

Interview of Stan Nance.

Stan Nance: -- three of them are the main operators of putting all this stuff together. I was a member of the Signal Company Special, 23rd Headquarters Special Troops.

Crew Member: Can we get this on tape? We need to get this on tape.

Stan Nance: I expect to put it on tape.

Crew Member: Okay, then we need to --

Stan Nance: But I wanted to tell you --

Crew Member: Can I touch you?

Stan Nance: Okay. I was called by a group from Connecticut, putting a documentary together on this. This was 65 years after the fact we had come home. And all these books and all these documentaries on World War II had been shown and here comes a group real late to what I thought and wanted to put together a documentary. Some person in Connecticut that read a little bit about this organization that he didn't know anything about, and at the same time he found out about this, he read the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops were having a reunion. So, he by himself invited himself to the reunion in New York, at the hotel they were having it. And he went there and talked with some of the boys in there, because he knew nothing about, the world new nothing about it. The media know very little about what the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops did. And so, he talked to those men and he interviewed them and he invited them all to make a tape that he wanted to put together. He decided he would like to put a documentary together, a full-length documentary together of an hour or so. But those men there, he couldn't find a signalman. There weren't any signalmen still alive. The ones that

operated the radio during the operation. These are the key men because the wire ran by communication, everything by communication.

Interviewer: Save a lot of this stuff.

Crew Member: We're rolling right now.

Stan Nance: Anyway, this is off of the cuff, what I am saying now because they invited me to -- they found out I was the only radio man, one of the only ones still alive available to them, and so they asked if I could be interviewed and so, when they -- when I talked to them and got the information of what they wanted, I said, "Why don't we put this together, this interview here in Salt Lake City, and I will get KUED in on it." That was back three years ago. He said, "No, we've got one other man." There were only two of us still alive that we could find. That was me and Rick Barry, who was my driver of my radio vehicle. And he was in Las Vegas, but they would rather go to Las Vegas, so I had to go down there. But they did put together a documentary that has fizzled out; I have heard nothing more about it.

Interviewer: Yeah, and all the documentaries I've seen of World War II, there hasn't been anything on this Ghost Army and what you did. So, we're happy that you're here in our studio and going to tell us about your experiences. It has really been a military secret during the war and for many years after. How long was it --

Crew Member: Before you do that, do you want to be -- will your name be spelled Stanley B. Nance then? Do you want us to put "Boyce," or "Stanley B?"

Stan Nance: "Stanley B" is fine.

Crew Member: Your rank, again? What was the rank, we need to know his rank.

Interviewer: He was a sergeant, a T-4.

Crew Member: T-4.

Interviewer: When you entered, right?

Stan Nance: 23rd Headquarters, Special Troops? Is that what -- I need to know that.

Stan Nance: The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops was a secret organization set up to confuse the German Army as to the tactics that the American Army were using to win the war. I think, if I -- why don't we do this my way?

Interviewer: Any way you want to do it.

Stan Nance: I was drafted and sent to Camp Polk, Louisiana, and I joined the 11th Armored Division. Now, this is very important in my program and the program of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops because the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops were chosen men, chosen by the Secretary of the Army from different units of the United States Army to come in and be part of this new experience that we were going to experience. And so, I was one of those. But I started out in a different outfit, like everybody else. And so, I have here a letter that was written to my wife, and it says:

"Dear Mrs. Nance, I have received a memorandum from headquarters Second Armored Regiment announcing the promotion of your husband, Private Stanley B. Nance to the grade of technician, 5th grade. In this splendid achievement, both he and his family can take just pride. Other things being equal, an Army will stand or fall on the quality of its leadership. Your husband's selection for this position of leadership and increased responsibility will enable him to make a much greater contribution toward the winning of this greatest of all wars. It is my hope that during the months which lie ahead, he will so distinguish himself in the

profession of his new duties as to honor for himself and credit to his family. Yours truly, Charles S. Killburn, Bridger General, United States Army."

So, he was the Army general, he was the commanding general of the 11th Armored Group, and when he sent me this, little did he know I would be somewhere else later to achieve what I did. So, that's a letter because I was inducted into the Army and sent to the Camp Polk and joined the 11th Armored Division. Now, drafted in the Army, October the 14th, 1942, just four months after my marriage to my sweetheart, Helen Wardle. I was assigned to the 11th Armored Division at Camp Polk, Louisiana. Early on, I was promoted onto the rank of a T-5 as this letter indicates. I graduated from radio school at Fort Knox, Kentucky, finished as top graduate earning the status of a high speed 766 radio operator in Morse code, etc. Operating my radio on Army maneuvers in California in Mojave Desert, I was summoned to hurry myself to San Bernardino and then on to Camp Forrest, Tennessee. There, I was informed I had been specially selected by the secretary of the Army to direct my skills in radio transmission and artistry in Army tactics toward the new military philosophy, military deception, a secret phantom Army to be deployed in the front lines of the ETO. So, I was in the back of a half truck in the Mojave desert when a jeep came up, slammed on its brakes, and shouted to the men around -- this was 9:00 at night -- "Do you have a man here by the name of Nance?" The response was, "He's over in the half track." The man in the jeep came over and the soldier in the jeep came over to the half track and asked me, "Are you Nance?" And I said, "Yes." He says, "Get your things ready and come with me." I had just a few things in the half track, and I went with them. Now, this was very unusual because when someone transfers from one Army unit to another, he has a

handful of papers, and he goes through quite an operation before he can be transferred in any form of any transfer formation he receive. That didn't happen. At the end of the war, my name was still a member of the 11th Armored Division, and after the war, I received letters from the 11th Armored Division headquarters, the organization after the war, whatever you call it. And so, my papers were in the 11th Armored Division all the time I was in the Army. I was never a member of anything else, but the 11th Armored Division while I was in the United States Army in Europe.

Interviewer: And all that time, you were part of this secret --

Stan Nance: I was part of a secret operation, and this goes on to say this, which I think is important. I was picked up and had to be in San Bernardino by 7:00 the next morning. They told me that I, that they had a piper cub ready at Blithe to carry me down because the time element was very important. I went back to Ibis, picked up all of my materials, personal materials. And, then they told me that the piper cub was not available, and I had to go in a two and a half ton truck. It was all right because we flew anyway, we had to be in San Bernardino by 7:00 the next morning. That was about 12:00 at night. And so, in San Bernardino, no papers, nothing. They put me on a train and sent me to Tennessee. And so, after, that was in Camp Forrest in Tennessee. After Camp Forrest, I was re-located in Camp Kilmer, New Jersey allowing me frequent visits to New York City, visiting Central Park, Times Square, where I stayed in the famous Astor Hotel, Empire State Building and the theatres. It was then on to England on board the Henry Gibbons. Sailing aboard this ship was no picnic. The sea was tolerable, but the menace of the German U-boats attacking the convoy was scary. As I watched the United States destroyers in our area dropping depth bombs, it was then off to Bristol, then by truck to the famous Walton Hall where we set up camp. With Stratford-Upon-Avon nearby, I

was able to see Shakespeare plays. I spent time in Lemington spa in (inaudible), enjoying that part of the country. Part of my duties here was to instruct the company in aviation recognition, a vital part of our security. It was in England where the real covert aspect of my duties sank in. Realizing the specialty of this group of highly intelligent civilian soldiers specially screened for their assignment. Now, as Shakespeare would say, "The stage is now set to make men out of boys."

Then, the invasion.

Crew Member: Stanley, I'm sorry to interrupt. I'm over here. But to have you read things -- are you going to be reading things?

Stan Nance: I can't hear you.

Crew Member: Are you going to be reading these things and book like this, because if you tell it, it's a lot more personal. Is this just for detail?

Stan Nance: I can't remember it. I'm 91 years of age.

Crew Member: Okay, so it's helping your memory. Is there a way, Rick? You gotta work with me here.

Interviewer: Stanley, what you need to do, if you can, is think of some of the most interesting experiences you had and if you had to refer to the book from time to time, it's okay.

Crew Member: Let him refer to the book.

Interviewer: And kind of tell me the story a little bit, if you can.

Crew Member: And let's take it from -- "somebody who has no idea what this position is."

Stan Nance: Well, I would think you would want to know about the outfit I was in.

Crew Member: Mm-hmm, that's good.

Stan Nance: That's my next --

Crew Member: That's good, but --

Interviewer: That's okay, do that.

Stan Nance: I think you will get all that you want in the next couple paragraphs here.

Crew Member: But we need to --

Interviewer: I will --

Stan Nance: Because of the importance of this. Okay, this book that I have here is an account of the World War II Historic Army of deception wherein a handful of men artfully changed the course of the war, shortening the conflict five to six months, therefore saving thousands of American lives, not to mention the tens of thousands of German lives. The Ghost Army of the ETO was made up of four United States Army units. Three of which are identified in books written by Guane, Gerard, and Niece. The fourth unit of this group, whose operations were so classified, the authors have failed to interview or uncover any information regarding their performances. Thus, writing very little in their operations. Signal Company Special, 23rd Headquarters Special Troops was a separate Army unit consisting of 292 men specially trained in radio communication tactics and as ground operation operators, radio repairman, etc. Three units making up the full contingent of the 23rd Headquarters Special

Troops, the Ghost Army of the ETO. My group, the Signal Company Special's primary duty was to set up radio networks, sometimes working independently with Armies in the 12th Army Group and other times with other Ghost Army units.

So, you have the three units that are made up that did all of the deception, my unit was strictly a radio unit, work with these other units and the things that we did.

Interviewer: And what were some of your most interesting experiences that occurred?

Crew Member: Hold on Rick -- (inaudible).

Stan Nance: Okay, the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops worked with nearly every Army on the European continent. We had here --

Interviewer: Let's start back to when you arrived there, and what were your first duties right after you got that assignment and arrived into England?

Stan Nance: Well, I hit the beaches a few days after the invasion. I was given my radio truck in England, and I remained in that truck going over to France, and hitting the beaches of France. I -- my radio car was in the hull of the ship, I was in the personnel section. And we hit Cherbourg. I got in my vehicle with my group, and we drove off of the ship into the streets of Cherbourg.

Interviewer: Now, prior to D Day, didn't you set up some rubber --

Stan Nance: I had nothing to do with that. See, that's the thing that I was trying to place before you is that there was an engineer group. They worked independent. There was a comic group that used noises of tanks and things like that. And this is some of the things

that I wanted to read of what they did. But I had nothing to do with the other units. I was assigned a radio truck and on a mission, I would get in my radio truck with my group, and we would head to where I was to operate my radio. Sometimes it was with other people or other groups of men, sometimes it was alone. Most of the times, I operated with my men alone. I operated in all of the campaigns. I drove many, many thousand miles. I drove all over France, all over part of Germany, all over France, all over Belgium, all over Holland; I was in nearly every operation. Now, there's probably -- how many units in the United States Army? There were hundreds. And my group would be called to operate with maybe the Fifth Armored Division, and the next night be the 21st Army Infantry Division. And so I would put out their patch. We would be part of their organization, and I would drive into where their unit would be set. For instance, the Fifth Armored Division. They would be in an area where they would not be operating at the time. And I would drive my car into their particular area and all of these tanks and all of these men, 12,000 men with their equipment would be in their area, on a forest or on a hill or whatever. I would drive my truck in and I would be assigned usually to a key radio unit. And what I would do, and so I would be assigned maybe to the battalion headquarters or the Army headquarters or whatever. I would drive my truck in next to the vehicle that was the operating unit of that particular network. I would drive my automobile in and put it right next to his. I would key in the operation of my radio so I had the right tower for the operation, and then I would go over into his vehicle. He would be an operator of the Fifth Armored Division. And I would go over and I would watch him because when I took over his radio, I had to be exactly. We had been trained in this particular form that when you took over a radio, or a person took over a radio, or a group took over a radio, we had to mimic exactly that particular unit. So, I would get in this vehicle and for maybe several hours, I would watch him and then I would take

over this at times; I would take over his transmission. And before he moved out, I would be solely using his transmission or his radio for all my network transmissions. And then, I would move into my own with the same operation and then at night, that Fifth Armored Division would move out and join another group in another area, unknown to the Army, and not own my radio, but every tank, every truck, every tent, every unit that that Fifth Armored Division, as the Germans looked from the heavens, they could see everything in place. The next morning would be exactly the same as it was before. However, the tanks would be rubber. During the night, the engineer group would come in. They would take out their bales of rubber, inflate them with the generators, and place them in the very same areas of tanks, 88s, 75s, whatever they had on the ground there. The next morning, our group would mimic that to where it was exactly the same as from the surveillance from the sky as what it was the night before. However, the main group would join another group, double its strength, and then they would push on, double their strength. And that's what the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops were brought into England for is to mimic the groups. We would have their patches on, and so the 12th Army Group --

Interviewer: Stanley, you explained that very well. That's just what we wanted.

Stan Nance: The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops fought in, there were --

Crew Member: I'll be right back, just keep going.

Interviewer: Okay. So you'd go in there and mimic exactly what was there to fool the Germans.

Stan Nance: We would be the Fifth Armored Division. We would have all their patches, we would be exactly -- but we were all dummies. Everything was fake, except my radio would be the real thing. My radio would be actual transmission from my group to

headquarters or other units of the Ghost Army, so the operation would be coordinated not only with our group, but every other division that was an instrument in that particular fighter in that operation. And so, that's what we would do.

Interviewer: Now, did you have any experiences where the Germans would come over and strafe those dummy tanks?

Stan Nance: Never.

Interviewer: And create action?

Stan Nance: Never, they never -- they would never because, okay. The most important thing about the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops is that you could move an Army in six hours. We could take those dummies, bale them up, put them in trucks, and we would be 50 miles away in six hours. It takes three days for a regular Army to move that far, 50 miles. And so a regular Army group, when they were moving, they would be noticed by the enemy. We would -- these groups that we mimicked would move at night, so that they would be in a completely new area by the next morning. And they would fortify the other groups, the infantry or whatever group they were with, would by doubling their strength to where the push would be made. So these times that we mimicked the Army would be when there would be a major thrust going on the next morning so these Army units would be able to complete their mission by the strength that they had. And we as a dummy unit, bunch of dummies, we looked exactly the same. We had M 1 tanks, everything that the Fifth Army Division had, we had it as dummies. Not everything was dummy. The two and a half ton trucks, the one and a half ton trucks and the vehicles that operated around in movement, they would be the real thing. So that's how we operated. We were a Ghost Army that went in and took the place of the real Army while the real

Army shored up at another place and thrust the pinchers of the enemy, and that's why we were so effective. Now, we received, I think this is well worth letting you know.

Interviewer: Well, some of those experiences --

Stan Nance: Okay, these were all operations going through France and taking over Brest and taking over the cities and areas of France. But when we got to the Rhine, that was different. The Rhine River was a fortification as strong as any that had ever been. The United States Army got to the Rhine and that was it, we were stopped from the shores of Switzerland to the shores of Holland. Uh, and so we were stopped. And so that key there of crossing the Rhine and defeating the Germans was the greatest thing that the 12th Army, 23rd Headquarters Special Troops did. We were the instrument. The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops was the instrument that gave the United States Army the capability of crossing the Rhine without losing very few men. And so, our unit received a commendation, a commendation that saved thousands and thousands of lives. And that's the operation we did at the Rhine, and that was at the town of Versailles. And that's where we drew the Germans -- we were so realistic that the Germans ahead of us or opposite to us on the Rhine never moved. They were there. They built up while the United States Army went around at Remagen. They were able to breach the lines and going over the Rhine river at Remagen and forming the pincher movement going around them, and they collapsed because of what we did.

Interviewer: Setting up the dummy Armies and fooling the Germans.

Stan Nance: We fooled the Army to where the main body of the German Army was opposite us, where the 9th Army mainly went around to the north through Remagen and encircled the back of them. And they collapsed, that was the end of the war. There was skirmish fighting at the time, but that was the end of the war and we were responsible for that

whole operation of keeping the main German unit in tact across the Rhine river while they were being circled by Patton to the south and General Bradley to the north.

Interviewer: How many different times did you have to move and during this operation that you were doing? Was it an awful lot, or just a few times that you moved and changed your position, or was it all the time?

Stan Nance: Well we were on the go -- okay. When the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops lined up for their operation and took over the Armies or the units, the real units -- we took over a real unit and they would move out at night and put pincher movements on the German Army from usually both sides and then they would close in on them. And we were responsible for most of the operations of being successful in Europe because we took the place of a full Army sometimes while the other units, divisions, would go be operating at night and go around them and infiltrate through them, and that's -- we received a commendation from the general of the Army at Versailles when we, on this last operation of the Rhine. That was the key operation of the Army is to encircle the German Army and to bring this thing to a halt and so, we were the central area to where they were massing up across the Rhine against us. The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops put their works together and at night, the 9th Army went to the north, Patton's Army went to the south and encircled and that was the end of the war.

Interviewer: They used these dummy Armies before D Day? You were not involved in anything before D Day then.

Stan Nance: No -- before D Day --

Interviewer: Before the invasion on --

Stan Nance: No, this was an Army that was put together by a group of men, and that was very important in the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops. So that was put together

and organized -- Douglas Fairbanks of the movie industry, he was one of the key men that came with other units and other people of the United States Army with the concept of, "Hey, we can form a dummy Army, a group of men, that can fool the Germans if it's done right, if it's done with operation to perfection." And so, what they did is at that particular time, we were well into the -- ready for invasion, 1943 was when this group was put together. That quick. So I was in the Mojave Desert and they said, "Hey, you're a radio operator. We need you. Come to Tennessee." And it was formed in Tennessee. Three months, they had this Army together, this group of men together that was a dummy Army, or dummy group that went through the Army spoofing the German Army time after time after time. We spoofed them at Brest. The United States Army, when they made the invasion, they cut down -- they cut through France, nearly to the Mediterranean. And so, they had the commanding general of -- Von Remke tied at Brest and that particular area of Western France. And so, we went in there and we helped there. We -- that was one of our main operations is helping to push the German Army into a small group around Brest, which was a sea port to the west. And that was our first big operation. Then we had different operations through France, it would take place of the American Army units and then where the American Army units were joined together because we would take their place. And they would just double up their capacity of their strength.

Interviewer: Right.

Crew Member: Rick, can I interrupt? Hold on, Stanley? Let me ask Rick something. Rick, you may have asked him this when I stepped out for a second. Can you ask him his unit?

Stan Nance: My particular unit, my truck, my unit was a key that was not a dummy. My radio set was never a dummy. We had dummy sets about -- there was one of the

Army units in our group, one of the four Army units of our group had spoof radios that sent out dummy messages and things like that. Mine, I wasn't part of that group.

Interviewer: Okay, did you have any dangerous situations during your duties where you were shot at or had any danger situations?

Stan Nance: Well, if -- I couldn't put it any plainer than what I have here. Let me read this. This answers your question.

Interviewer: Because I would think the Germans would attack your units, thinking the main body was there, even though you were gone and you would have some situations where the Germans would be firing on what they thought was the main Army, which had taken off in the night, so they would be firing at you.

Stan Nance: That's a good point, because everything was done so quickly. The German Army and any unit -- we had German units, fighter units within three miles where we were. But our operations were so precise and so clever and so quickly done that, you know, you don't do things -- we did it over night. And if the Germans were to counter, it would take them at least 48 hours to figure out what they were going to do and to counter. So, I have one area -- one thing here that I wrote that I thought was pretty good, but I can't -- we were set up, it was just set up like we were a bunch of ducks at a duck pond.

Interviewer: Right.

Stan Nance: And the Germans were running all around, we were in an area to where we were so camouflaged that I represented like being in a duck pond, the Germans running all around us and we were there and we were never detected. Now, that was one time that we got out of the Army pretty slick, and that our lives were saved because that one particular time. But we were, many times we were in situations to where the Germans could attack. But,

they -- it seems like their attacks were not spontaneous, except the Verduns. And I think that was planned well ahead of time. Now, the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops were bivouacked in an area -- we were operating in an area. We had an assignment in an area that in two hours after we left that area, the Battle of the Bulge people came in. Two hours, and that's all in our history. And so we moved out just in time for the in the Ardennes area to where Von Remke and his group came in and, that was at Brest. Anyway, the group of Germans came in on the Belgium bulge, and went in 100, 125 miles. And we came to the rescue; I was in on that, our group was in on that to help chase them people out.

Interviewer: The -- what your goal was to make the Germans think that the main Army was where you were, and so it would seem to me that you would get a lot of attacks, uh, if they could find you.

Stan Nance: But it was -- okay. You're right because we were finished with our area within 36 hours. And it took them that -- it would take them that long.

Interviewer: So you would move out before --

Stan Nance: No, okay, here's the unit opposite the German Army, and that's us. And we're not doing anything, we're not fighting, we're not operating at the time. Here's the German Army over here that we're --

Interviewer: Fooling.

Stan Nance: We're holding that German Army next to us and within six hours, the main divisions that we operated for would be fighting them and going around the back of them. It was a pincher movement. And so after that happened, it wouldn't take them more than 12 to 24 hours that the main operation was behind them or to the side of them. And so, they would move back. They wouldn't fight us.

Interviewer: So you were responsible for a lot of those victories?

Stan Nance: We were responsible; we received a citation from the General of the Army for our operation going over the Rhine. They claimed we, and it's in print, that we saved at least 15,000 Americans crossing the Rhine. And it's estimated that we saved three times that many Germans because the Germans, at that particular time, were not a very formidable Army. They had kids, 12 years and 14; 16 year old kids fighting on the opposite side of the Rhine. They were pretty devastated at that time. And so, we had -- we had a commendation and all of this was secret, and then after the war, they said, "Say nothing when you get home." And so, I said nothing.

Interviewer: All right, before we go there, right after the war, you said something that they were going to ship you over to Japan.

Stan Nance: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell us about that.

Stan Nance: Well, we were in a bivouacked area in Western Germany when the war ended, and we received that information -- I had a radio. I was getting radio information whenever I wanted, turning into my radio. I had a radio unit. This is my radio unit here, this is my truck. That's the one that --

Interviewer: You carried your radio in.

Stan Nance: I lived in that practically all through the war. And it, an interesting thing that was given to me while I was in England and I happened to run across a stray straw mattress, about six feet by four feet, while I was in Great Britain and I picked it up and put it in my car, my vehicle, and that straw mattress was in my vehicle all during the war.

Interviewer: So you could sleep in there.

Stan Nance: And so, I wouldn't sleep in the vehicle. I would put it outside on the ground, but the rest of the men would sleep on the ground, I would sleep on my straw mattress. But, yes.

Interviewer: That's great. Now, tell us about when the war was over and they were going to ship you to Japan.

Stan Nance: When the war was over, I got that information that we were to hurry back to our, I forget the word.

Interviewer: To your base.

Stan Nance: Our assembly area, we were getting ready to be sent by air to The Pacific. But, first, the commanding -- they were going to send us right over. And our commanding general said, "No way, these men get a furlough." Because when they get home, they get a furlough and then they'll go over. And so, we assembled our group together and I just -- they weren't going to use the same trucks we used over there. They were going to -- I don't know what method they were going to use, but they had all their operation already planned as to what we were going to the when we got to the islands around Japan. And then, we were sent home on our furlough, and then I came back to Camp Forrest, Tennessee -- excuse me. Anyway, we came back to New York into camp there. And while I was at Pine Camp, New York, while we were there, they dropped the atomic bomb while I was in New York.

Interviewer: And so, you were going to do that same procedure --

Stan Nance: Very same thing.

Interviewer: In the pacific, decoys to free up the other Army.

Stan Nance: We didn't receive any information; we were going to be indoctrinated on that on the way back. But they had all that planned, and I didn't get in on any of

that -- I don't think any of the regular officers or non commissioned officers got in on any of the news on that.

Crew Member: Rick? Sorry.

Interviewer: Let me ask you this one thing. Tell us about how they wanted you to keep all this secret, and for how long and how it finally came out.

Stan Nance: Well, when I left, uh, my unit, 11th Armored Division in California, I thought it was strange that I didn't take any documents with me whatsoever until I got back to Camp Forrest, Tennessee. And then it was there that I was told that I was going to be part of a covert Army, a secret Army. And I was not to say anything about it to my family of anything that I was in or any of the operations. A lot of my letters that I sent home were censored. I mean, cut out. I have letters I can show you that -- and I finally sent a V-mail letter to my wife, and I don't put very much into V-mail letters, and even part of that was cut out. The Signal Company Special was watched over, surveilled more than any of the other men. The other men could take pictures and things like that. We couldn't even have cameras. The only reason I have cameras, that picture of my vehicle and I was taken in Versailles in Holland. That was taken by my captain. And after the war, after our operation in the ETO was finished, my captain came to me and gave me this. I didn't know he had that picture of me and my truck. He gave me this and he said, "I had this for your wife --"

Interviewer: And --

Stan Nance: -- "because I didn't think you were coming back."

Crew Member: Let him talk, Rick. Please.

Stan Nance: And he wasn't supposed to take pictures. We got a lot of pictures on, well, when we were in Verdun waiting for an operation, the company commander

came up to me and said, "Nance, we have a new man coming in. He's from New York." He says, "Would you take care of him and put him in your unit?" Now, this was well into France, this was just before we crossed the Rhine. And so, he had a camera and he didn't know that he was not to have it because he was a new man just coming out of the ranks of the people -- the extra people that came into help. He had a camera. We weren't allowed cameras. And so, because he wasn't instructed that he wasn't to have one, we were able to take pictures and I was able to take a whole bunch of pictures in the later part of the operation while we were in Germany, I have a lot of pictures we took from his camera, so we were able to get a bunch of pictures.

We didn't expect to go to Japan. It didn't enter our minds, but our operation was so clever and so unique and successful that it was only in the last two or three weeks of our operation in the ETO that they decided they wanted our unit in Japan. That was a last minute thinking of the Army, so we thought we were going home after, and they said, "No, you're going to Japan." So we were very fortunate that that war ended, or we would be over in that operation in the Pacific, which would have been quite fun.

Now, I have something that might be of interest to you, and I reflect on the war and everything I did, I enjoyed it. I didn't see -- there was only one officer and one commissioned officer that was killed, and that was from a bomb from -- no, it wasn't. It was from a shell while we were near Metz, the operation of Metz. They were, the pedal which was in my outfit, and that information is in these books. So, we had one -- he wasn't a buddy of mine

because I was LDS and he was strict Catholic and he was a thorn in my side all through the Army. He hated me, and I hated him. And he would do everything he could to denounce me and my church. He was so anti-church, it was funny. And I had that way all through the Army, I was LDS and I kept my LDS religion 100 percent while I was in the Army. And he knew that, and he was just at me all the way through. So I did have a little entertainment on that respect. But he was killed, he was the main body of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops that was my nemesis and he made sure that I knew that he didn't like me. Anyway, he was killed, Captain Wells was killed from a shell and in one of our operations, those are the only casualties we had in the Army. But we were very successful. We were told by reliable sources that we had saved at least 15,000 men because the Germans had told the American units, "You cross the Rhine River and it's going to flow red." And we crossed the Rhine River, that's one operation --

Interviewer: That's an interesting story.

Stan Nance: That was one operation that was successful because they had a defensive piece of land there at the Rhine River that was going to be tough for us to go over. But anyway --

Crew Member: Let me interrupt Stanley, for one moment. Rick, before you go forward, Stanley, talking about the end of the war, I want to know what, if Stanley can describe as a non-decoy official radio operator.

Stan Nance: I can't.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Crew Member: I want him to describe what the decoy operator would say, what some of those messages would be, because clearly communications was a great way to fool the Germans. But then I wanted to know after he answers that what he did as a non-decoy.

Interviewer: Her question is, when you were taking over the radio commission, you know, the radio transmissions of the units that you snuck away in the night, what kind of messages would you send after this unit left?

Crew Member: He wasn't -- no; Stanley was not a decoy radio operator.

Stan Nance: Yes, we had scads of decoy operators, but mostly they came from the other three units rather than the Signal Corps itself.

Crew Member: Okay, look at Rick --

Interviewer: Look at me.

Stan Nance: And tell Rick, Stanley, what those decoy operators would say to fool the Germans, the radio operators. What would their messages be?

Interviewer: What kind of messages would the decoy operators send?

Stan Nance: They were at liberty to send what they wanted, and that's what made it unique, that fools the Germans, we thought, is that they would go on the radio, voice radio. They used mostly voice radio. I used Morse code because I was operating -- okay, so you understand one thing. Let me read this from my Army separation. It said:

"Served as radio operator in France, Luxembourg, Holland, Belgium, and Germany. Handled coded messages between various Army units, divisions, battalions, kept daily records of all messages handled."

So, the radio messages that I sent were all handed to me.

Interviewer: Look at me when you're talking.

Stan Nance: Okay, the radio messages I handled were instructions from the brass given to me. I didn't -- I wasn't the author of any of the messages that were sent. It was a message sent to a headquarters of whatever came to my -- it would be handed to me as I sat in my radio. See, I had a what they call a half ton truck. The Army called it a "gut wagon," which had canvass over the top and I had a 388 radio set, which was about the highest that they had. It was behind the front seat in the back of the vehicle, and it was a very sophisticated piece of equipment, several units, a receiver, and everything I did was by hand. And, the messages were given to me, and I would send them out. I would receive them in code. I had a decipher that I would use to decipher, put through the code machine, and then I would hand it to the officer in English. So, when we were in any big operations, there would always be an officer around, usually a lieutenant or a captain that would make the decisions what went over the radio. I didn't do any of that; I was just the radio operator. And it was fun. I was able to pretty well know where the divisions and where our tactical operations were going at nearly every point I was on my radio. But, that was only on the missions that I was on because I had a lot of free time in between operations.

Interviewer: How long after the war did you feel like you could talk about this?

Stan Nance: I just kept it. My wife knew very little about it. I had a teenage daughter that was school, and she said, "Dad, what did you do in the Army?" I told her. And you know what she said to me? "Oh, Dad. You didn't do anything like that." That's what my daughter said to me. "Oh, Dad. You didn't do anything like that." She couldn't believe that is I was in the Special Troops Army. Anyway, as I look back, it was a lot of fun. I would do it over

again because it was enjoyable. And you never know what any of my operations may have done. I'm sure that somewhere along the line, some of my radio transmissions saved a lot of mothers and new wives a gold star in their window. And that's how I feel about my operation with the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops -- that we deceived the German Army to the point that we were one of the main operators to thrust the German Army to defeat them.

Interviewer: Stanley, thanks so much for something to this interview. It's been real interesting, and they say we haven't heard a lot about this --

Stan Nance: And there's so much to it that we haven't even -- we haven't even touched it.

Crew Member: We need to wrap it up though.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for coming.

(Break in the recording).

Crew Member: You are just going to be looking at me. And when you left, you were saying, you were talking about the theatrics of your whole operation. And can you hear me? Talking this loud?

Stan Nance: A little louder.

Interviewer: The theatrics and you said, I asked you, "Did they recruit, did the enlisted theatrical people join your group?" And you said, "Oh, I want to talk about that." Let's talk about theatrics for the 23rd. And you were telling me that they -- the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops had a lot of comical, theatric people in them. Tell me about that, tell me.

Stan Nance: Well, I don't remember the -- listed in the books that are published, they have the names of names people that made up part of this unit. I can't remember them; I'd have to read it.

Interviewer: But, what were the qualities and skills they had?

Stan Nance: There were Hollywood producers, there were artists, the majority of them were famous artists who have displays in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other large art exhibits on the east coast. And you also have mechanics, they drew from a real wide area -- most of them were very professional and very knowledgeable and it's -- it's recorded that they tried to get the most intelligent and the best qualified people to come in because they had specific duties to do, things to learn. So, it was an actor's world that we were in. And so, that's why they drew from that source there.

Interviewer: Give me an example of what some of those famous artists provided for your special group.

Stan Nance: Well, okay. Let me mention this, after the war was over then a lot of these men that were in the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, there were a number of those that became famous. There's art designers, there's costume designers. Bill Blass -- I don't remember the name.

Interviewer: Bill Blass.

Stan Nance: Bill Blass, and men like that that followed the profession of artistry after the war was over. And there's a number of famous ones, but I can't remember personally.

Interviewer: So, for example, artists, what did they do? Did they help design what an Army would look like? How did they provide --

Stan Nance: You're asking a radio operator.

Interviewer: You don't know, that's fine.

Stan Nance: I don't know, I really don't.

Interviewer: Um, you were talking about your friend who said, "I blew up American tanks." Tell me that story again, that's funny.

Stan Nance: Well, okay. When a certain area was chosen for our unit to bivouac between our operations, when we had an operation, everything was blown up, everything was in form, everything looked real. And then they would deflate them, put them in bales, put them on the truck, and they would move a whole Army within six hours, the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops could re-place from one place to another in six hours where it would take an Army with all of its equipment filing down the streets, it would take sometimes three days. So that's one of the effective things that the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops was able to do, and that was to move a whole Army within six hours to a 50 mile radius or distance. And so, when they would deflate all of those tanks and other equipment, put them in bales, put them in two and a half ton trucks, and the way they would go down the street. And then when they got to the other area they were to set up, they would take those bales and they would undo them and put the compressor to them. And this was done by engineers that were specifically chosen to do that. And one of the men said in recent years a long time after all that took place, he was asked by his family what he did. Well, he was one of the men that used the compressor to blow up the tanks. So when his family asked him what he did in the war, he said, "I blew up American tanks." So, put that was one of the assets of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops is because they could move over night from one area to another, a real, full, US Army men, 1,000 men, that took the place of normally 15,000 men to a division. Whether the division was a tank

division, or whether it was just an infantry division, whatever. We would portray that particular division in the field. And we would take its place.

Interviewer: So, was the purpose to thwart the enemy's surveillance area from the sky only? I mean, do you have to appear to look like an Army aurally, or did you have to look like an Army --

Stan Nance: All we had to do was to set up every item, every vehicle, every point within an area where a division was. We had to set up a view of that very same thing so when a, say the Fifth Armored Division was bivouacked in an area, or they were in an area where they were guarding an area, whether they were ready to be under attack, or whether they were to attack or be part of the Army that was going to attack, the Fifth Armored Division would have everything in place and there would be enemy surveillance of that area. And when night fell and they had that responsibility of moving and supplementing another area for a stronger push in their pincher movement of going around the enemy, then knowing that the enemy knew or had surveillance pictures of every individual item in that area, then when we came in, everything would have to be simulated exactly as it was before. Exactly. No change. Only, ours would be inflated rubber, except for the two and a half ton trucks and for the one and a half and the half ton trucks, which radio truck I had was what they called, a ton and a half, they used the term "gut wagon," as to the radio vehicles that the 23rd had. So, it was very effective and that's the way we operated. Whether we operated with the 5th or the 7th or the 12th or whatever armored division, or any of the infantry divisions. We simulated, probably 100 different divisions.

Interviewer: And that simulation, do they see tents? Dummy people? Dummy tanks? Real trucks? Real guys walking around? What are they seeing?

Stan Nance: Just exactly what you would see in a regular fighting unit.

Interviewer: Okay.

Stan Nance: Whatever, the vehicles and the equipment that would be placed around an area, for instance, for a division, the equipment would always have to be in the same place. The movement of personnel, that would not be a part of it because different units would have their own personnel and they would be doing what they would be doing. So, uh, it would be the equipment that would be -- have to be in the same place. Um, I don't know why it would be necessary for everything to be exactly in the same place, by the same token, that was their responsibility to do that. And that's the engineers and the sonics and those units there. So, I would -- I had little responsibility in being part of those units. All I do is, all I can say is I remember, you know, some of the activities that were going on in the area.

Interviewer: One last question, and let me be clear here. Your role, as a radio operator, you weren't a dummy operator, a phantom operator, a comic operator; you really sent messages back and forth.

Stan Nance: Yes.

Interviewer: By Morse code?

Stan Nance: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so, you were working aside some dummy operators though?

Stan Nance: I never worked beside any of the dummy operators. The dummy operators were chosen and schooled and oriented before each maneuver, each task, each operation that we had -- they would have everything planned as to where their operation was going to be, the movement of their vehicles and all of this. But remember, these people here, in

order to confuse the enemy, would be over a wide-spread area. A division may only take in maybe a quarter square mile of land for, if it was bivouacked, it would take about that much space. If it were on the lines ready for an attack, then they could be spread out in single form. They could be in groups -- there's many ways that a division would be on an attack. But when they would be in bivouac, then everything would be dormant there. And the spoof operators would be schooled and they would go out and probably start their radio transmission, which would be voice. That was all voice. And they would be spread out maybe over a five mile area, just scattered, and maybe some of them still moving. Lots of times, these convoys of spoof operators would just keep moving from place to place to make the enemy think that we had more men that we had, more vehicles than we had, more units than we had. And that we were a part of some particular unit in the area, a fighting unit that they were just out going from one unit to another. So the spoof radio men were very effective because they assumed that they were fooling the Germans into thinking that they were more widespread and the operation was more widespread and -- that the communication of talking to someone five, six, seven miles away -- would think there would be more units in the area than what there really was. But that was just one aspect of their operation, of the spoof radio. I wasn't a part of that, but I knew what was going on because of what I was doing.

Interviewer: That's very interesting though. Name another operation of the spoof operators. What would they do to trick the Germans?

Stan Nance: Well, now, I was given the task of going into the regular Army groups and being a part of the operation, and communicating the operation of what was really going on with the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops or the Ghost Army, there had to be coordination between what the spoof Army was up to and how it was going to coordinate its

works with a real unit, and so that was my responsibility of transmitting of the network of the regular Army. Whether it be out of headquarters, the 12th Army Group, whether it be a division, or a corps, or whatever. I did not operate anything under the company, under company or battalion. It was always division or Army or usually corps, usually I would be in the corps, which would be many divisions. Two or three of the -- sometimes four divisions. So, that was mainly my work and it was a lot of fun and I had a responsibility that I really loved doing and I think there was a possibility that some of my transmissions were very effective. I did not create the messages. All I did was -- it was to send them on. But what was funny was to receive these in code and wondering what they were, because it was "dadedadedadedadada," everything was "dadededa." And as those things came in, I was able to convert those into the T's and the I's and the E's and I was able to convert those into words, and through a decipher, and then I would hand that to the chief officer in the area that was making -- that was handling all of the coordination of what was going on. So I was just a little part of it, going into that. But there's one thing interesting, and that is, of the 350 men at Fort Knox that I was taken out of the 11th Armored Division by surprise and I would say, kidnapped. I was kidnapped out of the 11th Armored Division and taken in the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and there, I was made a T-5 and I, with two other of the T-5s, they only made three T-5s at the time, we were only in there less than two months. We were made non-commissioned officers. And 350 men at Fort Knox that I was a member of, I graduated the top of the class.

I could run a radio, a key radio quicker than anybody else and it was quite unique that I was -- before I was in the Army, when I came home from -- I was in on a mission in Tahiti. And I learned how to play the uke. When I was a kid, I strummed it. I just strummed the

uke. But when I was down there, I learned that you don't strum like this, you keep your arms straight. Those natives down there wouldn't strum it, they would go like this. And I did that as a key radio operator. Instead of hitting that thing like this like everybody did, I'd hit it like this. And I could go much faster than anybody else. So, because of that and when I was inducted in the Army in Fort Knox, excuse me. When I was inducted in the Army at Camp Polk, Louisiana, and in the training session, I broke the record on the obstacle course down there of seven minutes in the mile obstacle course. When I came in, the officer, the captain said to me, "You just broke the course record of the obstacle course." So I had a pretty good account of on paper that went with me where ever I went. But it was because of my radio operation that I think I was chosen specifically for the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops because it was very unique and they wanted a radio operator in there they could depend on. And I didn't have any bad habits.

Interviewer: What was -- last question. I keep saying "last question," don't I? What was the camaraderie of your unit in terms -- was there humor and lightness? Because this all seemed like an adventure, in a way, and a movie in a way. "A-ha, we're actually coming in behind them, but they think we're in front." Was there a feeling of lightness?

Stan Nance: Absolutely, these men knew they were doing something different. They knew that it was secret. The word "secret" among them was something that they felt they were doing that nobody else was. They understood what they were doing and they liked what they were doing and there was a very, very wonderful camaraderie in and among the group. For instance, in my particular group, there was -- everybody, are the men that were married bragged about their wives. I mean, part-time. We would sometimes play cards, we would sometimes goof around, but there was just a lot of good reaction, feeling among us all. And because we all felt that we had the prettiest wife, the company commander says, well, "Why

don't you prove it." So there were about 50 of us got the pictures of our wives and put them on a table, no names or anything, numbered. And all the group went around to make their choice known of who was the prettiest. My wife was number one by a long shot. And, uh, I don't have a picture of her, but she was prettier than anyone there. And she won first place. And after that, the company commander was always on my tail kidding me about that, and then that is when the war was over, well, when we were on the greatest operation.

One of the biggest operations was advancing the United States Army across the Rhine River. This was the biggest operation, this is the operation that the Germans said that this river is going to run red if you try to cross it. And yet, it was our best spoof and most effective that our unit won a presidential commendation for what we did crossing the Rhine, supposedly saving at least 15,000 American troops, and probably three times that many German troops that were saved on that side of the Rhine. That, the commendation is one of the great things that I like. I mean, in my life, it was, it showed that we had pretty well done what we were supposed to do. And we did it. Now, because of the type of work we did, being very secretive, when I got home, I was asked by friends, family, what I did, and I couldn't tell them. Everything was restricted 100 percent, everything we did was restricted. And that restriction was not lifted until 65 years later. And so, I didn't receive my medals until 65 years after I had earned them. All that time, I wasn't involved in the Army at all; I was in the 11th Armored Division. I had nothing to do with the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops. So, I was lucky to have gotten them and I got them there and I got some nice big displays and extra things the Army gave me because of what I did in the Army. But the main thing is which I have mentioned before, I will mention again, and that is, if just one of my radio messages changed the temper of

the battle to where one mother or one wife was spared receiving the gold star, then my time in the United States Army was worth it. And that's all I can say.

Interviewer: That's wonderful. That gold star, boy. I can't imagine, huh?

We can wrap, we're done.

End of recording.