up there with a canteen (laughter) pouring water to put out that fire. He wasn't having that much luck, but we were sure sweated out. I don't know why they didn't start firing on us that night, but they didn't. I mean, it was kind of a -- we were kind of worried about it because we were still in artillery range. There was another one that I remember from being in that house. They gave us what they called "10 in 1" rations -- and they were good rations -- and after being on the "K-rations" for two weeks. I'd get up in the morning and I would start eating until I had got my breakfast, and then I'd eat a piece until lunch, and then I'd eat until supper. All between meals, you just didn't seem to get enough to eat. And after three days, when we left there, they marched us out of there, I wasn't feeling too good. I'd eaten too much. But after that, they took us back to a little village. I can't remember the name of it now, and I think it was back to Naples again, and prepared for us. That's when they started planning this jump at Capua that they cancelled, and then they prepared to go to Anzio. Our regimental commander came down and told us one night, "Absolutely no prisoners whatsoever." In other words, if we found anybody -- civilian or anything -- we had to kill them. I was really

worried about that order because I didn't want to kill a little kid or anything. I could see why he had to give the order -- you couldn't have anybody back there telling the Germans where we were at and what we were doing. Anyway, they cancelled that jump and had us go in by landing ship infantry. And just as we landed, just as the ships went in and let us off -- we had to get off into water about up to here -- and they had issued us armored suits. They were just like a pair of coveralls, or overalls, I should say. They had a bib and everything on them, but the legs were fastened tight around the legs. And when you get out of that, just before we started loading, the Germans bombed us and hit a ship just, I think it was about two from us -- one or two from us. Anyway, one of the guys on our ship broke an arm just because of the jar that hit us. Then we started unloading and going onto shore, and we had pants up to here filled with water. And at that time, the Germans were strafing us, started coming in, started strafing us, and you get out and try to run with 100 pounds of water in your pants, you don't have much -- just like a bad dream (laughter). It wasn't any fun. I just thought of a bad dream, but the only trouble was, you weren't dreaming. After we landed at the beach, they moved us -- we moved up to take a bridge on what they call the Mussolini Canal. We moved up there at night, and, I know -- I'm trying to think how many days this was we'd been on the beach.

Elizabeth: Hold on just a second, she has to go down stairs.

Interviewer: Hold on just a minute. We'll take a break. Take some water, have a swig of water if you want. That's some fresh water for you. This is going great though.

Elizabeth: Keep going.

Interviewer: Okay, uh, now we can keep going. There's a town there called Cisterna di Latina.

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah, Cisterna.

Interviewer: Tell us about the Mussolini Canal.

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, this is a pretty good sized canal. You saw it, haven't you?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: It will hold as much water as most of these rivers around here will hold, and it had real steep banks on it, on each side. They would go up quite a ways and a bank on the side of the bank that we were on. It would go up, it was like a hill and it had a dip in it, and you could walk up and down that dip pretty easily. In fact, that's what we did a little later on I'll tell you about going up that. Anyway, this night we moved up here to this bridge and I was digging in on the side. There was a road there -- I think it was a paved road -- but it was not very wide. It would not meet with our two way traffic very well. I was starting to dig a fox hole just up above the road and pretty soon a German machine gun opened up just across the road from me. I got off that -- I got down in the barrow pit real quick. I could see where that fire was coming from, so I took one of these grenades, pulled the pin, and threw it. Well, that grenade got wet when we came in, and as I threw it, it left a streak of light right from me right to where that machine gun was (laughter). I dug down pretty good that night, and (inaudible) went quick that night. That's the last we heard of the machine gun. The next morning, there was blood and equipment and everything left there, so that machine gun -- had knocked it out, anyway.

Interviewer: There were a lot of days on the line at Anzio. Like we were talking earlier, it's like the trench warfare.

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about what it was like there -- I guess artillery and mud.

Lawrence Stimpson: Oh yeah – artillery, water. One day we was being shelled -- this was after we'd been there awhile, well, not very long come to think of it. It was after that day when we'd lost so many men. I know one day, in this house there -- the front line was out about 100 yards from the house where they'd sit on the bank of the Mussolini Canal and they could see what was going on over. I had left that morning. They started shelling us real good, and they happened to hit right about where those guys were cooking their breakfast back in a kind of corral next to the house. And they came out of that, hitting their fox holes right quick and the fox holes had about that much water in them. I come to the door and I thought, "No, I think I'll take my chances here." I didn't like the mud. This is in the latter part of January, I guess. I didn't want to – I'd just as soon take my chances in that house. Anyway before, out of this night -- I don't know if I want to tell you this or not.

Interviewer: Well, if you feel comfortable. We'd sure like to hear it.

Lawrence Stimpson: Okay, for some reason, after that machine gun hit us, this lieutenant that was in charge of us pulled out with all the men, except we were there. There were four or five of us, there was kind of a grater there by the side of the road. And he always told me, in any situation, to do something. So I started checking around and came to find out we were the only ones left there. And I thought, "Well, I'm not going to stay here alone with the four or five of us." And we formed in what was called a diamond formation. That is one where you have a man in front, on each side, and one in back and you'll, and you tap your rifle with a bullet to stop -- two to stop and one to go. And we start marching back to where the company was, the main company. On the way back, we run in to two -- we'd stop every once in a while and just listen --

and pretty soon we heard some hobnailed boots coming up the road. They finally stopped, and we came to a dead pass there, so we finally contacted them and it was two Americans -- it was supposed to be anyway -- and they were heading for their company, heading in exactly in the wrong direction (laughter). They were heading for enemy territory, so we turned then around and went to the company. Just as we got there, the company commander was real unhappy with that lieutenant, so we come up back to the bridge again that day and we stayed there for the day - - a day or two, I can't remember. I remember doing outpost duty at night. When you're outpost, you dig a foxhole and there're two of you and it's not big enough for the two of you to sit in it. Out there in the dark, it's pitch black, you've got nothing between you and the enemy, and you're about 100 yards or 200 yards ahead of the rest of the company. And you are sitting out there at night listening for enemy coming or something. It's kind of hard on the nerves, and if you haven't had any sleep, it's not easy staying awake, either.

After that, one day they sent us out on a patrol. There were about 50 men in this patrol, and we were marching, going up the Mussolini canal. We are in this file at the top of the canal there. We could walk up there real easily, and we were receiving rifle fire. We didn't pay too much attention to it, but we knew they knew we were coming. I came to one spot and I could look out and thought, "Man, I'm really wide open here." I just stepped back and the lieutenant stepped in my place and he got it. That's the first person I actually watched get hit and die at the same time. In the meantime, we had got ahead of our scouts. You always have scouts, but they were down over the bank next to the canal and the lieutenant and I got ahead of the scouts. So I pulled up over the kind of a bank there and got on the other side of it, and the Germans were firing at us. I could watch the leaves fall off there, and they threw one of these what we called "potato masher

grenades” at me. It was only about 10 feet away, but I don't know why it didn't hurt me (laughter).

I don't know how long I was there, but the other lieutenant called me back and asked me if I could go get some artillery support from the battalion commander. I didn't know it at the time, but I was a second man, I think -- second or third man even to do it. The other two didn't make it, or the other one didn't make it, anyway. They determined to go out with a machine gun. So I started back, but I would run and hit the dirt, run and hit the dirt. That's where they machine gun, just every time I'd get running, it was firing. I don't know why it didn't hit me, and I swear it was coming down the bank, it seemed not much closer when I got to the end than it was when I started. I finally got to the battalion commander and explained where they're at and he said they were too close. He didn't think we could adjust the artillery because the troops were too close to it. I forgot to mention that when the lieutenant called me to come back, I crawled over the hill where that other lieutenant got killed, and there were 12 bodies there, one on top of the other that were killed.

Interviewer: Those were GI's?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah, our GI's, yeah. Actually, a few days later, I had to identify those bodies. What they did, they just dug a big, grave and buried them in it. But the trouble was, they only put 10 in the grave. There were two missing. They ended up actually as prisoners of war. When bury you somebody like that, just dump them all in the grave and throw the dirt on them, you would be surprised how that contorts their faces and that. I was on a detail that I had to try to identify those men. That's when you get disgusted with men who don't wear their dog tags so you can tell who they are. You couldn't tell from their facial expressions. You could tell maybe

from a ring or watch or something they were wearing or whether they had a beard or something, or what color their hair was.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: You don't want to make a mistake on it because it didn't make the parents back there too happy when they get the word.

Interviewer: So, getting to the day when you lost so many men. It was that day you told me about--

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, it was there at the bridge for awhile, and then they called us to make an attack at another bridge one day. That day, we did have a tank with us. We got up there, but they got shelling us so bad that day, and we didn't have much shelter to go to. We lost -- well at the end of that day, there were only 13 of us left out of 103 that hit the beach eight days earlier. We lost the first sergeant that day -- he was a psycho case. Some psycho cases are just temporary. I mean, he came back to us again and earned a battle field commission before the war was over. I'd say we lost 50 men that day there, and most -- I'd say 50 percent of them -- were psycho cases. They just--

Interviewer: They can't stand it anymore.

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah. It's usually your first experience in combat you'll get it. The longer you've been in, the less chance of being a psycho case. However, they made me company operations sergeant at that time, because the first sergeant was gone and the operation sergeant was gone and, uh--

Interviewer: They'd been wounded?

Lawrence Stimpson: Wounded or psycho cases, yeah. Barnes, I can't remember -- Barnes was wounded. But I got back to battalion to find out what I had to do and I actually just felt like pulling my hair and screaming myself. Then it dawned me what I mess I had to straighten out. I had to account for every one of our men in what they called a status report ever day, and that tells you what men are missing. And that's the report your parents get back in the states, you know, too -- if they are killed in action or not. So that was quite a mess I had to straighten out, get straight.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: You don't want to make any mistakes.

Interviewer: So, when do they take you out of the line at Anzio?

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, uh, I am trying to remember back. We were there for two months, I guess. They'd take us back to a house that was maybe 100 yards, or 200 or 300 yards from the front line, and have us stay for awhile. We'd chill out and have outpost duty.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: You are still pretty much on the front line. There's nothing between you except a few guards out there in the main line of resistance.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: We had, I guess all companies experience this, or have this happen, that somebody will shoot themselves in the foot to get out of it or something. You could tell when they did it because they would holler "Medic!", then "Bang!" (laughter). We had one guy there that put his hand on the top of his rifle and hit the trigger going down and it went right through

his hand. He was one of the bravest man we had in the barge, but he wasn't that brave on the line (laughter). He was terrible, to be honest with you.

Interviewer: So you'd had some close friends in all this, I guess?

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, not too close. Pretty close. This Arnie Bernette and I were quite close friends, and Hartop -- Charles Hartop -- and the first sergeant. I kept in contact with them and the CO, the company commander. I ended up pretty good friends with him, I think.

Interviewer: So how did they fare? Were any killed, were any wounded?

Lawrence Stimpson: They were wounded. Yep, Arnie Bernette, the other friend of mine, was killed when he jumped in Holland. But you don't, uh -- the way they show it in these shows, where you show a lot of remorse and that -- my feeling was, I didn't show that because he got his and I still got mine coming. He was through with his. You know, pretty soon the odds are against you because of how long you've been there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: And that's the way you look at it a lot of the times at a person. He's out of it now, but I've still got it coming. You don't know from day to day what you're going to get or what's going to happen.

Interviewer: Yeah. Let's go -- we'll come back to a few things -- let's go to Holland here, unless there's some piece that we haven't talked about.

Lawrence Stimpson: In Holland, I remember, our mission was to take a bridge at Grave, Holland. I think there must have been more than one bridge at Grave or something because other regiments -- the 505th, I read a book about that -- they took a bridge at Grave, but I didn't see

anybody else, any other soldiers at that bridge we took. And that's why there's only Bernette, a friend of mine -- there's two of us that left Italy that had never missed a day of combat. Well, actually, after Italy, there were seven of us, but they had us -- we had a levy that five could go on rotation back to the states, and we drew cords to see who would go and it was only Bernette and I that lost -- we were the only two left after Italy that had never missed a day of combat. He's the one that got killed. In fact, he was trying to go across that bridge or coming back across it when he got hit--

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: --that day.

Interviewer: So, tell us about the jump. Tell us about the jump in to Holland. What was that like?

Lawrence Stimpson: That was one of the best jumps we made. However, we made that about 2:00 in the afternoon and we did hit our drop zone for a change. I know -- I was the company operations sergeant and I think there was also a platoon sergeant at that time. I had a platoon that was not called for on the (inaudible) so I didn't get any grade for it. But I know, being company operations sergeant, I had all the maps we needed. I was supposed to keep the company going where we were supposed to go and where we were supposed to be. After I landed, I was on my back, and I had so much stuff on me that I could not get up until somebody came back to help me. I knew there was a road behind me and I kept stretching my neck to see if there were any Germans (laughter). I could not wiggle myself to get up out of that chute -- I couldn't get up because I had all the maps and everything you jump with. You must have 150 pounds of stuff on you, 100 to 150 pounds of stuff with you.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: You would be surprised what you jump with. When you jump, you've got to jump with everything to last three days.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: Two or three days.

Interviewer: So were you taking fire when you jumped?

Lawrence Stimpson: No, we didn't see any fire. We did when we got to the bridge, though. There was some fire there and some artillery. I kicked myself one day -- I was walking across this here by the bridge, and here come this German plane, real low. I don't know why I didn't get my rifle and shoot him -- I guess I was surprised. But you could see the pilot in the cockpit, he wasn't 50 feet off the ground passing that bridge to see if it was still intact.

Interviewer: Was this Nijmegen where you took the bridge?

Lawrence Stimpson: No, this was Grave.

Interviewer: Grave.

Lawrence Stimpson: Grave, yes. Then after we secured the bridge, they moved us up to Nijmegen. They marched us up there -- we went too far from Nijmegen and the company commander asked me to check on something up ahead where we were going to cross there river on boats--

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: --rowboats.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: I had a bicycle. I can't remember where I got the bicycle. It was a brand new bike, but I was riding that up there and on the way back, there was a bunch of tanks on each side of the road. The Germans kept shooting with artillery at them, and the artillery shells would go off, and it was too late to hit the ground now, so I kept going. Pretty soon another would go off, but it was too late to hit the ground now. I don't know why but I go through the (laughter) barrage without getting scratched back to the company commander. Then they took us across the river in boats. We rowed across.

Interviewer: Were you under fire?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Lawrence Stimpson: I can't remember too much about that. I know they were putting artillery shells there, but I can't remember if they hit any of our boats or not. It was pretty quiet when we went across. We captured the bridge intact. Then our regimental commander had to get tough with the British to get their tanks across it -- they didn't want to do that. I know I remember being in a house once -- I was upstairs going through if there was any Germans in it -- and I come across an armor piercing bullet right in the wall about two feet from me (laughter). I'll tell you about another instance I heard about, I didn't see it, but one of our lieutenants -- kind of a new lieutenant -- is down stairs and he hit the dirt on the floor. He did not have a good day that day. But the rest of the time, they put us up by the Hotel Burgendal or something, I can't

remember the name of it. We just held the position there for quite awhile. I got me a foxhole and put some wood across the top of it and was able to put dirt on it and I got candles down there. I could lay there at night and read by the candle and I was pretty well protected, I thought.

Interviewer: So, was it Becker who was killed on the jump? Was that your friend, what was his name?

Lawrence Stimpson: Bernette.

Interviewer: Yeah, Bernette, pardon me.

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah, he was killed at that bridge. He jumped. He was the one who got killed.

Interviewer: Yeah. That must have been tough to hear that.

Lawrence Stimpson: Yeah. The main thing to remember there, they shelled us about every day, and you could tell where the British were because they were just spraying like a hose all day long with a machine gun. We didn't fire unless we saw something to shoot at. I know one incident there, this friend of another friend of mine, Johnny Kellogg, was out in a house in front of our position. Well, they come up missing. They were prisoners of war. They were captured there.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Lawrence Stimpson: I had another friend of mine, Jimmy Lowe. When we landed in Italy, somehow going through a fence or something, he fell off his finger -- I don't know how he did it. Anyway, before we left Italy, he got wounded again. If I remember correctly, he got wounded on his head at night and they bandaged it up, but they bandaged it on the wrong side of the head (laughter). While we were there in Holland one day, he came by and said, "Well, here we go

again,” and he hit his fox hole, but he didn't get hit. Three times he was hit, but none of them real seriously. He spent -- I don't think out of the 350 days I spent on the line, I don't think he spent 50.

Interviewer: So you spent 350 days on the line?

Lawrence Stimpson: Near 360, between that and Holland, Germany, and all of Europe.

Interviewer: When was your last day? What happened there? What happened there on the last day that you finally had to fight?

Lawrence Stimpson: In Holland?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, it really wasn't much fighting there. It was artillery. They were blasting us with artillery about every day and we were in a holding position for about a month or so until somebody come by and relieved us.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Lawrence Stimpson: We jumped in September and, uh, I was on the advance party when we went back to France to Lyon, and it was about the first of December -- the 1st or 10th of December -- that I got word that they selected me to go back to home for rest and recuperation. So it must have been about the middle of November or something before we got back to France.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you were selected to go home?

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, I'll tell you, I couldn't wipe a smile off my face for three days until I left (laughter). Yeah, real good. And then they put us in a route to Paris and they put us in a

hotel there waiting to get us transportation to fly us back to England and the weather got so bad they couldn't fly us. In the meantime, the Belgian "bulge" started, and I was afraid they would change their minds and send us back to the line, but they didn't. We sat there in that hotel there for 10 days in Paris before they finally put us on a train and to La Havre, and by ship to England, and then from England to Scotland, I think, before we caught a ship to the States, and in the States on a train home. I was home for about 30 or 40 days, I guess, before I got orders to report back.

Interviewer: And did you go back to Europe?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yep, back to my unit, I was there about three months altogether. I didn't think they would send us back, but we went to Fort Douglas. We went and sat there one morning, and we thought, "Well, let's go downtown," but the guy that was in charge of us said, "We've got a meeting at 1:00. Let's wait until after that meeting." Well, at 5:00 that night we were on a train for Brooklyn, New York, for the port of embarkation. We landed there on a Saturday night, I think it was. Sunday we toured Boston and New York because they didn't know what to do with us yet at the Port of Embarkation. The next day we found out we were supposed to be at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. We went there and they re-equipped us, and a week after I first reported at Fort Douglas, I was looking out of the porthole of a ship again heading back to France.

Interviewer: But you didn't see combat again after that, or did you?

Lawrence Stimpson: Well, in a way I did, I guess -- I don't know whether you could call it combat or not -- but it wasn't really bad. By the time I got back to the unit, I know we had to

spend some time at Cologne, on the river there at Cologne. Then they pulled us back and we started towards Berlin. We were about 75 miles out of Berlin when the war ended.

Interviewer: How did you feel?

Lawrence Stimpson: Good. Believe me, it was good, and even better when the Japanese surrendered. I didn't have to worry about going to Japan or anything because I had plenty of points to go home. We were on a canal there -- I guess it was a canal -- we were on one side and the Russians were on the other. Some of the guys went over and visited the Russians. In fact, one guy wanted to borrow my wrist watch one night to go over so he could tell when to get back. He got back, but he didn't have my wrist watch when he came back (laughter). I didn't want to mess up because I just had been home, and I wanted to stay on the straight and narrow. To show you how serious the combat was, I didn't even take the cause money out of the barrel (inaudible).

Interviewer: At that point.

Lawrence Stimpson: At that point, yes.

Interviewer: I will ask an interesting question. Do you remember the first time you fired your weapon in combat?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yes, I was on Anzio, and I had no qualms about shooting the enemy.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: In fact, I put tracers in my gun to see what I was hitting (laughter).

Interviewer: Did that work well?

Lawrence Stimpson: No, they were coming out of this house and hit in the dirt. To hit a moving target is a lot harder than they think. In these movies -- in these Westerns -- when they hit somebody with a pistol, it is not that easy. All of us, our men in our company, had to be expert rifleman and shoot expert on the range. One day there at Anzio, we had a pilot shot down -- a German pilot. He landed up, oh, 200 yards or less in front of our lines. I guess we had seven or eight men shooting at him and not one of them hit him. You'd be surprised to hit a moving target. With a man, you only have about 12 inches there to shoot, and it's a lot harder than you think to hit it, with a rifle anyway.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Lawrence Stimpson: Now with a machine gun, where you can spray it, it's a little different.

Interviewer: So looking back on it all, what do you think of World War II? What do you think of the war today. When you think back on it all, does anything come to mind?

Lawrence Stimpson: Yes, I am certainly thankful we won the battle in Europe. If we hadn't, we'd be in real trouble today with Hitler in charge. It would be a disaster. I think with the wars today, if we don't win that and keep the upper hand, it is going to be disaster again. Of course, it will be a disaster because if we pull out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Taliban and the insurgents take over, then they are going to cause more trouble. They'll get nuclear weapons and they don't have any qualms, they don't worry about killing people. It doesn't bother them at all.

Interviewer: Yeah, I agree with you completely.

Lawrence Stimpson: Even in Vietnam. If I think if they had got the politicians out of there and let the military win it, I think we would have won there.

Interviewer: So, is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to talk about?

Anything that we glossed over, or--

Lawrence Stimpson: Not that I can think of. I'm yakking a lot here.

Interviewer: That's what we wanted. I think we're done here. And we may have you come back in again as we get closer.

End of recording.