

Interview of Mont Mahoney.

Interviewer: Mont Mahoney, we're grateful and honored that you were willing to come up and be interviewed today. Can you tell us what you were doing early or in late 1941, and what your feelings were when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

Mont Mahoney: Well, I was a student at the university. I guess I was a junior, and it was a real shock. And when we heard President Roosevelt come on the radio and declare war on Japan and eventually Germany and Italy, I knew then that I was on my way. And I later thought that the Japanese did a very dumb thing, because they united America, 100 percent. We were determined to defeat Hitler and Mussolini and Hirohito. And it was a traumatic experience. Some of my friends that were one year younger went in immediately, and they let us stay at the university and graduate. We went to OCS after we graduated. And, I guess some of us, maybe, have never forgiven the Japanese people for allowing their emperor to do those things, and I guess we should feel the same way about Hitler and Mussolini, the terrible things that they did.

Interviewer: So, you, after graduation, then take it from there. Where did you go from there?

Mont Mahoney: We were, I was married and the 30th of April, 1943, and we got inducted on the 7th of May, 1943. And we graduated from the university in June, and then we went -- I think in July, I think we went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to OCS. We didn't get our commission as normal at the graduation from the university because we didn't go to a summer camp, but we went to a four month OCS at Fort Sill. And there was about 90 of us, I think, from

the University of Utah that went on the troop train down there for four months training. And then, on the 16th of December, we received our commissions as second lieutenants. And we'd start out a hard, strong year at the university and then truck drawn and then truck drawn the artillery at Fort Sill. And from there, we were assigned to many different places depending on what our specialty was. And I was accepted in battery executive school at Fort Sill, which is a four week course in January, and that was mainly in learning how very easily to lay out the guns in a battery of artillery to have them shoot at a target and have them shoot parallel, that's the important thing. I'll go maybe into something about that. But after I completed that training course, I went to Camp Campbell, Kentucky to the 276th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. And I went down there, and this battalion had been trained as a truck drawn, and then they were converted to armored, and that meant they had different kinds of guns on self-propelled mounts called an M 7, 105 millimeter, and there was six of them in a battery, and three batteries in a battalion. And I went there for, I think it was still June when the permanent cavalry came back from armored school. And that meant that I was surplus. They put me in what's called the replacement depot. That meant I was subject to Uncle Sam to put me anywhere they wanted. So, after about a month in limbo, I got orders to go overseas. And we went to New York, where we got on the Queen Elizabeth, which was the largest and fastest ship afloat at that time. And, there's 21 of us in one state room that was designed for a couple when they go on a cruise. And I think we went fast and, no lights and got over there and landed in Glasgow, Scotland, and went down through, I guess Wales in England and down to Utah Beach. And went to France where we were there waiting for someone to come ask for us or be assigned to some unit.

Interviewer: So, did you participate in the D Day invasion?

Mont Mahoney: Oh, no.

Interviewer: This was after D Day then?

Mont Mahoney: This was in August or early September, I don't remember which. But, as we went in, we saw all the results of ships sunk and they'd put in -- they had sunk some ships on purpose to make a dike for the ships to come unload their troops and supplies and their vehicles over in France. And, we went through where they had gone through the D Day invasion, which was very evident that it was a difficult job, and up through the hedgerows where they had fought through and finally broke through and I think it was at Caen, or they broke through and went over through a large part of France. And liberated Paris, and then to on further east, and I was in different camps along the way to where they finally let us stay for a little while, and then some went to one unit and others and this lieutenant that had been in this 276th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, I happened to see him. His name was Larry Wyler from the University of Utah and I knew him and he says, "Do you want to come back and re-join the 276?" I said, "I might as well." So I went and replaced a forward observer that had been wounded seriously and I reported to the colonel, and he says, he knew me. He says, "Lieutenant, there's your vehicle." And I looked over there, and there was a tank. I'd never touched a tank in my life. And he says, "Well, your job is a forward observer in that tank." And I said, "What do I do with it?" And he said, "Tell Sergeant Koontz where you want to go." And the sergeant, he was in charge of the tank. There was five of us in a tank, Sergeant Koontz was the commander. And then there's Corporal Albert Hide, the gunner who shot the gun and the coaxial 30 caliber machine gun to go along with it. And then, Howard Smith was driver. He was from North Carolina, and then there was Hunter, Private Hunter was the bow gunner who shot the machine gun just next to the -- he was opposite of the driver. And we were from New York, and Salt

Lake City, and North Carolina, and Tennessee. All different religions, different guys, but we got along great. They were good guys and saved my life hundreds of times.

Interviewer: Now, was that the first time you met those guys, or did you train with them?

Mont Mahoney: Well, yes. When I was with the outfit in Tennessee, I was in the "A" battery, working with the six guns on the M7 self-propelled vehicles, and I only had communications with the ones in the A battery. I might have seen them or met them, but I don't remember them. But when I got into that tank, we were five guys in an area about five feet wide and five feet long and five feet high, five of us. That's where we lived together for, oh, about till the next May the 8th. We were together. And, my colonel was very, I guess he was jealous of me, I don't know. But I did not drink and carouse with the officers, and he did not like that. But, we, the four enlisted men and myself got along great in that tank all that time all through the Battle of the Bulge, going through France and the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line and over through Germany across the rivers and we had some interesting times together. I don't know if you want to hear some of them or not.

Interviewer: Well, we want to hear the interesting details. Tell us then where you went and what events took place shortly thereafter.

Elizabeth: (Inaudible), this hall way?

Interviewer: We'll continue. Go ahead, Mont from the --

Mont Mahoney: I joined the 276th in, oh, 15th of November, plus or minus. And first time I asked the colonel, how do I tell them where to go? And they said, "Just tell Sergeant Koontz where you want to go and he will get you there." And so, we were going out the first afternoon, and along the road we were all alone, and Sergeant Koontz says, "Lieutenant, pull

your head in." I says, "Why?" And he says, "There's a shell coming." So I pulled my head part way in, but the shell lit the ball pit right by the tank and blew all over my face." And next time Sergeant Koontz says to do something, I did it immediately. Anyway, we went up that afternoon up to town called Landroff, and this is in France where I saw my first dead GI soldier. And that was really traumatic. There's several of them laying in the street where they'd had a counter attack by the Germans two days before, and our artillery unit and others had destroyed this whole German division and killed them all. And those that got away, but -- and then, I met some of the ones I had known in Tennessee right there in that town where Lieutenant Pitrose had his half track knocked out and some of his men captured and, I guess one or two of them got injured. But we went to that town, stayed there that night. I hadn't been assigned to any tank company yet. That happened the next day. So, we stayed in the -- just pulled into one of the old barns there and shells came in half the night, crashing in, and I wondered, "What have I gotten myself into?" Anyway, the next day, we went into about eight or ten miles to another town where I was assigned to be the forward observer with the tank company. The tank company had three squads, and they had about nine or ten tanks, M4 tanks. So I was assigned to this tank company and they were going to go over this hill the next morning and attack the Germans on top of the hill and go over as far as they could go. So we found a place to stay that night, and there was guards outside watching the vehicles so that no one would come bother them, and we found this house where we could stay and it had a front room and a kitchen and family room, I guess you'd call it in the back, but between the front room and the back was a brick wall with a fire place in it that was about three feet thick. And so we slept in behind that fire place, and I happened to have -- I slept right next to the opening where they went from one to the other and happened to have my hand out in that opening and a shell lit right in that front room and exploded. And one of the shell

fragments burned my hands quite badly. I didn't know enough to do much about it, but it wasn't that bad. But if it had come through that opening, it would have killed us all if it had, if we had been in the front room, we'd all been killed. And I say shell fragments. People talk about shrapnel, World War II, there was never shrapnel use. There was just high explosive shells that when they exploded, the shells, bits of pieces of the shell flew all over and that's what did the damage.

Anyway, the next morning we got up and had our breakfast I guess and started up this hill and there was a bomb crater and one tank went through and another tank went through and another tank went through and alongside and hit a mine, blew its track off. So there's no way for us to get through. So I took my field glasses and map case and got on the back of the tank company commander's tank, and rode with him on the outside of the tank as we went up the hill and through to where we established kind of an observation point, and as the tank company commander said, "There's the target," and I would adjust the artillery fire on that target. And I think we destroyed quite a few targets that day. And it started to get dark and I had no food and I had no sleeping facilities, and the company commander says, "Well, we're going to stay here all night. Why don't you go back to your tank and then bring it up in the morning and re-join us?" I said, "Okay," and started walking back. I guess it was a mile and a half or two miles or something like this, and I was walking back and I could hear very well in those days, at least in my physical exam, they didn't turn me down because I had a tendency to be hard-of-hearing. But as I was walking back, I could hear shells coming in and they come along the flooder and through the air and I knew they were coming. So I got down and the track -- the

tanks went through and there was about two feet wide and 18 inches deep, and I lay down in one of those tracks, and six shells came in and lit all the way around me. I was right in the middle. And those shells came from friendly forces. And at least from where I thought were friendly and we always shot two volleys, so I cocked my head up and listened and sure enough, six more shells came and lit the same spot. And the reason I say this, I guess, is about two days later, I was back in the battalion fire direction center of my own unit. I says, "At that time, where did you shoot?" "Oh, we shot two volleys three thousand yards short." And I says, "Thanks for missing me." So it was my own battalion that shot. Anyway, that was the first baptism of being shot by my own forces. And then, do you want me to keep going?

Interviewer: Yeah, just keep telling the stories.

Mont Mahoney: I'm not sure exact sequence of these things, but I'll tell ya, we were going along in a kind of an U-shaped valley. We would go up over a knoll, and go off through the valley past a couple of little villages, or farm houses, and then the Germans started shooting antitank guns at us. So the infantry, who are along side of us, are on the sides of our tank, got on and we backed over the hill so that I could see over the hill just barely and see the guns firing, and I called for fire mission on those guns. And using my field glasses, I would see where the shells were landing, and I saw one big flash out of the muzzle of one of the antitank guns, and I saw a big flash, and there's a little black speck in the middle of it. And I thought, "Maybe that's the shell." So about 15 seconds later, or ten seconds later, I saw it land right in front of me just off to the side and about ten feet away, and then it went past my right shoulder, and I could feel the wind as it went by, and it must have been armor piercing, or if it hadn't have been, it would have hit there and exploded and got me along with me crew and some of the infantry. Anyway, needless to say, we shot some fire back at them and destroyed them. Then,

we kept going and I don't remember where we stayed that night, and it doesn't matter, but we just kept going and going as we could as we destroyed the resistance, and as we were able move. When we get pinned down, we'd have to go down into defensive position and call for artillery fire to destroy what was holding us up, and then we'd continue on.

Interviewer: You were in front of the battalion all the way as a forward observer?

Mont Mahoney: As a forward observer, my job was to go with the tank company and follow them and be right behind the tank company commander, and he would tell me if he'd see a target or if I saw a target, I would shoot on it. I was -- while I was with the tank company, I was head of the artillery anywhere from 500 yards to 3,000 yards, depending on where I was and how fast we moved and how -- where they were set up in a firing position. And, we seemed to be going along reasonably well, and there was one time, I was with Patton's Third Army, and we were assigned to be in an artillery battalion that would go to different parts of his efforts to go forward where they needed some extra artillery. And, this was getting down into December, and it was cold. But, we survived because we had tanks to be in that were warm and we dug fox holes and put tents over, and sometimes we found a farm house that was abandoned, and we would sleep in that at night.

Interviewer: Did you ever sleep inside the tank?

Mont Mahoney: Oh, yes. Sometimes we had no choice, because we were where -- we were subject to machine gun fire or rifle fire, and we didn't want to get out, but we did sleep in the tank once in awhile, but lots of times, we would get out and dig a fox hole and take a tarp and stretch it from the tank down to the ground beyond the fox hole and sleep in that. And I don't know if you want to hear anything about food?

Interviewer: Yeah, what did you eat?

Mont Mahoney: We had C-rations, which was about two cans about the size of a Campbell's Soup can, and one of them was a beef stew or pork and beans or something like this, and the other one had crackers and charms and cigarettes and toilet paper and other things like that that were for -- and we'd use those and we learned how to take those Campbell's soup cans, and put them in the fins of the tank. There were five of us in the tank, so we would put six of them in the fins of the tank, and as we were going long, the heat of the engine of course got it warm. And we would hear the first one pop, then we'd stop and get the other five and eat the hot pork and beans or whatever it happened to be. And then we had K-rations, which was about like a Cracker Jack box, and it had little tin in it about like tuna fish can, and then it had other things, cigarettes and toilet paper and charms and other things like that that would go along with it. And we'd open that up and eat it cold. So that's about the main food that we had while we were going along in a tank. And, one interesting thing that might be interesting, I don't know. But I noticed on the C-ration can, the one that had beef in it, it was, "Canned by the Revelle Dog Food Company." And I knew it wasn't that, but a good friend after the war was Steve Richards, and he grew beef, and I said, "Did you sell any of your beef to the Revelle Dog Food Company?" And he, of course, he didn't know where they went. But, it was interesting that they wouldn't change the name on the can to something other than Dog Food Company. Anyway, we ate in the tank quite a bit, and once when we're going along, we saw a place where there was some red cabbages that hadn't been harvested yet, and we stopped and went out and liberated a few of them and had some nice red cabbage that was real fresh, cold, but it was good. Made a variety.

Interviewer: Did you ever come in close contact with General Patton?

Mont Mahoney: No.

Interviewer: Ever heard him speak?

Mont Mahoney: No, never did hear him speak, but I think each one of and all of us had such great respect for him, and we would have followed him anywhere. And he told us to go some places that were nearly as bad as anywhere, but we would have followed him anywhere. He was aggressive, he said that, "There's no such word as retreat, you keep firing, you might have to move back a little bit, but you're still working towards going forward." And it was -- you hear stories about the time he slapped that soldier, and that was a sad thing, I guess, but he didn't like cowards. And I have to say to this, to my colonel, that he was a disciplinarian in the United States and overseas, and his -- we knew what we had to do, and we were trained to do it. And when he says, "This is where you go," we went there and did it. And I think out of 500 men, I think there's only eight or nine who suffered death in the combat from September to the next May, so we went through some terrible things, and the discipline, I think saved many, many lives.

Interviewer: Well, did you fight then in the Battle of the Bulge?

Mont Mahoney: Yes, just before the Bulge started, we were down to the south. We were on Third Army was south of the Bulge, and artillery and our tank guns -- the tank guns would shoot directly at a target, another tank, or a half track or something. But artillery always shot three to five to eight thousand yards. But this place where we were, we were shooting direct fire at the Germans. And the story as I like to tell it, we got word that the Bulge had started, and we were pulled out of where we were shooting direct fire, and I always wondered what happened to the people we left to maintain that, but we were pulled out and told to go up in the bottom end of the Bulge, and this is just before Christmas. And I say that Eisenhower asked Patton how soon he could move. And he said, "We'll be going." But the fact

is, in my opinion, we were already on our way, because he knew that's what was going to happen. And we got just in to the bottom end of the Bulge on Christmas Eve, and I think this had to be France or Belgium where people were glad to be liberated, and they came out with cookies and different drinks and things and fed us there and Christmas Eve, just before we continued on up into the Bulge. And as far as the Bulge was concerned, I don't know our unit was employed very much at firing at the Germany, but I'm sure the people that we were supporting suffered a lot of losses and we supported them as we were called, and it was bitter, bitter cold. And I think you've seen pictures of two or three GI's with our arms wrapped around each other and frozen to death when morning came. And I just felt so badly for them, but they hadn't given us our winter uniforms yet, and our galoshes and things like this. And somebody messed up, I guess. But we went up into the Bulge and then after the First Army and the Third Army joined and trapped a bunch of Germans and the others retreated back across the Rhine River, I think it was, or might have been the Shur River, I can't remember. But, they retreated back across there and we were stabilized for a couple of weeks. And thinking back about food, it was, oh, I guess just about the first -- just before the first of January, somehow, they got a case of raw eggs, complete full eggs. And they brought them up and we each got one egg cooked the way we liked it. And all the rest of the time had been powdered eggs and this kind of thing. So, before we went across the river into Germany, I had -- I'd take this PFC Hunter, our ball gunner. He had beautiful eye sight. He could look out there, "Lieutenant, look there. There's a target." So I'd put my field glasses up and he'd say, "Yeah, that's right." So I'd fire on it. But he could see it with his naked and unaided eye. And we were as kind of stabile for the week before we went across the river; we were assigned as forward observers to go up and sit in the fox hole dug by someone else and observe the Germans across the river. And then adjust the fire. And I will

always take him with me because he could look over there and, "Look right there, lieutenant."
And I'd pick it out and we'd fire -- adjust the artillery fire to destroy the target. And then, one of these days, when I was up there with him, this colonel -- World War I colonel, probably shaved tail in World War I. But he came up with a couple majors and others tried to see what kind of shooting we were doing. And at the University of Utah, we used a method of adjusting called, "The big T," and, "The little T," which was -- used trigonometry. And determined where the guns were, and we'd shift them according to the plans. And I'd forgotten most of that. And they came up and wanted me to do some firing using those University of Utah methods. And I really struggled with that because I couldn't remember the trigonometry to make the things work, but finally got a satisfactory adjustment on a target that they chose. And they were ready to leave, and I said, "Colonel, why don't you let me use the modern forward observer methods of adjusting fire?" And he says, "All right." He picked out a target, a pill box over there. And so, I called the commands back to the fire direction center, and they shot a round out, and in artillery, if you don't make a bracket with the first two shots, you're in trouble. The bracket is a short and then over. And I told them to raise it 200 yards, and their guns were over here and they shot here and the second shell, lucky me, hit the pill box right on the nose. And that -- I would have been a private if I had missed. Anyway, he says, "That's good lieutenant, bye." And he saluted me and he went. Anyway, then we went across the river over into Germany, and that was a real battle.

Interviewer: Where did you cross the river?

Mont Mahoney: It had to be directly east of Luxembourg.

Interviewer: On a pontoon bridge?

Mont Mahoney: Pontoon bridge.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mont Mahoney: And it wasn't fun. And as we went across those pontoon bridge, I thought of the engineers that built these bridges. They built them under fire from the enemy. And, I'm sure they lost a lot of them. We got over into Germany, and up through there is where they grew grapes for their wine and their Schnapps and we'd get up in those big hills and fields with the grapevines all up on stakes and wires in between and we'd take our tanks and go across those wires and pull the wires down for hundred yards on both side of us, and I guess we took some amount of joy in doing that. But it was kind of a naughty thing to do to the farmers, but we had to get a little fun out of something. Anyway, I've got a map of where our route was all the way through France and Germany and over into Czechoslovakia when the war ended. But, we'd go along and these little villages would come up to them with Tank Company and, nine or ten tanks, and half tracks and Jeeps and so on, and if they shot at us, I'd call artillery fire in and we'd destroy the town. And after about three of those, the Bürgermeister of the next town would come out in these costumes with these elders of the town and all dressed up and said, "We're not going to resist." So we by-passed the town and let the MP do whatever they had to do in that town. So we moved quite rapidly during some of these periods of time because the Germans didn't want to lose all of their buildings, and they said they'd be friends. And I they think they were smart.

Interviewer: Did you come across many German civilians on your path?

Mont Mahoney: We didn't actually have contact with many. We did sleep in some of their homes, because they had evacuated them. But as far as direct contact, we only went -- when they came out to meet us, we didn't have one-on-one contact. The commander with discuss with them. One time we went into a town, and I guess the MP's, when they went into the town, they tell the people, the Bürgermeister, to bring -- all the people to bring out their

guns and their cameras and anything else that they could use for their own defense and pile them in the center square. And I remember this one old gentleman came up and he had a shot gun, beautiful shot gun in one hand, and a rifle in his other hand. And he was going to put them on the pile and I says, "Let me have that rife." And I took the rifle. And he says, "Will I get it back?" And I says, "I doubt it." And somebody else got the shot gun. But I still have that rifle. Beautiful rifle. Anyway, that's one of the sides that doesn't matter as far as -- we didn't. But they'd take all these guns and things and put them in the town square and we'd run over them back and forth with the tanks and destroy those guns so they couldn't use them to fight against us from the back. Now, that's where we're most vulnerable when we go through a place, and people from the back attack us from the back, that's worse than meeting them from the front.

Interviewer: Did you ever have to face any German Tiger Tanks?

Mont Mahoney: No, but their Tiger Tanks I think had an 88 gun on them, which was three inches plus, a little bit. And we had some tanks that we had battles with. But the -- we didn't ever get with a Tiger Tank because they were much better than our tanks. And we didn't like them. We avoided them. A little bit ahead of myself, but anyway, we got over into Germany. And referring back to food, we'd go down a valley and there was a meat-packing plant, and next to the meat-packing plant was the manager of the plant who had a beautiful living quarters right next to it. And with big tubs and big beds and we thoroughly enjoyed that for a couple days. And the meat-packing plant had turkey and beef and ham and all these other meats that were all beautiful. Oh, we ate and ate and ate. And then, the next day, the -- what's called the division artillery, or "DIVARTY," found out that we were there. And so they sent us out and they moved in. And so, we didn't get to eat anymore of that. But we thoroughly enjoyed the

beds and the hot tubs and hot baths and the food that we were able to liberate. We didn't steal it, we liberated it.

Interviewer: You know, when you spoke with the library -- you told, you had that diagram of one tank was here and you're getting -- can you relate that to us?

Mont Mahoney: As we would go over through Germany, we would go as fast as we could. And I think Patton went faster than they expected him to. And Montgomery was on the north and he says, "I got to do some study of this before you could go." And Patton didn't have much respect for Montgomery. But we went, and we went fast. And one day, we were on an Autobahn, which is like our freeways. Two lanes of concrete going one way and two lanes of concrete the other way, and there was four of us abreast just going as fast as we could, and I guess, I don't know what we were doing. 30 miles an hour or something like this. And a quarter a mile ahead of us, they blew the bridges over a significant stream. So, we had to pull up the start. They had three antitank guns, two on one side and one on the other. And they had beautiful fields of fire on both side of the free way, a big pasture where they could -- if we scattered, then they could still pick us off. So they started shooting, and I guess we lost 300 or 400 men that day. The Jeeps and the half tracks just disintegrated, and then I was in the right-hand column, I was following a tank, and a tank following me, and it looked pretty serious, so we decided to scatter to get out so we could do some damage or avoid some of it directly right down. And my job was to call artillery fire, which I think I did, and then we scattered and the tank to the left of me was going down the abutment, and I was in the middle, and the tank to the right of me went down the abutment to the right, and as the tank to the left of me, the antitank gun hit his either gas tank or ammunition and burned everybody in the tank. Knocked it out. And then the next shot hit the one to the right of me, which was away from the guns and did the

same thing. And that gun, the shell that had the one to the right of me could not have missed me more than four or five inches, because it went across my bow. And so I got out into the prairie and backed around and started shooting the artillery fire and then our tank got hit and knocked a track off. And we lost our communication, so the airplanes were able to complete the mission and destroy the antitank guns. And, our tank, all five of us got out of it okay. And all we could do was seek cover and wait till the enemy had been destroyed. And, which the airplanes were able to do. They were always up flying over us when we're doing some moving, and they were able -- they knew what commands I had given, and they just continued adjusting the artillery fire, and that's how those three antitank guns were knocked out. And then, my tank was knocked out. It took two days to get it fixed, and we were out of combat, but the engineers were able to build a bridge and all the remaining forces were able to by-pass on that engineer built bridge and go forward with the attack. And I had to go back that night with tank recovery vehicle to get my tank to get the track to put on, and I had to help them take the bodies out of some of those burned tanks, and that was not a fun job. Anyway, I was glad to get in my tank a couple a days later and head out and go back to work.

Interviewer: When you were going through Germany, could you get news when Hitler committed suicide and stuff, did you hear about that?

Mont Mahoney: That was close to the end. I think that was in early part of May, as I recall --

Interviewer: You gotta stay back, sorry.

Mont Mahoney: I was -- we did once in awhile get the -- what was the Stars and Stripes was the newspaper put out? They had modeling and sad sack and so on that was really fun to hear and see, and one of the newspapers, well, it was in February or March had a

report in there that the congressman in Washington said the war was over. And my thought then was, "I wish they were here to go these last miles and occupy when we had to occupy." But when we went through Germany, we got a little bit of news. And all we could see was cities and towns that had been destroyed by the bombers. And as we lay in our bunks at night when we couldn't move, we would hear the bombers droning over our positions, and then we'd hear, "Ka-woomph, Ka-woomph, Ka-woomph." And that was the bombs dropping in the towns. Frankfurt was a mess, and most of those towns that had any defense industries or combat industries in there were destroyed, and anyway, it was we didn't actually -- I can remember one time, we came across the top of the hill, and there was about, oh, seven or eight tanks in a row, and there was one lone German soldier walking across the prairie was probably a half a mile away from us. And people started shooting at him, and most of us said, "Oh, let him go. He's only one guy, and we could blow him a bit, but what would that do?" Anyway, he got away and got all right. And as we got over into deeper into Germany, we'd come up -- sometimes we went at night because all we'd have was a little lights on the edge of the tanks so we wouldn't run into the one ahead of us, and we'd come to a crossroads. And we had our maps and we knew where we were to go, but we found that some of the Germans that taken those road markers with the directions to the city and turned them. So, they wanted us to get lost. And I guess some of us did get lost, but it didn't stop us for very long. And as we got over into Germany towards the tail end, I guess this was late in April. We were going along the road, single file, and there was two rows of refugees, I guess you'd call them. Mostly Germans and Poles and some Russians going mainly the opposite direction because they didn't -- most of them didn't want to get captured by the Russians. And then on the other side on the right hand side, there was a bunch of GIs walking along, and they were in sad shape. And we'd stop and pick up one or two of them and

take them to the aid center so they could get some medical treatment, and they were GIs mainly who had been captured in the Battle of the Bulge and had been starved and beaten and not fed very much, but there was six German speaking GIs, three medics and three other GIs who could speak German. And they had the responsibility of distributing the food for the Red Cross and the other basic foods, and they were all fat and sassy. The six of them, and the other guys, their legs were smaller than your wrist because -- they would just bury one or two a night alongside the road because they couldn't walk anymore. And anyway, this was one of the sad things I thought of then, and much later that there was six GIs, American GIs that were mistreating their own buddies in uniform that were POWs. And that was sad, but that didn't compare to what the Russians did and the Japanese did and the Germans did to those people. And anyway, we got over there and towards the tail end, and they sent us down to Austria where Hitler and his people had their training headquarters, and then we came to a certain point and they told us to go straight north into Czechoslovakia, and this is about the first of May. And as we went there, there's along the border of Germany and Czechoslovakia was called the Sudetenland, and that's where it was very German and anti-American, and we didn't get much help there, but we got 50 miles up there up towards the center of Czechoslovakia, and they'd come out and greet us. They'd have American flags and they'd have their Polish flags or their Czech flags and other things and their costumes and come out and welcome us. And as we were going there, this was, oh, second day of May about. I guess that's about when Hitler committed suicide. I don't remember the exact date, but we were unobstructed. We went up to the center of Czechoslovakia, and I think the town was (inaudible) when we ended. And the reason why I remember that is, one of my grandsons went to Czechoslovakia on a mission. And he wanted to know where I was, so I had to look it up and it was (inaudible) where we were. And we went up

there and waited for three days, not moving, not shooting, not doing anything. Just waiting. And the Potsdam Agreement I guess had decided that the Russians were going to come so far, and we would meet them there. And so, we didn't move anywhere. And we just stayed there till the 7th of May, we heard that the armistice was signed on the 8th and the night of the night of the 8th would be the last of the battle. We didn't ever meet any Russian troops, but we stayed there for a couple days, then we went down into Austria down on the Danube, and the Danube at that time the air is not blue, it's brown. Just like our rivers are here in April and early May. And we were put in charge of occupation forces of the Germans that had been captured, German troops and put them in barracks and -- I put a -- we had a barracks there, and we put a sign on the outside of the barracks "Fraulein verboten". That means, the girl's not allowed in that barracks. And that didn't help much. And anyway, we had -- I got in charge of the group of German POW's and anywhere from 400 to 700 at a time, and we had to feed them and keep them from fraternizing too much.

Interviewer: Were they going to re-train you for going and fighting in The Pacific afterwards?

Mont Mahoney: Yes, we were occupation forces there for about two weeks, and then they sent us up to a camp, I think it's Camp Lucky Strike, and where we got on ships to come back to the United States. Our whole battalion came, and there we had the cooks on the ships cook beautiful bread and sandwiches and cakes and all these things that we hadn't had, and oh, that was good. And then we got to New York, and we each had 30 day's leave to go home or where ever we wanted to go, and I -- my dad and mother and two younger brother and a sister lived in Washington, D.C., so that's where I told them I wanted to go. And I thought my wife would come there to meet me, but she got the flu or something real bad. So she didn't come, so

about two days later, I caught an airplane and landed on one of these cargo planes landed somewhere in Kansas. And I couldn't get any flights to Salt Lake from there. So I got on the train, and it got into Salt Lake about 2:00 in the morning. And the street cars stopped running, so all I could get was a taxi. And I had no money. How I paid for the train, I don't know. But I had no money, and so I told the taxi driver where to take me where my wife was with her folks and I knew one thing -- that her dad always took his wallet out and all his change out and put them on the baby grand piano. So I went in about 3:00 in the morning, paid the cab, let him go on his way, and I went back to woke them up. And I guess they were glad to see me, I don't know.

But after about three weeks, Ruth and I acquired a car. We were headed for Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where our unit was supposed to go. And as we got into Washington area, President Truman orders the two bombs dropped. And of course, that meant that the Japanese eventually surrendered. And that's a story I could tell I guess, but maybe -- anyway, we went back to Fort Bragg, and everyone joined there. And we drew everything brand-new. New tanks, new half tracks, new Jeeps, new side arms, new M-7s, and everything brand new, all there waiting for us. And we were scheduled together to get on the ship in October, or maybe a little later and there was a scheduled landing on Japan either in November of 45, or I think was March of 46. And we didn't know which one we were going on, but we knew we had to get ready to go. And we checked our equipment all out and had it all ready to go and back in our tanks and all equipment, everything on there. And then they finally decided the war was over, for which we were grateful. And there's been many people who say it was a naughty thing to drop those bombs, but it saved at least a half a million Americans and anywhere from five to 30 million

Japanese. And we were able to get back into peacetime occupation and back to school and start our families and build our home and start our jobs, at least six months ahead. It would have been horrible going on shore to Japan. I've heard it said that D Day on France was the most complicated military operation, but I think the one going on Japan would have been much worse because all going across the ocean and the Japanese were training 12 and 13 year old boys to fly an airplane, so they'd go up and land with a bomb load on to a ship or any target, suicide bombers. And old ladies with sharpened bamboo sticks ready to spear us and things like this. It would have been horrible.

Interviewer: So there's no doubt in your mind that Harry Truman made the right decision?

Mont Mahoney: Oh, he made the right choice. And I made a habit, and that's the way I guess you got a hold of me was writing to the editor of the newspaper saying some of these people saying dropping these bombs was an infamous act. And I challenged them. And I've got letters from several people -- Don Gale and Spence Kinard who is with KSL saying, "We're sorry for what we said. We didn't know." But, I think that some of the studies that come out found out at the last meeting after the second bomb dropped, Hirihiito happened to be present, and he was a Deity to the Japanese people. And somehow, someone got the nerve to ask him what the Japanese people, what they ought to do. And he said, "We're through, we want to save the Japanese people from annihilation." Because he could see those bombs being dropped all over Japan and we were killing more Japanese with high explosive B-29 bomb raids than the atom bomb killed.

Interviewer: And those incendiaries.

Mont Mahoney: Yep.

Interviewer: Liz, have you got any questions?

Elizabeth: I have one back here. I have three.

Mont Mahoney: Let me just say one more thing, if I could. As an officer, I was assigned at certain times to be the censor of letters coming back to the United States, and I didn't have to censor much, because we all knew if we told them exactly where we were, someone could intercept that and I was a self-censorer of my own letters. I wrote a letter four or five times a week to my wife, and I'd have to be very vague about where I was and what I was doing. But, I would say -- I remember saying, "We've been really busy and I've been doing a lot of good things. Don't tell my folks." And then, the day my tank got knocked out was the third of April, 1945. And I wrote in the letter the next day, I says, "All we did was move and move and every time we stopped, we'd build a fire to try and get warm. And then somebody would say, 'Hey, let's go. So we'd get in the tank and we'd move.'" And then, I made one sentence. I says, "I got into a mess and lost my sleeping bag." And that's all I could say about that attack till I got home. I didn't -- I couldn't tell them that my tank had been knocked out and all these men had been killed, and that wasn't according to my job. But somewhere along there, I says, "Read between the lines. You might find out where we are." But there at the very end, we're able to relax those rules, and be a little bit more informative, but still, we couldn't say very much.

Elizabeth: I think I know the answer to this question, but I just wanted to say it on tape. Why is the tank warm? One would think it would be very cold in the tank.

Mont Mahoney: I'm not hearing that.

Interviewer: What made the tank warm? She said that being in a tank would make it very cold.

Mont Mahoney: Well, it had an aircraft engine, and there was enough heat from that that radiated back into the personnel chamber, but the excess heat had to be blown out the rear end of the tank with the fans and through the grills that were there, and that kept it very warm, or warm enough. We were dressed for winter wear. We didn't take off our jackets and things when we got in the tank, we kept them on -- because my hatch was open all the time, unless small arms fire was coming or the sergeant's tank lid was open. And we'd just go along that way. And of course in the spring time or the fall, heat wasn't a problem, getting rid of it. It was keeping it in there to keep warm.

Elizabeth: What are charms? You said in the K-rations?

Mont Mahoney: Charms are little pieces of hard candy, wrapped up in plastic and twisted and one of the comical things; I guess it was to me at least, we got all the charms we wanted. And my wife would send packages over, and in it were charms. And I'd say, "Thank you." I wouldn't tell her why -- but anyway, we, you know what a Cracker Jack box is? There's charms in that, and other things. And we appreciated anything we got. And the way I guess I wrote most of my history, what my brilliant mind couldn't remember, I wrote -- my mother-in-law kept all the letters that I wrote to my wife. And when I got back, I found this box full of letters. And so, I went through that and took excerpts out of them and used that to write the details, because I could remember what that letter referred to by something that that, when I said I got into a mess and lost my bed roll, I knew what that meant. So, that's the way -- I've written too much. I'm sure some people, let me just say one other thing. I gave a copy of my military history to each of my five children, and my brother and sister, and the brothers that were still alive and sister that -- I got to say this, too. But I gave a copy of this to each one of them, and they let their children read it, and their spouses read it. And my oldest granddaughter married a

full-blooded German. And after he read that, he came up to me and I guess he was, well, of course he wasn't born till after the war. And he came up to me and put his arms around me and he said, "Thanks Grandpa for helping save my German race." And I got to say one more thing, I guess -- my only sister, when dad and mother lived in Washington, she got a job in the Eisenhower administration in the White House. And I don't know what her job was, but she got acquainted with a German scientist, George Kistiakowsky, who was Eisenhower's science advisor. And he had worked with Oppenheimer on developing the atom bomb. And he was instrumental in developing the trigger for the atom bomb. And this was before my sister, Elaine, met him. But he was down there in New Mexico when they shot off the first one. And Oppenheimer was very skeptical about the device working. They had it on a steel tower, I guess, four or five thousand yards away from them, and they were behind a bunker, and Oppenheimer bet George Kistiakowsky a month's pay of George's pay against a 10 dollar bill that it wouldn't -- George said it would work, and he bet the 10 dollars, and Oppenheimer said it wasn't going to work. And when it went off, it worked, and my -- George Kistiakowsky was up on the embankment, and it blew him down into the mud puddle at the bottom of the trench. And Oppenheimer pulled out his wallet to pay the ten dollars, and it was empty. And he eventually got the ten dollars. My sister, who married this George Kistiakowsky, has that ten dollar bill. And they came, the two of them came out to Salt Lake and I went skiing. This was in the 70's when I was younger and more agile, and I went up the ski lift with George, and he said he was sorry that he helped develop that atom bomb. And I said, "George, I wouldn't be here, and my two brothers wouldn't be here, because they were in LST Navy, ready to take me on the shore of Japan, and I think we all three of us would have not survived that attack." And so, I hope I convinced him that his efforts to develop that atom bomb was worthwhile to save many, many

more people than it would have been lost in that attack on Japan. And Japan and Germany became our good friends and competitors, and they became good friends of the United States.

Interviewer: You know, it's interesting that Oppenheimer didn't think that was going to work after he had developed it and all of that. That's interesting.

Mont Mahoney: Well, there's so many things that have never been done.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mont Mahoney: Nobody had ever put that much atomic particles together, and to get the trigger to move the two of them together to get it to explode, never been done.

Interviewer: That's interesting, anything else?

Elizabeth: Could he give me a short reflection on the World War II war effort and what it meant?

Interviewer: Give us your thoughts, at that time, you had no idea how significant it was, I guess.

Mont Mahoney: No, the dropping of the bombs?

Interviewer: Just the war and general, and fighting the war and being involved with it.

Mont Mahoney: Well, what you've read, I guess I've read, too, about (inaudible) the concentration camps in Germany and the elimination of the Jews in Germany and lining up the people, the Jews and stripping them of their clothes and pulling their gold teeth out and marching them into these gas chambers and turning on the gas and bringing them out and putting those bodies on railroad cars to take to crematoriums. It's hard to imagine anyone being that way to other human beings. And I think that Mussolini, I think got hung because he was a coward. And Hirohito finally gave up to save his Japanese people, and they killed millions in

China and those other places. And many of these things -- and Stalin did the same thing. I think he's killed 20 million of his own people. And these things didn't come out till afterwards. And the war since then, Korea, Vietnam, and what's going on now? What is going to spread freedom and liberty? The whole world has got to come to freedom and liberty to have the Savior come back and reclaim us. Anyway.

Interviewer: Well, Mont, thanks for coming. You did a great job and we really appreciate you coming in.

End of recording.