

## Recorded Interview

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I was born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1924. When the war started, I was a sophomore in high school, involved in the boy scouts and baseball. At that time I enjoyed swimming and fishing with friends and family members. When I heard the news regarding Pearl Harbor, I was with my best friend at his Uncle's farmhouse, located about fifteen miles east of St. Paul. We heard the first reports coming over the radio in the living room as we were preparing to eat Sunday dinner. My friend drove me back to my home. I think the last thing he said before he dropped me off was, "John, I don't think our lives will ever be the same again." He was right.

I was kind of stunned because I didn't know much about the Pacific and Pearl Harbor where the attack took place. I was knowledgeable about the stress and strain between the U.S. and Japan from the newsreels and radio broadcasts. I was stunned and angry, particularly when I heard about the casualties.

I went back to school the next day and found that the teachers had gleaned a lot of information from the news reports. They brought us up to date. We discussed declaration of war, casualties and the fact that we were entering a whole new phase of our history. There were a lot of rumors about what might happen next. Some people feared that there might be an invasion of the Hawaiian Islands and the west coast of our country.

At the time of the attack ('41) I was a junior in high school. [graduated in '43] Because I was a senior they waved my induction into the draft. I was eighteen which made me draft eligible in December of '42. I

had already received my induction notice when I graduated in June of '43. I went out to Fort Snelling and signed up and was told that I would be called up in a couple of weeks. My parents were concerned because they knew that some of my cousins had gone into the service. We knew that I would be called very soon. I was sworn in late June of '43 and trucked out to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, for processing. I was placed on call and allowed to go home at night by street car. This went on for two or three weeks. I took on the usual KP and field duties. We received a series of shots, were issued uniforms and waited for our travel orders.

I was told to report to the St. Paul union depot on a certain date in early July and joined other inductees. My parents took me down and said goodbye. We got on a passenger train with seats set aside for servicemen. We were transferred by rail over a couple of days to North Camp Hood, Texas, for basic training. At that time North Camp Hood was a tank destroyer camp. Others, including a very good friend of mine, were taken by train to Camp Hood where we were processed and given tests. We also garnered a drill sergeant.

My senior year in high school we were offered a program called the Army Specialized Training Program. I went to a ROTC Military high school and my grades were good enough to apply. I was accepted into ASTP. When I got to Camp Hood I was assigned, along with others from St. Paul and my area, to an ASTP training company at Camp Hood. We began thirteen weeks of basic training in several areas: field work, long hikes, marksmanship, rifle range, mortar range, machine guns and extensive backpack hikes in the Texas country side. Luckily, I got a three day furlough toward the end of my basic training and was allowed to go back home to St. Paul and spend time with my family.

When I went back to Camp Hood to finish Basic Training we had to go through the “battle conditioning course.” This was an all day arduous series of tests which included climbing walls with rifles and machine guns crawling and field work, crawling under barbed wire while withstanding live fire above us. We finally graduated.

I had quite a few friends from my home area and new friends that I had met through Basic Training in my Company. We were told in a general assembly that most of us from our company would be going to school at North State Teachers College in Denton, Texas. We had heard about the program and were happy about the opportunity. The idea was to train servicemen in engineering. I had taken a lot of math and science in high school. That experience had qualified me for the program. The program was to prepare engineers for the expected rebuilding after the war, particularly in Europe as well as any other part of the world. The program was in two parts, “initial” and “final.” I never made it to final. Both parts were to be about two to three months. The goal was to graduate as an army engineer.

Life at North Texas State was wonderful. I was in a dorm with good regular meals. We had a very kind hearted major in charge of us. We were involved in calisthenics and some military training but mostly class work. We studied math, chemistry, physics, and pre-engineering. I earned another furlough toward the end of that school work and went home. Some of my buddies were on furlough at the same time so we got together. My best school friend, the one I was with on Pearl Harbor Day, joined the Airborne and ended up in the 17th Airborne. He later went to Europe and was wounded. I got together with him and other high school friends in the fall of ‘43. President Roosevelt signed a document saying that we could not

afford the ASTP. We knew then that the school work was over and we would be entering a whole new phase.

In March of '44 it was announced that most of us would be transferred to the 103d Division at Camp Howze for advanced training. As we were waiting for the trucks to transport us to Camp Howze there was a Headquarters' sergeant going over our records from high school and beyond. After reading through to my high school records and my training record he asked me if I had any radio training. I said I belonged to a radio club in high school and had set up Morris Code for communication in physics class. I had built crystal sets along with my professor and other students in physics class. The records man said they were short of radio operators in the 103d. He said he would send me to school in the signal company in the radio section and if you can make it through, there is a good chance they might send you to radio school at Camp Howze. I told him that I would be very interested in that opportunity.

Just about the same time, my high school friend and good buddy, Harold Class, was killed. We had double dated together, went into the army together, played baseball together. He was also being screened for radio training but did not have the radio background. He was assigned to the 411th, went to Camp Howze and became a BAR man. When we settled in at Camp Howze we spent time together in the barracks, at the PX, or in town seeing a movie. During the Battle of the Bulge I was in a radio truck near the German border. Trucks were coming back to our signal headquarters from the Bulge. One day one of the trucks slowed down and one of the men asked me, "John, aren't you a friend of Harold Class?" I told him that Harold was one of my good buddies. He said, "I hate to tell you but he was killed by a sniper this past week at the front." That was crushing news. He

was my first or second best friend. I had seen Harold at Camp Howze but I never saw him or heard about him again until I got the news of his death.

Radio School continued:

I was at Camp Howze and accepted into radio school. I signed into the radio section of the signal company. I was assigned a barracks with regular operators who had come off maneuvers in Louisiana earlier in the year. Many of the guys in my barracks were pretty hardened because they had been through basic training “nightmare” maneuvers. There were maybe six of us who were going to radio school because we had been in ASTP.

I vividly remember one morning standing at revelry. The old timers, including the sergeants were pretty tough on us. They rolled us out pretty early in the morning to line up for revelry. The First Sergeant would call out our last name and the custom was that we were supposed to call out our first name to verify that you were on deck. The sergeant called out “Donlan,” and I yelled “Jack.” He repeated, “Donlan,” and I repeated, “Jack.” Finally, he said, “Soldier, we do not use nicknames in this Man’s Army! Try again!” I said, “Yes, sergeant; John!”

I had a pretty tough section leader from Michigan who was a very good radio man himself. He monitored my progress at radio school. Our goal was to speed up our code transmission and reception up to fifty to sixty words per minute. We started to get familiar with radios. The radios at that time were mounted on the back of weapons carriers. We started getting familiar with the radios and on the weekends we might go out on field trip or even on short maneuvers, learning to transmit from one unit to another. We learned how the signal company operated in a modern triangular division and how it worked with the other sections: headquarters, telephone and telegraph, construction, and message center.

The summer went by: a lot of KP and a lot of duty. When D-Day came we were all tuned to the news on our little radios. I commented to a buddy, "I will always be able to tell my kids what I did on D-Day. I painted rocks white in the company yard listening for the reports to come in." We were a long way from Normandy. We went on some extended maneuvers learning to operate as a unit. The climax of that training was a twenty mile full field pack hike out in the Texas ranch land/wilderness. We would get upset because as we were marching along with our packs and rifles, the half-tracks would roar by us kicking up dust in our faces. It seemed unfair that they were riding along and making it miserable for us.

They thought at one point they might make us a glider unit and instructed us in packing our gear for that assignment. The glider unit did not happen. The rumors started flying. We received one final furlough and I went home for a couple of days. My parents took me down to the union depot and we said our "goodbyes", not knowing if we were ever going to see each other again.

After I returned to camp, we began the final preparations. We were responsible for our jeeps, weapons carriers, radio sets, rifles and equipment, all of which had to be packed in Cosmoline to prevent water damage during overseas shipment. This process took days and days; the truck motors and armaments had to be covered in Cosmoline. Eventually, they trucked us over to the troop trains in Gainesville, Texas. The troop train was equipped with bunks as well as seats to accommodate us. We had a three train ride from Camp Howze to Camp Shanks in New York on the Hudson. During the trip we pulled KP in the kitchen car. We stopped in a city in Ohio. We had been given strict orders not to tell anyone where we were going.

Ironically, we were met by many friends, parents, wives and kids when we pulled into the station. Somehow the word got out.

After three days we got to Camp Shanks on the Hudson. We went through more processing, shots, and equipment checks. They granted 24 hour passes and most of us took the train down to New York City. My buddies and I stayed overnight in the YMCA. At that time in Times Square there was a service telephone station for troops to call home, free. I stood in line, called home, and got my mother. She was surprised and wondered what I was doing in New York and where I would be going next. I told her I didn't know and if I did know I could not tell her. She wished me "good luck." I remember having wonderful meals at Camp Shanks and getting accustomed to managing a pack weighing fifty to sixty pounds and a duffle bag.

We loaded on the troop train and traveled down the Hudson to Hoboken where we boarded a ferry, crossed the Hudson River and unloaded at a pier. Walking up the ramp of the Kaiser Troop ship at the wharf was very difficult with our field packs and our duffle bags. The MPs and Seamen were ushering us to "keep going". We got to the top deck and had to climb down all the ladders and steps to our sleeping quarters and bunks. We chose a bunk, knowing it would be our temporary home. I think it was midnight when we heard the ship's whistle indicating that the convoy was preparing to move down the Hudson. The last thing I remember seeing was the Statue of Liberty and the Skyline of New York off to my right. With a tear in my eye, I wondered when I would see that again. We passed Staten Island and then out into the ocean.

The dining level was one or two decks above where we slept. Generally, we lined up with our mess kits, got our food and found a place to

eat. We had been enjoying pretty good meals but about two days out we were in pretty rough waters. As the ocean got rougher, we got sicker. The Merchant Marines said to get up on the top deck, close to the bow, lie down or sit down, go with the tide and try to look at the horizon. Most of us were not eating and if we were eating we were not holding it down.

I did a little research many years later in a college library and dug up the New York Times and found out that they were putting out weather reports for the whole western hemisphere. I was able to find the record of a hurricane that had come into the Caribbean, and had hit Costa Rica, Haiti and south Florida before moving north toward the Carolinas. Years later I did some investigating and found out that we had been right on the edge of that hurricane. It was awful. We had destroyers and a small aircraft carrier behind us in the convoy. The destroyers' format was to crisscross in front of the troop ships looking for subs. We watched those destroyers going up and down and could not believe they were going to make it. We were told to go below decks. Every once in a while we would hear the sharp, banging crack of the keel when the transport would slam into a wave; we just knew we were in trouble. This went on for days but when the ocean finally settled down and we started seeing seagulls off in the distance, it made us very happy.

We saw the Atlas Mountains of Africa in the distance. Towards evening we entered the Straights of Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean. We saw the Rock of Gibraltar in the sunset. To make things worse we hit a storm in the Mediterranean. Towards evening we saw the shore lights of Marseilles. After pulling into the harbor at Marseilles, we were strafed by German fighters forcing us below deck again. We stayed down there until the attack was over.

Toward nine or ten o'clock at night we were told to get our packs ready but not our duffle bags, they would come later. We went over the side, descended the rope ladder and boarded landing troop ships that took us to shore. Once on the beach we saw massive destruction; our Air Force and Navy ships had really battered the harbor and the German installations. We unloaded the equipment from our troop ships and put our duffle bags into trucks.

We formed lines and the MPs began to march us up and out of the harbor onto the streets, which had high stone walls, and past abandoned homes. It was somewhat eerie. There was a lot of military traffic crisscrossing our route. After marching all night we had covered about ten to fifteen miles up to the high hills of the northern slopes of Marseilles. We could not find the 103d when we arrived. Stuff was scattered all over and it took time to sort it all out and pull our units together. Eventually we pitched our pup tents with a buddy and crawled into them. In the morning, although they did not appeal to us, we cooked our sea rations on Coleman one burner gas stoves. There was one gasoline stove for every four or five people. Eventually, a chow truck came up and gave us a hot meal for breakfast or lunch.

We stayed in that area about a week, during which time they trucked some of the company back down to the harbor to sort out the equipment that had just been tossed ashore. We put the equipment onto 2 1/2 ton trucks which took it up to the staging area. We had to de-cosmolene all of the equipment. It took rugs, rags, and solvent to clean up the trucks, guns, and radios. Eventually, all the equipment was cleaned, in order and ready for a convoy of marines who were moving north.

At that time, we found out we were joining the Seventh Army. It had invaded southern France closer to Nice, weeks before we landed.

We began establishing our radio networks, truck to truck. They began splitting up the radio section into truck units each to operate with a regimental command post: one truck for the 409th, 410th, and 411th. I was assigned into a radio truck to work with the 409th. We began the rudimentary test messages and transmissions put together in code by the message center. There was also a Division command post that keyed on the three refinement units sending messages back to the division. The division messages would go out in code to the three regiments and from the regiments the messages would go down to the battalions. From division they would go back to corps.

The first sign of battle that we saw was when we came upon a town that became famous in the 103d lore, the city of St. Die. We were coming down from the heights of the Vosges Mountains into the city. We could see tremendous destruction. We were told that the 3rd Division tried to drive the Germans out of St. Die but they were not successful with several frontal attacks. Prior to our arrival and after the 3rd division pulled out of the line and headed south to a rest area, the 3rd, 36th and 45th Divisions were already in action north of us into the Vosges Mountains. Their objective was to take some of the towns going up the Rhone River, the main north/south river in that part of France, using some remaining roads and highways that were left. Eventually, we received orders to go north, stopping for make-shift meals along the way. Eventually, we had a chow truck that went with us which was capable of providing hot meals. We continued up the Rhone River and eventually could see the base of the Vosges Mountains.

Prior to our arrival, The German Commander told the mayor of St. Die that because his citizens had cooperated with the Third Division that they were going to pay them back by leveling their town. The authorities were told that they had 24 hours to get their citizenry out of town. Some years later, I talked to a survivor of the destruction of St. Die who had taken his family and as many possessions as possible out of town in a two-wheeled cart. When we arrived the St. Die Cathedral had one tower still standing. The walls were destroyed, but you could make out the church outline. The rest of the city was essentially leveled by German mortars.

They pulled us back to consider what the next step should be. Being good hearted Americans, we came into town and set up medical shelters and food stations for the townspeople. We tried to help them in any way we could to get back on their feet.

Soon we were back into combat and heading north, deeper into the Vosges Mountains. Many of the towns we entered are in the 103d history: Sessenheim, Avonelle, Rothweiller are a few of them. We would set up a division headquarters in an Alsatian town and then it was our job to organize communications. The telephone and telegraph had to lay wire lines forward and back to division and to the regiments and battalions. It was the job of the construction sections to help lay that wire and organize the communications.

We moved on through November. We actually had Thanksgiving dinner brought up to the front in huge containers on the back of 2 ½ ton trucks. Dinner included turkey, dressing, and mashed potatoes. It was almost like being home but not quite.

I was on a truck on a three man crew pulling a 24 hour shift. While one guy was on duty, two guys could be sleeping on long benches in the

truck on the back end of the weapons carrier. As long as the crew chief knew where he was, one guy might go off into a hayloft in a barn or in the remains of a building to get some sleep. The weather turned nasty after Thanksgiving. The wind was blowing so hard the pine trees were howling and the snow was starting to build up. The crew built temporary bridges and a bridge over the Meurthe River as we neared the German border. We kept moving north, deeper into the mountains and into Lorraine closer to the German border. We moved into December and we did not have very good gear for the weather we were having. The quartermaster central did not get cold weather gear forward. The gear was possibly sitting on docks in Normandy. It was getting colder and our feet were getting wetter. Our boots were not keeping our feet dry and we really needed sweaters. Occasionally, we would find a blanket to wrap around us.

Toward the end of December we started getting shoe packs. They had leather tops and rubbers soles; they were pretty much waterproof. It felt “heavenly” when I put on my two sweaters and my long underwear. We started receiving better meals. I had a terrible habit in those days. I never drank coffee until after the war when I studied for finals. I just did not like coffee. The guys tried to convince me to drink it when I was shivering from the cold. I said, “No, no!” I would take coke but not coffee.

We received the *Stars and Stripes* if we were near the division command post. After December 16th we read about the thrust of the army into the Ardennes. Also, reports would come in over the radio, but we seemed to hear the most news over the BBC and some information by word of mouth from the guys who were coming back. At one point we knew that the Germans were moving; that was prior to Bastogne and St.Vith. We knew that things were not going well up north. George Patton got involved

and led the 2nd armored division, and 4th infantry division, through a ninety degree turn out of the 3d army and double timed them north, day and night, slamming into the southern flank of the German thrust on Bastogne.

As legend has it, as Patton went north he “stole” several battalions of the 103d that were strung out. After the start of the Bulge we had to spread out as a cover for other divisions going north. I think Patton told other commanders that their battalions were going with him and not to ask any questions. I have a very good friend, Jean Capistan, who was wounded when he was with the 411<sup>th</sup>, 22 miles southwest of Bastogne. The 103d should not have been there. Our historian has always said that the story is “legend,” and that they cannot verify it with records.

We were in tough shape in the Vosges pine woods up in the mountains. We experience artillery fire and small arms fire but we were able to maintain our communications, mainly Morse code. Once in a while we were told to communicate by voice because of the circumstances. We weathered out the worst of our part of the Bulge. I found out three or four years ago, after looking in the German archives, that our division in Berlin was awarded the Ardennes Medal. I wrote a letter to the Army Service in Washington, D.C. and received it.

What the German archives showed was that it was always Hitler’s plan to send the main thrust west through the Ardennes eventually to recapture Antwerp and all the intermediate towns, all the way up the coast. They succeeded in that and sent another group south into our area to recapture the city of Strasburg. That city had been captured earlier and Hitler wanted it recaptured. In order to do that he sent a second thrust south into our area Operation Nordwind. It never happened because we hunkered down as a corps to hold back attacks and the division was able to hold that

area. They had a lot of SS troops, elite German troops, coming in our direction. They were held back and never broke through into the Seventh Army's core area.

By early January the Bulge had been pretty well contained and we began to reverse the attack back toward Belgium and eventually into Germany.

On Christmas Eve, 1944, I was on radio duty in the radio truck in the little town of St. Jane Robock in northern Lorraine, very close to the German border. French and German people lived together in the town. I was on duty, talking with my crew chief. I told him that there was a church about a half a mile away in town and asked him if I could attend the midnight church service. He told me to go and said he would come and get me or send someone for me if he needed me. About 11:00 PM, I started toward the church which had a big spire displaying its German architecture. As I approached the church's location I could see the people marching across the snow. There were no lights in town. The people walked toward the church in the dark, passing battered buildings that were nearly destroyed. I moved on toward the church and actually entered, unknowingly, from the rear of the building. When I entered, I saw other GIs standing waiting inside with their rifles on their shoulders, which was customary. I stood in the back with them. When the mass started I noticed that the dome of the church was not there; apparently, it had blown off. There was cold air flowing down into the church through that open dome. They had an old organ which was still able to play. They started playing Christmas hymns. When time came for communion I did not know whether to go up or not. The townspeople were seated more towards the middle of the church. They started going up to take communion and some the other GIs lined up behind them to receive

communion. It struck me as being very odd that I was going to take communion with people who were suppose to be my enemy. I was worshiping the same God that had been worshiped for two thousand years. It was hard to frame it in my mind. They sang “Silent Night” in German which was very touching.

When we went out through the front doors of the church many people shook our hands and thanked us. We told the other guys back at the truck about our experience. We always remembered that night because it was Christmas Eve of 1944. I told my parents about the church service in a letter. I have always wanted to go back to that church because I know that it is still there. I have been back a few times with the 103d Veterans.

I wrote home almost everyday and my parents kept all my letters. At one point my dad was in a nursing home and my mother was cleaning out drawers in the house, preparing to go to a nursing home. I was surprised to see that they had kept all the souvenirs and letters that I had sent home from overseas. I still have all of our written communications during the war. They were censored, but you could still tell what was intended. I think we had a pretty easy censor who was not too rough on us.

I also kept a diary, which was illegal; I could have been court marshaled. The army did not want the Germans to confiscate a diary that might help them in any way. I kept encrypted notes on various pieces of paper that would jog my memory but would have no meaning to anyone else. When I was on R and R, I would expand on those notes and at the end of the war I compiled them into a diary complete with dates and locations. I still have the diary.

We crossed the Rhine into Germany on an engineer bridge March 15th of 1945. By then we were pretty much in control. Our division

pivoted south and jumped on the autobahns, in truck convoys, picking up speed through cities off the autobahn. We saw the remains of German jets. On two occasions we had to jump out of our trucks and into ditches for protection from German jet fighters who were strafing us.

We were being pushed back quite a bit into the foothills of the Vosges during the Battle of the Bulge. Operation Nordwind was working to an extent. One night, under blackout, we were retreating in a truck convoy on very muddy roads. We were very concerned about slipping off the road and down into the water. A MP in a passing truck got out and said, "Do you guys know where you are heading? You are heading right into the German lines! You better turn around and go back." We had taken a wrong turn and we took his advice.

When we came into a town we would set up a command post in a building, find some firewood, and cook some meals. The people we encountered were good to us; especially the French-Germans in Alsace. [In 1994, I went back with two of my sons to Pfaffenhoffen, in Alsace and the whole town was so gracious. They gave us a parade and parties to thank us. It was heartwarming to have them remember us and want to stay in touch.] We crossed the Rhine and headed south into Bavaria, crossed the Bavarian Alps into Heidelberg and eventually into Munich. We entered Austria in April of 1945, went down into the Tyrolean Alps, and ended up in Innsbruck, Austria. We set up our division there; it was pretty close to the end of the war. I was able to go with a couple of guys by jeep down to the Brenner Pass. Pierce Evans, one of the radio operators in my unit, disobeyed orders and went down the Brenner Pass about the time the 409th was making a link up with the 5th army. He should not have been there. We had a big celebration in Innsbruck. We went skiing in the Tyrolean Alps

and enjoyed a big regimental parade and a party where the whole town turned out.

We shifted into the point system; if you had enough you transferred back into a division. I think you needed eighty some points and I did not have enough. I was transferred to the 45th division and left for Munich. I did see Dachau and spoke to some of the survivors. Across from the Dachau camp was a German street with beautiful homes, gardens and play sets. It looked like any suburban neighborhood. The people had abandoned the homes at that point in time.

We continued in the 45th division convoy going north. The division CP had a bulletin board that posted incoming typed messages. That is how I knew about the death of FDR. We saw the VE Day announcement and headed north. We went to camp areas in Rheims where the army went through some reorganization. During this time duty was pretty easy; we watched movies when we had down time. Patton came by in a car with his pearl handled pistols and his dog in the back. He waved at all of us. Rumors were flying about what was next.

We did not know much about the H-bomb other than it was a powerful weapon. We did not know about the casualties. Many of us had buddies in the Pacific and we were concerned for them. When we began to pack up and move out some of us felt we were going to the Panama Canal. There was the possibility that we would be used to combat guerilla forces. It was the summer of '45 when we sailed.

We were loaded on another troop ship at Le Havre. We left mid afternoon. At one point we could see Plymouth Lighthouse on the south coast of England. As we headed out into the English Channel an announcement came over the loudspeaker, "Now here this. Due to a change

in orders this convoy will be changing course and proceeding directly to Boston Harbor for disembarkation. At that point the whole ship started to rock. Gas masks went overboard and celebrations began. Finally, we settled down for our six day voyage home to Boston Harbor, free of hurricanes. I always likened that trip to what happened in San Francisco in the '70s. The convoy approached the outer wall of Boston Harbor. A large banner was erected below the sea wall and two words were on the banner, "Well done." We continued into the harbor under the arch of water from the fireboats as people cheered.

After we disembarked we went by truck to Camp Myles Standish. We enjoyed a good hot meal and a nice warm barracks compared to the troop ship accommodations. We organized for the next phase. Our destination was not clear at that point. A few other men and I found out that we would be going by train to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin but I didn't not know what to expect when I got there. They did not tell us it would be for discharge. Eventually, we boarded a train for Camp McCoy and signed in the barracks. We were given a 45 day furlough. I took a train to St. Paul where I was met by my parents.

The 45 days of furlough passed and I was headed back to Camp McCoy. In a matter of days I was told that I was going to be discharged. We marched one by one past a Major/Colonel who was handing out the discharges. I grasped mine firmly and walked a little faster past the Army Reserve sign up table. I got on the train and headed up the Mississippi River.

I visited the family of the soldier that was killed by the sniper and told them what I could remember of what he had done. As I made more visits I tried to establish a long term friendship with them but it did not seem like it

was working. Maybe it was in my own mind. I thought they may have been thinking why I had survived the war and their son had not. I just came to accept the way things were. That was a hard reality of the war. I had lost a good friend. My other good friend, whom I had known from grade school through high school and had been wounded in the Bulge, was recovering from his wounds in a hospital in Texas. He had been in the 17th airborne. He came back by Christmas of '45. He had lived next door, so we were able to connect again and ended up being lifetime friends. He passed away a few years ago. We had a big family celebration around Christmas including friends and neighbors. Many of my friends were home because of the holidays.

I worked in a factory making refrigerators for awhile and soon found that I wanted to further my formal education. My ASTP background was a good recommendation when I applied to engineering school in 1946. My credits were accepted and I spent three years attending Notre Dame University.

I have been to seven or eight reunions and have been to France to revisit areas where I served. I visited Strasburg and the cathedral there is beautiful.

I worked at 3M in St. Paul until I retired in 1989.