

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Vernon Ollar

Date of Interview: October 12, 2021

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 12th of October, 2021. I am at the residence of Mr. Vern Ollar, Ingram, Texas, and I am interviewing him in his home. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

So, I'd like to start, Vern, by thanking you for spending the time today to share your experiences with us, and let's get started by having you give us your full name, and introduce yourself and we'll take it from there.

Mr. Ollar: Well, my full name is Vernon L. Ollar. Of course, I was born in Moline, Illinois in 1921.

Ed Metzler: Wow! What ... what date on ...

Mr. Ollar: July 26, 1921.

Ed Metzler: July 22nd ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... 1921. According to my math, that puts you comfortably over a hundred years old.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. I just celebrated my hundredth.

Ed Metzler: Congratulations! (Laughter)

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, thank you.

Ed Metzler: That is wonderful! So, you were born in Moline, what, in town, in a hospital, at home?

Mr. Ollar: No, I was born the old Moline Public Hospital.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And my parents lived in Rock Island (cough), Illinois at the time which is a neighboring city.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Of the quad cities. And there wasn't a hospital in Rock Island at the time, and the only one on the Illinois side was in Moline Public Hospital, so that's where I was born.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: (Unintelligible).

Other Person: Yeah. Go ahead.

Ed Metzler: And so, you had brothers and sisters?

Mr. Ollar: No, I was the only child.

Ed Metzler: Oh, you got spoiled then.

Mr. Ollar: No, I didn't get spoiled.

Ed Metzler: No, you weren't spoiled (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: Not in the Depression; you didn't get spoiled.

Ed Metzler: There was no such thing as spoiled during the Depression.

Mr. Ollar: No, no.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Ollar: Well, my dad he was [a] very conservative type of guy, and he wouldn't have any more children.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: Because of the Depression.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And after the war. And so, I just didn't have any brothers and sisters.

Ed Metzler: Now what ... what did your father do for a living?

Mr. Ollar: He was a machine operator for ... he worked in, uh, at the time, the name was Williams and White Manufacturing Company, and they were suppliers for parts in the John Deere Company.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Which was located in Moline.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And he worked for them. And he met my mom and she worked as a ... she had been born and raised in Missouri and ... around Monroe City and came to Chicago when she was eighteen, couldn't find work there and heard about the quad cities. There's a (unintelligible) and the John Deere people and it was a big manufacturing company, and so she came there and that's when she met my dad.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And they got married in 1920, and I was born in '21.

Ed Metzler: Hum. So, you went to public schools there or ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, I went through uh, the old Franklin Junior High and Irving Grade School and Rock Island High School.

Ed Metzler: And ...

Mr. Ollar: And it was a ... I was pretty fortunate that I could play football and I had a lot of fun in high school.

Ed Metzler: Yeah? So, I guess if you were like eighteen when you graduated, that would have been about 1939 ...

Mr. Ollar: ... '40, right.

Ed Metzler: ... in 1940. Okay so, here you are graduated from high school in 1940; what'd you do then?

Mr. Ollar: Well, I was involved with a little lady.

Ed Metzler: I see.

Mr. Ollar: And we got married in ... in '41, and I was working on a ... at the Rock Island Arsenal, an ... an ordnance plant.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Rock Island Arsenal was run by the government, and they were big suppliers, of course, for munitions and small arms, also repaired tanks ...

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Ollar: ... that they brought back from Euro, uh, from Asia. But anyway, I got a draft notice. In the meantime, we had had a little girl in '42 she was born, and so I didn't know whether ... what I wanted to do. I know I couldn't uh, I could get

out of this going into the service; I was working in an ordnance plant for the government. I mean ...

Ed Metzler: Now, this is before the war started?

Mr. Ollar: No, the was ... it was after Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Okay. So, you worked there before Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah. World War I [s/b World War II] was '41 wasn't it?

Ed Metzler: Correct, December 7th, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: And I got married in ...

Ed Metzler: Do you remember that day? What happened that day?

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah. Yeah, it was on a Sunday morning.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, I remember that.

Ed Metzler: So, how'd that change things around your sphere?

Mr. Ollar: Well, like I say, I was working at the arsenal.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: And it changed a lot because all ... all my buddies were going. A lot of us signed up with the National Guard; we stayed out of the draft, and they ... they were going, and guys I played ball with. So anyway, uh, I got a draft notice and I reported in, but I didn't tell them I had a daughter, and I didn't tell them that I was working at an ordnance plant, so I was processed.

Ed Metzler: So, you already had a child?!

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Oh!

Mr. Ollar: She was eleven months old when I went in.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Ollar: I went in in December of '42.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And ...

Ed Metzler: How come you didn't tell them?

Mr. Ollar: I didn't want ... I wanted to go.

Ed Metzler: You wanted to go?

Mr. Ollar: And I was stupid (laughter).

Ed Metzler: No, patriotic (chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: So, ended up at Fort (unintelligible) Fort Dodge, Iowa around Des Moines, and he processed me there and sent me on to Camp Sibert, Alabama for my basic training.

Ed Metzler: Where in Alabama?

Mr. Ollar: Camp Sibert.

Ed Metzler: Camp Sibert.

Mr. Ollar: Which is just outside of a town by the name of ... of uh, (pause) I can't think of it now. So anyway ...

Ed Metzler: It's a long way from home.

Mr. Ollar: Oh, oh yeah. But I'd been away from home before.

Ed Metzler: Really?

Mr. Ollar: I ... that's another story.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, I took my basic there. And we were on maneuvers in ... and took a lot of training.

Ed Metzler: So, this is the Army, right?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Yeah, we were in Camp Sibert. And then from there I was mustered out to join an outfit and joined an outfit in Camp, or uh, Louisiana, Camp Polk, just outside of Camp Polk. They were on maneuvers; it was the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion.

Ed Metzler: I'm going to write that down.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And ...

Ed Metzler: 81st Chemical ...

Mr. Ollar: Mortar.

Ed Metzler: ... Mortar Battalion.

Mr. Ollar: Battalion.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: It was a ... they ... so, we were attached to them, and Company B, First Platoon, and so then we left out from Camp Polk on maneuvers down there and went to just outside of Camp Gordon Johnston, Florida.

Ed Metzler: So, this is what, late '42 or early '43 we're talking about now?

Mr. Ollar: It's early '42.

Other Person: No.

Mr. Ollar: The spring of ...

Other Person: '43.

Mr. Ollar: '42.

Other Person: Oh, okay. I thought ...

Mr. Ollar: No, '40 ... now you're getting me mixed up.

Other Person: I'm sorry.

Mr. Ollar: Uh ...

Other Person: Judy was born in '42.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, she was eleven months old.

Other Person: So, that's (unintelligible) '42.

Mr. Ollar: So, this was in '43.

Ed Metzler: Correct.

Mr. Ollar: Because I went in at December of '42.

Ed Metzler: Yep.

Mr. Ollar: So, in the spring of '43, I'm in Camp Polk, and then we went to Florida (pause) in '43. So anyway, Camp ... that Camp Gordon Johnston was ... was a hell hole. We trained in judo and hand to hand combat. It ... we were trained by the British commandos, and guys were getting sunburned so bad 'cause they wouldn't let us wear any clothes. We had to wear ... to where we were running around in skivvies.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: Bare-footed. And ...

Ed Metzler: But the Brits were teaching this, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Well, they were getting us ready for the South Pacific.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: Of course, we didn't know that, but that's what ... that's what the overall picture was.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: So ...

Other Person: (Cough).

Mr. Ollar: ... well, we ... the Marines were there and Rangers, all special troops. And yeah, we were just a battalion, so we were kind of special. And our (unintelligible) mortars were the only rifle and (unintelligible) uh, mortar barrel (?) in the world. A mortar barrel is a smooth bore, like a shot gun.

Ed Metzler: Correct.

Mr. Ollar: Our mortar barrel was rifled, like a rifle.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: And ...

Ed Metzler: So, you can aim it almost.

Mr. Ollar: We were very, very accurate with that ... with that mortar. It was much more accurate than a one-oh-five. And it was a lot closer, of course. One-oh-fives, five miles back, and we can be from a mile in. So anyway, we took that training, and then we pulled out of there and we went to uh, (pause) well, I'd say Virginia. Anyway, we went to a camp in ... in Virginia.

Ed Metzler: You really moved around a lot!

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah. We're taking these different training.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: They getting us ready. And then ... and we went on maneuvers in West Virginia (cough), and we figured we ... well, we aren't going to the South ... South Pacific because they're shifting us over and going on mountain maneuvers, we're going to Italy.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: So, we go to Italy and we're on maneuvers ...

Other Person: West Virginia.

Mr. Ollar: That's it, West Virginia, out of Virginia.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And can't think of the name ... Camp Pickett! Camp Pickett, Virginia. And, named after that general during the second, or the Civil War.

Ed Metzler: Oh, Pickett, huh?

Mr. Ollar: General Pickett.

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Ollar: So, anyway ...

Ed Metzler: Confederate general.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. At ... well, Virginia.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), yeah, right.

Mr. Ollar: So ... but it was good, good place. All their barracks were brick, permanent, and the ... everything was really nice. Had a nice lake where we could swim. And out of there, we went into, like I say, maneuvers in West Virginia in the mountains. There's a lot of rock in West Virginia. And so, the platoon sergeant was standing there; he calls out ... uh, muster, and (unintelligible) provide dinners. Well, a volunteer for what?

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: To learn how to mountain climb. So, what's the deal? Well, he said, "We're on ... going on maneuvers and the (unintelligible) I have K-rations three times a day. But when on ... these guys are going on this mountain climbing, they're going to get twenty-eight hundred, or ... equivalent to twenty-eight hundred calories a day and hot chow!"

Ed Metzler: They're ... square meals!

Mr. Ollar: "I'll go!"

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: So, my buddy standing next to me, "I'll go." And so there was eight of us. So, we started learning how to climb a mountain. And we ended up ... we ... mountain climbers. And I still got my pitons and my snap links hanging on a nail out there. So anyway, uh, we finished, and my buddy and I ... our ... our final exam was to climb eight or nine hundred feet up a cliff that ... but we had a rope, we had help, but it was still a long way to go. And, we did, and we had

lunch sitting a ledge with our feet hanging over at that ... about a block and a half high.

Ed Metzler: Looking down to the valley, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: Well, right across from us was a big slab of rock that was higher than us. You could look right straight across about a half a block, and it was two guys over there working that ... that cliff, that rock. (Cough), probably a couple of guys from the Army or whatever from a different outfit. So anyway, this ... when you repel, you let it out the back, and you ... you can cinch it this way uh, through a snap link on your belt. It's really fun to do when you repel. And you come back in and you hit ... you go down and you hit ... you just ... as you get ... come in you ... you snap in and when you go out you let out, and it's quite ... quite a deal. So, these guys are ... this one guy is coming down off of this cliff, and he's coming down, he's repelling, and he's coming in. And when you repel, you go out, six, eight ten feet to ... because of ... you want to go down and then you go out again. Oh, you've seen these guys on television do it, I'm sure.

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Mr. Ollar: And he hit a slab of rock that was loose on the side of this mountain cliff (cough), but he didn't know it. He went on down and he got down at the bottom and he grabbed a rock and ... or the rope and shook it and tell the guy he ... he was there and he ... he would hold on the rope for him, make it easier for him to repel. So, here he come and he hit that big slab which is bigger than this table.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: It was huge; it was ... had to be eight by ... eight by ten. And it loosened it and down it came. And we're sitting over there watching this ... on this, having lunch. And we hollered, "Rock!" That's what you do ... anytime rock falls, you holler ... you holler, "Rock!" And he just automatically slapped with his body up against the ... and ... and that thing left right behind him. And it was flat, it came down just one big chunk. And the dust just flew; you couldn't see

anything. We didn't know what ... we didn't know whether he made it ... he was alive or dead.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: And the dust flew, and here he came around out of the back; he walked around the back and come out of there, and his lift right behind him. And this other guy was standing up there holding, he'd cinched in on his repel. That was about as close as I've ever seen anybody get hurt on rock. And ...

Ed Metzler: And that changed the way you think about this whole rock-climbing thing when you saw that?

Mr. Ollar: No, it didn't change anything. It ... it just scared the hell out of us because we seen that guy just ... so narrow. Oh, we had a ... copperhead snakes and there were hills in West Virginia – they're loaded. There's copperheads all over this place. One guy was on the ... in our group was ... was climbing and he ... he had to go over and overhang which was part of your training. He got over the top, he was repelled in of course; if he fell, he ... he wouldn't have been ... he had pitons to drive into the wall ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: ... and they're two thousand pounds. You've be surprised how strong they are.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Ollar: And he'd of been safe, but in this particular case, he was climbing and he come up over the top and there's a copperhead about ready to strike, and he went, "Oh!" And he come down he banged into the side and he got banged up pretty bad. And ...

Ed Metzler: But he survived?

Mr. Ollar: He survived, but he went to the hospital.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Ollar: (Chuckles). So ...

Ed Metzler: So, what was the next step? You're getting a lot of training.

Mr. Ollar: That was ...

Ed Metzler: But you (unintelligible).

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, that was the end of the, uh, then we got back to ... they had left a truck there for us, a weapons carrier or a six by, and we got ... we got ... when we got back to camp and that's all, there was a company clerk standing there, a second lieutenant, and everybody else was gone! And there was a vehicle there. What the hell's going on? Well, everybody went home, went back to Camp Sibert or uh, not Sibert.

Ed Metzler: Pickett.

Mr. Ollar: Pickett. Camp Sibert's in Alabama. And they all got furloughs. Said, "Your papers are waiting for you." So, we loaded up with ... and got back to Camp Pickett and got our furlough papers, and my buddy and I ... he was in Saint ... he came from St. Louis, and I came from the quad cities just west of Chicago, and so we decided to buddy up and hitchhike. We didn't have money, and I think I had two or three dollars and that's about all he had. Short end of the month; you didn't have much money at the end of the month.

Ed Metzler: Living paycheck to paycheck, huh (laughter)?

Mr. Ollar: (Chuckles), well everybody ... everybody sent ... I sent all my money home.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: I only got seven or eight dollars a month or ten in a month and they just ... to buy my shaving cream and soap and toothbrush and ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: But anyway, we got ... decided to hitchhike, my buddy and I, so we started out and we got some rides. And so, in the meantime, we ... we come up with the idea that we'd send ... we'd send for money to meet us ... have money at this ... in Cincinnati. Cincinnati was kind of like the dropping off place for ... that's why ... that's why St. Louis to Chicago, and we're from Virginia, so we've got a little ways to go yet. So, we had money, a hundred dollars each at the Western Union.

Ed Metzler: That's a lot of money back then!

Mr. Ollar: Well, we had to have to get our train ticket.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: I didn't know ... you didn't fly, you ... you went by train. So, we ... that's all we did, and a trucker dropped us off right in front of the ... the Western Union place. I picked up my hundred and he picked up his hundred. I went by ... bought my ticket, a green ticket to Chicago, and he went to St. Louis. And so, I spent uh, seven- or eight-days home. I had a ten ... had a twelve, no thirteen-day furlough. And I got notice to report back on the tenth. I had the ten ... ten days, and we were scheduled for Europe.

Ed Metzler: Did you know that at the time?

Mr. Ollar: No, we didn't.

Ed Metzler: You're usually the last person to find out (chuckles) where you're going.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Yeah, I ... I just a Pfc at the time.

Ed Metzler: So, how'd you feel about going to Europe as opposed to ...

Mr. Ollar: Didn't ... I didn't mind, really. It's all the same.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, nothing, you know, you don't get ... I ... I never was much to get too excited about anything. I got that from my dad.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, I always say that anyway.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, anyway ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, I have a question before we go any further.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah?

Ed Metzler: You said 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion. Chemical?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, we ... I was part of the Chemical Corps.

Ed Metzler: But ...

Mr. Ollar: Which was part of gas.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Ollar: We had gas.

Ed Metzler: Really?! What kind of gas?

Mr. Ollar: We trained in ... we trained in gas, mustard.

Ed Metzler: Mustard gas.

Mr. Ollar: Mustard gas and Lewisite gas. Lucite was odorless; you couldn't see it, and when you ... you smelled it, it killed you and you didn't know it.

Ed Metzler: You never knew it, what hit you.

Mr. Ollar: But you could smell Mustard.

Ed Metzler: Was it likely that you would use that in combat?

Mr. Ollar: We were trained to use it.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Interesting.

Mr. Ollar: It was a part of the Chemical Corps which was established during World War I because of gas.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: And that's ... they developed the mortar and because it was rifled so that that would be spinning when it came out of the barrel. The reason for that was they wanted to time that, explode it in the air over troops.

Ed Metzler: And to be accurate as well ... to aim it. Because the standard mortar, you don't really aim, you just lob it.

Mr. Ollar: Lob it.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: We could put that barrel in over our ... we could ... we could put the wet shell in a barrel. We were so accurate that we were what they called a bastard outfit. We had ... we were with one division, the next division, this division, this regiment.

Ed Metzler: So, you bounced around?

Mr. Ollar: Oh, we was with, at least, fifteen different divisions. I had a list of them. It was ... it was that long, the divisions.

Ed Metzler: Wow! So, you were assigned to various divisions during the war.

Mr. Ollar: Through the war. They wanted us ...

Ed Metzler: Wherever they needed you.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. We were on every front. So anyway, where were we?

Ed Metzler: Well, you're getting ready to go to Europe.

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah. So, we checked into Liverpool; we were on a ... we boarded a ship that was a limey ship, English, and ...

Ed Metzler: Remember the name?

Mr. Ollar: Uh, Liver, uh, [RMMV] Capetown Castle, Capetown Castle was the name of the ship.

Ed Metzler: Hum. Interesting name.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. I'm not sure just what it was. It was a smaller uh, ship. I think it was ... it was a converted liner.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Second class. It wasn't really ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it was the big one like ...

Mr. Ollar: ... wasn't like the Queen Mary or ...

Ed Metzler: ... a Queen Mary or anything.

Mr. Ollar: No, it wasn't ... and 'cause they had covered up their walls with big drapes and so the ... the guys wouldn't carve them.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: And ... though the food was lousy. The British was the lousiest people for cooks that I've ever seen.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: Their food was awful. They served oatmeal with margarine on ... on it, had no milk.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: Now, can you eat oatmeal with a chunk of margarine and no milk?

Ed Metzler: Doesn't sound appealing.

Mr. Ollar: They didn't know how to ... the British are ... British are ...

Ed Metzler: Well, how did ... how did the British act towards you Yanks? Were they friendly, uh, haughty?

Mr. Ollar: Well, well, on the ... on the ship, they didn't pay any attention to us.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh, you were just cargo.

Mr. Ollar: Just cargo, yeah. And we were half starved when we got off there in Liverpool ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: ... 'cause we wouldn't eat their food. And ...

Ed Metzler: Where did you board ship?

Mr. Ollar: November, uh, of '43, and we got over there ...

Ed Metzler: Where'd you get ... New York?

Mr. Ollar: ... no, in October, last part of October. And we got over there in early November.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: In Liver ... and landed in Liverpool.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: And then we went to a little town by the name of Penkridge and checked into a ... a camp that was formerly used by the British soldiers.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And they apparently ... they made arrangements for our battalion to move in there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Ollar: It was pretty good. Yeah, it was ... we couldn't complain about the quarters. It was ... we had stoves; it was the middle of the winter.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: And we were near a little town by the name of Penkridge which was about a half a mile away, a big town; it had a ... a pub and a store and a church.

Ed Metzler: Is that up close to Liverpool or is it further south?

Mr. Ollar: No, it was ... it was about ten kilometers, no, from Wolverhampton.

Ed Metzler: Wolverhampton, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Was ... we were about ten kilo ... kilometers from Wolverhampton and ten, eight to ten from Stafford.

Ed Metzler: So, it's kind of the midlands of (unintelligible), yeah.

Mr. Ollar: We were ... we were right in the midlands.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Ollar: And so, we ... we worked out of there, and we got our mortars. We hadn't had our mortars; everything was being trained physically in small arms and judo and bayonet and all that.

Ed Metzler: You really got special forces.

Mr. Ollar: We didn't ... we haven't even seen a mortar yet, and we got our mortars in England. And so, then we started going into our mortars, and ended up we were, all winter long, we trained with ... with our mortars and fired live ammo.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: And ... in an area they called Hillfacone (sp?). And that was a bunch of sand dunes. I think that was what they called in the movies the moors.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: In the Hounds of Baskerville.

Ed Metzler: Yep, (chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: And that ... but that was actually Hillfacone. And we had an accident in another company. I think it was dog country. One of the shells in a barrel exploded, killed a couple of guys, wounded two or three, and almost killed our commanding officer, our lieutenant colonel; sent him back to the States; never seen him again

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Ollar: And that stopped our live ammo firing. And they inspected every round. They brought in people from the States, and we didn't do anything but just dry runs for quite some time. And that was pretty bad.

Ed Metzler: Did you have any interaction with the locals?

Mr. Ollar: The girls.

Ed Metzler: I see.

Mr. Ollar: (Chuckles), no really. Uh, we didn't ... we used ... we went to the pubs, and we drank their mild and bitter, half and half – off and off they called it. It was more like our beer if you mixed a mild and a bitter.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Like ... it's close to a Pabst, Pabst Blue Ribbon.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, right.

Mr. Ollar: And so, we ... we'd go to the pub and drink our beer and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: ... and have ... have a lot of fun, the guys. And we'd hitchhike to Wolverhampton 'cause traffic was very uh, laid back, no action town. So, we didn't go there. There was a bunch of ports over there, I think. That's ... there was just nothing there.

Ed Metzler: Pretty dull, huh?

Mr. Ollar: So, we went to Wolverhampton.

Ed Metzler: Which is a larger, industrial city, right?

Mr. Ollar: It was, right, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And ... and ... air raids and we ... when we were over there, and everybody kept their blankets on the windows and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: ... and every ... when you went into a pub, you pushed a blanket aside and went in.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And there was no, no street lights. But I don't recall ever getting bombed while we were there by a ...

Ed Metzler: So, do you have any idea at this point where you're going to end up? You're just kind of on hold?

Mr. Ollar: Well, we knew where we were going; we weren't in England to go to CBI [China/Burma/India].

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), that's true (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: So, we knew eventually, and we knew by firing live ammo that we weren't over there on maneuvers.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: So, we just went day by day. I mean, you just go along. You don't worry about it.

Ed Metzler: Well, you're still private first class at this point?

Mr. Ollar: No, I got a corporal stripe.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: And I was a gunner on the mortar squad which was ... I ... I dropped a shell and set up the site. I had a site that sat right on the muzzle of the barrel.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And it had horizontal and vertical settings.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: We had ... we had our control ... he was a staff sergeant; he worked his slide rule and that's how he computes the ... the elevation and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: ... and so on. And that was ... that system is pretty good. We were pretty accurate with that ... that mortar, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you got how many in the crew, if you will?

Mr. Ollar: There was eight.

Ed Metzler: Eight?!

Mr. Ollar: Four and four; we had four guys on each cart, and we had an ammo cart and a mortar cart.

Ed Metzler: And how many mortars in that?

Mr. Ollar: One mortar.

Ed Metzler: One mortar, eight guys?

Mr. Ollar: We had four guys on the ammo, and four guys on the mortar.

Ed Metzler: Man! How big physically is this mortar?

Mr. Ollar: Pretty good size. The barrel weighed ninety-seven pounds, and that was mine. I carried that. The base plate took two men, two guys; that weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, hundred and forty-five, a hundred and fifty. Tripod weighed around forty-five pounds, and that was one man. So, we had one guy on a tripod, one guy on the barrel, had two guys on the base plate.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's four right there!

Mr. Ollar: That's four guys! And when you pulled a cart, you had two guys out in front with chains attached to a T-bar and you had two guys on the T-bar.

Ed Metzler: How many rounds were you carrying in the cart, roughly?

Mr. Ollar: I have no idea.

Ed Metzler: A bunch.

Mr. Ollar: A bunch. And it was plenty heavy. They came in boxes like that and I think it was two to a box, and we ...

Ed Metzler: So, how many millimeters?

Mr. Ollar: Well, that's be equivalent to about a hundred and seven which is a little bigger than a one-oh-five.

Ed Metzler: Than a one-oh-five.

Mr. Ollar: And it was ...

Ed Metzler: That's about three inches.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. It was a good size. It was bigger than a ninety.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And it weighed about eighteen pounds.

Ed Metzler: That's a hunk of powder!

Mr. Ollar: A lot of powder.

Ed Metzler: And gas (chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And when that baby come out of that barrel, it was going just like that.

Ed Metzler: Could you physically see it as it came ...

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah, I used to watch it. Yeah, I ...

Ed Metzler: Somebody ...

Mr. Ollar: ... I was sitting ... I'd step back behind it and 'cause it ... the barrel would be about like that; we had them like that. We fired from a hundred yards up to probably two thousand yards.

Ed Metzler: That's over a mile.

Mr. Ollar: If they wanted to, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: We were ... no, the closer we got, the more accurate we were.

Ed Metzler: Of course.

Mr. Ollar: So, we could just elevate, you know, and it was all on elevation, on distance.

Ed Metzler: So, were you still with your buddy that you had mentioned earlier, or did you all get split up?

Mr. Ollar: No, my buddy from St. Louis, Frank Salic (sp?), we were ... we finished ... we stayed the whole war; he survived. And he didn't do too well. He was ... he was about probably borderline of going ... being drafted ... like ... but he didn't have any kids, and so, he was thirty-four I think he said when he got drafted, which was the limit.

Ed Metzler: That's old!

Mr. Ollar: That's the limit. And he should never have been in our outfit 'cause that was heavy work. You didn't throw those hundred- and fifty-pound base plate around and a barrel around that weighed ninety, almost a hundred pounds.

Ed Metzler: Uhm, that's hard work!

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, and I weighed a hundred and eighty pounds and I ... I was like a young bull. You know, I could pick up that barrel and I'd throw it up on my shoulder and take off.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: And ... but he was ... he was in the, I can't remember if he was in the mortar crew or the ammo crew; I can't remember.

Ed Metzler: Now, were there other mortars and mortar crew that were a part of a larger unit?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. That was ... it was a battalion.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: We had four companies of battal ... of mortars, and ... and a headquarters company.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: Able, Baker, Charlie and Dog.

Ed Metzler: Not Delta? Dog?

Mr. Ollar: Dog.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), which one were you?

Mr. Ollar: Baker.

Ed Metzler: You're Baker. Yeah, Company B, Company Baker.

Mr. Ollar: First Platoon, First Squad. Always on the right flank.

Ed Metzler: 81st. So, when did they come and yank you up and take you somewhere to fight?

Mr. Ollar: Well, we were trained, like I say, all winter.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And we knew how to run those mortars. We really ... we would be firing two or three times a week, just you know, and we got so we ... it was just automatic. We even fired off a ... off an LCVP. They set up a ... set up a deal on the ... and built a ramp (unintelligible) table like a ... I don't know what you call it, uh, skid like.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: You know what a skid is?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And mount our mortars on that, and what we were trying to do is we were training for ... for the landing. And when we get into that, we knew we were getting into something pretty heavy because we were caught by the waves and on ... dropping the shells, and we could ...

Ed Metzler: That's when you knew you'd have an amphibious scene in your future.

Mr. Ollar: We knew that. Well, we trained all winter in ... on an LCVP boat. And landing and pulling the ... pulling them off the ... see, they were on carts.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Couldn't ... uh, we couldn't ... and then, you didn't land with jeeps. And so, we ... we were in this stage and they ... they got march order and we went into a staging area.

Ed Metzler: Where was that?

Mr. Ollar: I'm not sure.

Ed Metzler: It was down south somewhere.

Mr. Ollar: Southern England. And we weren't told where we were.

Ed Metzler: No, I can imagine.

Mr. Ollar: And there was probably, we heard rumors of course, I don't know how true it was, but there's fifteen or twenty thousand troops supposed to have been in that staging area in six men pup tents. And so, we were there and the old man called the company (unintelligible) he called us up and said we were going to get passes for the ... one night and that's the last time you're going to get any

passes, so you can go to town. You know, I can't remember the name of the town, but it was in southern England.

Ed Metzler: Was it down on the coast or was it inland?

Mr. Ollar: It was just ... not too far from the coast.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Who's the old man?

Mr. Ollar: The captain.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, was he a good guy?

Mr. Ollar: Our company commander.

Ed Metzler: Was he a ...

Mr. Ollar: Captain Levy; he was, he was a good man. Yeah. Came from the University of Alabama.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: Played football there.

Other Person: (Cough).

Ed Metzler: Wow.

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, we ... in this staging area and they ... it wasn't too far off the coast on ... we couldn't have been too far off the coast.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Oh, L-e-v-y is how you spell Captain Levy, his name.

Other Person: (Cough).

Mr. Ollar: Good man. So, we ...

Ed Metzler: So, one night on the town before?

Mr. Ollar: One night on the town, and we were told to go in and talk about (pause)

Other Person: Calais?

Mr. Ollar: Huh?

Other Person: Calais. Calais.

Mr. Ollar: Calais. 'Cause ...

Ed Metzler: They wanted you to talk up Calais so that the Nazis will think that's where we're landing.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Well, it would seem to be ... seem to be the right thing.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: It was only nineteen or twenty miles ...

Ed Metzler: It's the closest spot.

Mr. Ollar: ... across there.

Ed Metzler: Yep.

Mr. Ollar: And Rummel, from what I understand, what I read later, he ... he bought it. He was ... and Hitler bought it.

Ed Metzler: Yep!

Mr. Ollar: So, that was the main thing. And of course, I seen after the war that they had these dummy tanks and stuff.

Ed Metzler: Inflatable tanks and everything, yeah!

Mr. Ollar: It was Patton's Army.

Ed Metzler: Right, First Army.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, we got ... I got a big kick out of that.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: So anyway (laughter), so they ... we're sitting in this staging area and then we go into town and we sit in a pub; there was four of us at a table, and it was different guys around. And they told us, "Talk about ... talk about Calais." And of course, we did. And, "Where in the hell is Calais?" ... you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: "Oh, it's on ... it's on the coast of France." "Oh, the rumor is that that's where we're going," you know? That's the kind of ... that's the kind of stuff we were supposed to talk about (cough). One night we got out, and I don't know whose idea that was, might have been Captain Levy's idea, but it might have come down from ... from Corps.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Anyway, so, then we were buttoned up, and so then we got march order, and our mortars, we never seen them; they disappeared. And we didn't know it, but they were being transferred already to another hold, a ship, to our ship, and we got on there, and I'm going to have to (Mr. Ollar is moving about the room, and the recording is temporarily stopped).

Ed Metzler: And that's where we are. Can I start it again?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Alright, we're back.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, well our mortars was on this ship, and so anyway, we ... we boarded the ship and it was in the middle of the night. I had no idea what time it was, twelve, one, two o'clock in the morning, and ...

Ed Metzler: What kind of ship?

Mr. Ollar: It was a British, small ship; it was not very big. And it had a boom, and probably a ship that you would find in a ... unloading ... wharf area.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: That type of ship. But it had quarters down below and it, see, the only one landed that day ... there was just two companies out of our battalion – Baker and Dog was the two companies, our company and Dog company. And ...

Ed Metzler: This is on the first day?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. We were on that ship to go over, and ...

Ed Metzler: June 6th.

Mr. Ollar: ... for D-Day, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, they ... the seas were rough, of course. We didn't know that, so we ... we got ... the middle of the night down ... down below. No ... just the whole time. I mean, they wanted us to get out of sight. And it was that way probably all on the whole coast.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: And we didn't know it, but the 29th Division and First Division and the British and the Canadians were all doing the same thing. And there was just like I say, two companies – Able and Charlie were held back; Baker and Dog were scheduled.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And ... but, I don't know, we ... Dog Company was a different ship.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: We were the only ones on that ship.

Ed Metzler: But there were other infantrymen or ...

Other Person: Other ships.

Mr. Ollar: Nothing, no.

Ed Metzler: Just you guys.

Mr. Ollar: We were the only ones on that ship.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: And, that's outside of the crew, of course.

Ed Metzler: Oh, of course, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: But ... 'cause I don't remember seeing any sight of other soldier[s] on that boat.
And ...

Ed Metzler: So, where ... which port is this? This is Portsmouth or ...

Mr. Ollar: I think it was, uh, (pause) it was up the coast.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: It wasn't down here; it was further ... when you look at the coast of England, it was up like this.

Ed Metzler: Further west, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, up the ... yeah. It'd be west. And I don't know where Dog Company was, had no idea.

Ed Metzler: Well, they put you off one day, didn't they, because of weather?

Mr. Ollar: Two or three days. We ...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible) that.

Mr. Ollar: We got on there the 3rd, and we were there three nights.

Ed Metzler: Did you get sick?

Mr. Ollar: No, we just sit there.

Ed Metzler: But you weren't up and down on the ship ...

Mr. Ollar: No.

Ed Metzler: ... because of the waves and stuff?

Mr. Ollar: Didn't bother me.

Ed Metzler: She was tied up, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. No, we just sit there, couldn't go upstairs, and couldn't go out upside.

Ed Metzler: How boring!

Mr. Ollar: We played a lot of poker and ... and ... but the chow ... chow was good, I remember. And we just laid in the bunks, and it was not a good deal, but heck, we had no choice. And then we got ... we were prepared every night for the next morning, and they called it off. So, they ... the night of the 5th, it was just like another night, yeah. And so, we got the order to come up to topside, and we hadn't been up topside. We hadn't been out of the hold. And just sitting there and ... in the hold of that damned British ship.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: Eating that damned British food.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: And so ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: ... we ... yeah, our mortars came.

Ed Metzler: Onto the ship?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, some way or another. I ... I know ... still don't quite understand that 'cause I was pretty busy and checking the gear and ... and my rifle and all that. And they issued hand grenades, so we were, you know, and I remember they ... the boom, the big boom, the mortar went over the side down into the LCVP which had pulled up, and I remember that. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, the LCVP, they didn't bring it aboard?

Mr. Ollar: Oh no!

Ed Metzler: It's too big?

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah! That was a thirty-foot LCVP, landing craft vehicle personnel.

Ed Metzler: So, what do they do, tow it along behind?

Mr. Ollar: No, they were out there, probably out there going around, and we ended up going around in a circle, and I imagine they brought them over from the coast, LCMs and LCTs.

Ed Metzler: So, you rode that child across the channel?

Mr. Ollar: Oh, we, you know, we were on that ship, and we went to ... that specific area, and then they ... they ... we ... the mortars went over; this was all synchronized.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: There was LCVPs, there was ... got assigned to our ship; had to be because here came ... here it came, and it was right up there, and they tied it up to our ship. And when we went over, first time the mortars went over, the mortar and our two carts, the boom come over and dropped ... dropped it down in there. I can just barely remember that. And things were kind of hazy, and ... and we personally were pretty busy. So then, we went over the side. We had to climb down on those ropes and it was a rough sea. The LCVP was pitching up, banging up against the ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: ... and you had to jump in the LCVP up above; you couldn't just ... just drop in.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Ollar: You had to ... 'cause it was coming up and (popping sound) and banging up against the side of the ship. And so, you had to ... we're talking about maybe seven, eight feet.

Other Person: (Cough).

Ed Metzler: Good way to break a leg!

Mr. Ollar: And nobody got (unintelligible), and we were tougher. They would have been tough; we were tough because they had, like I say, our commanding officer and our Captain Levy was a former football player at Alabama. He was one tough cookie!

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Ollar: He was about five foot eleven or so, six feet, and he weighed about two-twenty, two-thirty, and he was nothing but muscle!

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: You didn't fool with him. And that's the way he wanted us. And I ... I weighed, last time I weighed was the only time I weighed in England, you go by stones, and somebody knew what the ...

Ed Metzler: Conversion was?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: And I weighed a hundred ... a hundred and eighty I think it was.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: And so ... but that was with my ODS, so I weighed about a hundred and seventy-five probably.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And ... but I was just ... we were all solid muscle. He had us trained, and that two or three days we laid around in the bottom of that ship didn't bother us at all.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: So, when we got in that LCVP, it was pretty rough, the seas were rough. We went into an area not too far and circled around and around. And then when our time came, we peeled off, and ... and headed towards the beach. And that was HR plus forty-five minutes.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: And HR was 6:30 in the morning, so that would have been ...

Ed Metzler: 7:15.

Mr. Ollar: Something like that, yeah. I didn't have a watch, so it would be around ... yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you were right in the front end of this whole thing?!

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah! They wanted those mortars. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, it was a rough crossing, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, it was ... guys ... it was ... one guy got sick, that's the only thing I ... I can only remember one guy vomiting 'cause we, you know, we [were] pretty good about that 'cause we had trained all winter on LCVPs (chuckle), and (unintelligible) water in the channel; the channel was rough.

Ed Metzler: So, you had been training in the channel on that ...

Mr. Ollar: All winter!

Ed Metzler: ... LCVP?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: We had our ... butts got wet in that cold channel more than once!

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, land in water up to our waist! Pulling those carts. I mean, we were a pretty tough bunch.

Ed Metzler: So, what was it like at the other end?

Mr. Ollar: Well, we dumped ... we got in ... we ... had a little problem. We ... we were coming in to our designated area which was the right flank to support this particular, 116th regiment, uh, the 29th division. I can't remember what company it was, Able ... Able ... uh ...

Ed Metzler: 116th Regiment, which division?

Mr. Ollar: [The] 29th. 116th was known as the Bloody ... uh Bloody 116th. They had ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're going into Omaha, right?

Mr. Ollar: Right, Omaha Beach on the right flank.

Ed Metzler: Right flank.

Mr. Ollar: So, we're coming in right on schedule, and I mean, the lead of course, stupid.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, I'm looking through this peep site, you know, the ramp. There's an opening on ... like that you could see through. So, I'm right up there looking through that, and right out in front of me there coming in, and there's a ... these posts, they're just cedar posts or whatever. They were about a four by four or six by sixes, just ordinary stumps. And they ... what the Jerries had done, had driven those in and they were tipped out toward ... out like this ...

Ed Metzler: Pointed out, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: ... from the shore.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Probably twenty, thirty, forty degrees, whatever. And on the end of that (slapping sounds) was a Tellermine, anti-tank. And we'd been briefed on that. They had taken pictures from the air. They ... they knew they were there. But the engineers in our sector didn't ... didn't take them out. There was uh, engineers landing before anybody; they swam in I imagine and were supposed to take those out. They got some.

Ed Metzler: But not all.

Mr. Ollar: But [not] all. And there was a Seventh ... Seventh Engineering Battalion, and they had terrible, terrible ... they don't talk about them guys, but they had a lot of ... of casualties. So anyway ...

Other Person: You're about to hit the mine.

Mr. Ollar: The ... the front of that LCVP is gone like, you know, bobbing, you know.

Ed Metzler: Up and down, up and down.

Mr. Ollar: Coming in the waves.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, yeah, 'cause ... and this thing is only ... it had to be about six foot or well, when I seen it, it was about ten or twelve feet, and we kept yelling, screaming, "Tellermine, Tellermine!" And he had thrown it probably in reverse, but it just don't take right now, and it was still shoving it in, and I'm petrified standing there looking at that mine. And if ... when ... when we'd of hit it, it'd have blew me to hell. And I didn't know any better to get back away from it. I remember, I was just froze like.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: So, looking through that peep sight. But he did, he stopped and I swear, it couldn't have been any further from here ... from that ... end of that table, six foot long.

Ed Metzler: Maybe six feet away.

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah! It was so close, I thought I could have reached out and grabbed it. Yep, I thought I could have. I ...

Ed Metzler: So, it backed away? You could back away?

Mr. Ollar: He threw it in reverse, and he stopped and he kind of went back. And so, then we pulled out. We couldn't go in more when we was supposed to, so then he turned and he's going parallel with the beach. Lot ... lot of small arms and a lot of hell going on, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're taking fire, is that right?

Mr. Ollar: Well, we were out about a good ... I'd say a half a block from the beach then maybe three-quarters of a block running parallel with the beach. Here's the beach and we're running like this, just barely, and (pow sound) we get hit with a

... I think it was a ... it had to be an eighty-eight; the Jerries had eighty-eights in those pillboxes.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: They raised a lot of hell with them; they're flat projectories. And (pause) (cough) we were running parallel to the beach there, and ... and we get a hit on the back of our LCVP. And how we didn't have any casualties there, I will never know. So, they ... we took ... we took in water which we ... and it disabled our ... our LCVP. If I ... I ... if I think ... I'm thinking, LCVPs, I think they all had twin screws, one on each side, so he couldn't control the ... the ... we ... he couldn't ... we couldn't go back in, so here we are taking on water out there and sitting ducks. And he had it shut down because he ... it just went in a circle ... 'cause he only had one prop.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And so anyway, the captain there, Levy, he was on our ship, on our LCVP. He hollered down an LCM; that's a little bigger than an LCVP. You can get ... you can get probably two or three squads on that. That's a uh, that's the next step up ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: ... LCM. And LCVP is only thirty. I think LCM is forty-five or maybe even fifty ... fifty foot.

Ed Metzler: Foot.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, pretty good size. So, we transferred. They ... they tied the two landing craft together, and we transferred over ... we had to take our mortars all apart and took the cart over and each piece, and put all the Mae Wests back on to make them semi-buoyant, and turn him around and go back in. He saved our butts probably because ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're aboard the LCM now, is that right?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And your equipment.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, and ...

Ed Metzler: And the LCVP, where is it?

Mr. Ollar: It's left, we left it.

Ed Metzler: Just let it go?

Mr. Ollar: Left it go. And the coxswain, he jumped over and ... but it was just left to go.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And probably eventually sunk I imagine. It was taking on water.

Ed Metzler: Probably still there (chuckles).

Other Person: Could be.

Mr. Ollar: So, we ... we had to get those mortars in. So, then the captain ordered the coxswain to hit the beach apparently 'cause he ... when we cut ... cut her lose and we ... put the ... put our mortars all back together and we strapped the Mae Wests on top of them, make them semi-buoyant, and he brought us back in to where he had been before which was here and we were supposed to be there, and ...

Ed Metzler: Get another good look at that mine!

Other Person: (Chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: Well, we didn't want to ... couldn't go back there. We couldn't go in there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: The only ... the only thing we could have, looking back in retrospect, uh, we ... if we'd of backed out and just fired our mortars, fired our small arms, we could have blew that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: No, we didn't think. And the captain didn't think about it. In fact, I just thought about it now.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: That that's what you could have done. Never thought about it before. And ... but we'd have still had to get around that ... that timber, so we ... we'd of been probably how ... I don't know how deep that water was. The tide was coming in but it still was coming ... it was not high tide ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: ... like it was, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, you hit the beach.

Mr. Ollar: We hit the beach and then we had to go from this point (slapping sounds) to this point. That's where we were supposed to be. That's ... that's ... mortars to keep them ... support those GIs that were trying to take that ground not a hundred yards ahead of us. And (pause) we ... we got down ... down there; we used the mortars for cover from the small arms.

Ed Metzler: So, you got ashore.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: But you weren't exactly where you wanted to be? You were up the beach always.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, because of that mine.

Ed Metzler: Right. So, what did you do? Did you then ...

Mr. Ollar: Well, we pulled in and stripped the mortars off of the ... with the Mae Wests and took off, and then we ran into this ... some problems as we're going. We're running parallel with the beach.

Ed Metzler: Trying to get to where you were supposed to be.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Are you taking small arms fire?

Mr. Ollar: Some, not heavy, but some. And we jumped behind the mortars for cover, and that was the best thing in the world. The mortars give us cover.

Ed Metzler: So, you'd stop periodically.

Mr. Ollar: Mortar ... mortar carts.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah, the carts.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: But the sand, is the sand soft and squishy or are you ... are you able to pull the carts along?

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah. We pulled those carts; we could pull those through mud.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: Which we did all winter.

Ed Metzler: They have big wheels on them?

Mr. Ollar: We were just like horses. Yeah, the wheels were like that.

Ed Metzler: Oh! Like thirty-six-inch wheels, okay.

Mr. Ollar: Well, they were ... they were pretty good size.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, twenty-four (unintelligible).

Mr. Ollar: I'd say twenty-four, twenty, yeah. And you had four guys on each cart.

Ed Metzler: You're working hard.

Mr. Ollar: Well, we were double timing.

Ed Metzler: Damn right!

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah. And if we got any small arms and then you hit the dirt and crawled behind that one ... carts.

Ed Metzler: What's going through your mind during all of this?

Mr. Ollar: Automatic.

Ed Metzler: No time to think.

Mr. Ollar: Nope! (Pop sound), automatic. I wasn't, uh, when you get scared in combat is when you stop. You're not scared at the time, but if this is ... this is not time for being scared; that's the way I seen it.

Ed Metzler: I guess the adrenaline just overcomes everything.

Mr. Ollar: Right.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: When you're scared is when you stop. And then you start worrying.

Ed Metzler: Start thinking about it.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. But when you're doing, you don't have time to think about it. These guys that say they're always scared, they're lying. Either that or they don't know what they're talking about.

Ed Metzler: Hum. So, you finally got the mortars set up.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, we ... here's the pointe ... Pointe du Hoc.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I've been there.

Mr. Ollar: Okay. Right here is where we were. Say about fifty, seventy, maybe a hundred yards, oh no, not ... not that long, not that far. Uh, while we were ... we were set up where we were supposed to go in in the first place. I could show you on the ... on the map, but I can't tell you. It's ... it's ...

Ed Metzler: But you're basically at the base of the Pointe du Hoc?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, we're to the left of the Pointe du Hoc there.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: And so, the Rangers are trying to get up those ropes.

Ed Metzler: Going up the ropes.

Mr. Ollar: So, they ... the ones that were on top were getting slaughtered, so they were calling for fire of some kind.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: So, we were right there. So, we set up and we were firing on top of that pointe, and we dropped a log of shells up there. And we don't know how we did, but we got that ... must have did some good because they eventually got up there, and then we had to take our mortars out ... and turn them at a right angle inland and start firing to support. This had priority over our ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: These guys were getting slaughtered, sixty percent, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Rough! So ... but they got over the top, and you guys supported them with fire.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. When I got ...

Ed Metzler: And then what did you ... you and your mortars ...

Mr. Ollar: Well, that's when we changed our mortars to face inland. And we knocked out a, it's in our ... uh, we got in the first machine gun nest (chuckle), I was the gunner at the time, and I was in charge of the men, of that ... that barrel and I was a corporal, and that was my ... my baby, and I felt pretty good about that (chuckles); killed a few Jerries.

Other Person: (Chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: You don't know how ... how you'll react, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. But your reaction was you felt like you were accomplishing what you set up to do.

Mr. Ollar: I felt pretty good about it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Any of your guys get hit?

Mr. Ollar: Not in our squad; we had casualties, but our squad came through it pretty good. I don't recall anybody getting hit.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Fact, we were awful lucky or we were awful fast on our feet.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, did you go inland immediately at that point?

Mr. Ollar: Well, then we had to go back a little ways. Once they secured a certain area, we ... we pulled up and went down and then went up that hill. And we had to get up that hill in order to set up on top. I don't know why really, but that's what we did, what we were supposed to do. So, going up that hill was (pause) it was, uh, it was kind of bad. It ... it was a few pockets of Jerries there, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you see any of them?

Mr. Ollar: No, alive ones.

Ed Metzler: None of them surrendered or anything?

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah, we seen some ... some of those, and most of them were prisoners.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: But not too many. Well (pause) ...

Ed Metzler: Well, you're on the beach, you're ... secured the beach, but you're a long way from Germany.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. We got up on top that hill, and that's where we spent the day, the rest of the day, had our mortars set up and we fired. There was a ... out in front of us ... once we got up the hill, and we got those mortar ... we pulled those mortars up that hill; I don't know how we did it, and we set up, we fired ... fired a few rounds, and then things quieted down. But the artillery was unbelievable going over our heads and going on down to the beach.

Ed Metzler: The German artillery.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was that eighty-eights or were they having ...

Mr. Ollar: No, it wasn't eighty-eights, they're flat. Eighty-eight is a flat projectile.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: It was probably one-five-fives.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And they were ... they had a one-fifty; ours was a one-five-five.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And it was just going over that hill, and they had them all zeroed in.

Ed Metzler: (Throat clearing).

Mr. Ollar: And it probably had maneuvers all ... all over there for three years.

Ed Metzler: Oh yeah, they had a long time to practice that!

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, and they had those thing ... those things, and they were just landing right on the beach (pow sound) just ... casual, getting tore up. And we're up there and we can't do anything about it. There (pause) there was a duck, they called them ducks, amphibious ducks.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Come ... they were coming in off ... trying to ... and that was in the afternoon, and Jerries was just pounding ... pounding the beach like hell with those one-five-ohs. And ... but we found out later when Diane and I were over there on the 75th anniversary that they had a gun emplacement about five miles back, remember that?

Other Person: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And that's where they had the one-five ... five-ohs. And they were, of course, we didn't know that at the time, and they were lobbing those babies right over our heads. I ... they were just going (swishing sounds) right over our heads!

Ed Metzler: You could hear them, huh?

Mr. Ollar: And we lost all our jeeps.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible) still firing at them?

Mr. Ollar: We, oh, we set up, yeah. That's the first thing we ...

Ed Metzler: Where did you get your additional information from? Did they bring more in?

Mr. Ollar: We had ammo on our cart.

Ed Metzler: Enough.

Mr. Ollar: And we didn't get any for uh, I can't remember, (pause). I can't remember when we got additional ammo.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: We had quite a few rounds on that cart.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: It was boxes and they were stacked high and it was two in each one; I think it was two, I think, because uh, it might have been four. I didn't ... I wasn't on the ammo.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: I was on the mortar.

Ed Metzler: Well, did you have to fight yourself through the hedgerows?

Mr. Ollar: Oh, that came later.

Ed Metzler: So, that's coming, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, yeah. Hedgerows had entirely different deal.

Ed Metzler: Were you guys mobile? Did you ... were you on a vehicle or did you have to hoof it?

Mr. Ollar: No, we didn't, like I say, we lost all of our jeeps.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: And they kept ... they ... I was going to tell you about that duck.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Ollar: They had a direct hit on that duck that was loaded with gasoline tanks. Those five-gallon cans that goes on the back of the jeeps?

Ed Metzler: Jerry ... yeah, called Jerry cans (laughter) actually, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: And ... and of course it exploded; what an explosion that was! And these ... there was cans going like this, and there was flame coming out of them, you know? And we're ... and one (unintelligible) about from here across the street (unintelligible), and of course, there ... there was gas and there was flames everywhere. We had ... grass was about, on a hillside, was (unintelligible). They had cleared away all the bushes; there was no cover. And they didn't want any cover.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: 'Cause the pillboxes was here and the hill was here and then they were here, so going up that hill, why, you didn't have no cover. So, it caught on fire and it ... it burned, oh, I'd say probably from here to ... the end of the house maybe, but it got that close. Yeah, I ... I can still see it (Pause) ...

Other Person: (Cough).

Mr. Ollar: The (pause) ...

Other Person: Tell him where you went from the ...

Ed Metzler: So, what happened next?

Other Person: ... shoreline?

Mr. Ollar: Uh, (unintelligible). I ... I never talked about this part of it. I ... I have to go on (unintelligible).

Other Person: Well, that's what I'm saying, go ahead and tell him where ... where you went.

Mr. Ollar: (Cough), but (pause) eventually it burned ... burned out, of course.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: But ...

Other Person: Then you ... from there you went to Paris.

Mr. Ollar: Huh?

Other Person: From there you went through Paris.

Mr. Ollar: Well, that was a little while.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it took a while as I remember.

Mr. Ollar: That was July and not too far ... far from my birthday.

Other Person: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: You were a grand total of what – twenty-three, I think.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, that was in '44, and my birthday was uh, what is my birthday?

Other Person: (Chuckles), twenty-one.

Mr. Ollar: July, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, July the 23rd is your birthday.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, July 20 ... July 26th.

Other Person: 26th.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And you were ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... born in '21, so in July of '44, which is what we're talking about ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, I was twenty-three.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you were twenty ... turned twenty-three.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, just a baby.

Ed Metzler: Just a child.

Mr. Ollar: So, we (pause) we had to take Saint-Lô, and in order to take Saint-Lô, we had to take Hill 192. Hill 192 was ... the Jerries had probably a division there. And

they had had, special troops, paratroopers and they were dug in. And what they ... what our brass did was synchronize the fire power that we had at that time. We had one-five-fives and two-forties, one-five-ohs or ... or one-oh-fives. Our mortars, nineties, sixties; we had all the fire power by that time in July.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And they had ... they synchronized all that fire power to come in at the same time on that hill. Now, just imagine, two-forties, one-five-fives.

Ed Metzler: Two-forties! That's huge!

Mr. Ollar: (Unintelligible). Onen-five-fives, one-oh-fives, four point two mortars, nineties and sixties, P-50 ... P-47s which five-hundred-pound bombs, and H (?) strafing, all that coming in at one time. Now, artillery was right below the P-47s. P-47s were coming in with five-hundred-pound bombs. You can't imagine that hill what it took! There was Jerries everywhere, dead, they was parched, pieces of them everywhere! Just blew them to hell! And that's how we took that hill. And ...

Ed Metzler: This is all Americans or do we have Canadians and Brits as well?

Mr. Ollar: No, just Americans.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: I never seen them.

Ed Metzler: They were working another area.

Mr. Ollar: They were on our left. This was all First Army.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: This was Bradley's Army.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Patton was not even a bubble.

Ed Metzler: No. Well, he wasn't ... I don't know that he was even there yet.

Mr. Ollar: He was in England yet.

Ed Metzler: Yeah! He came later.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. He came right in the middle of the summer, later toward the fall. I don't even remember where he came in. It wasn't an important part as I was concerned. But they ... then, of course, we had went through the hedgerows,

and that was, of course, we're pulling ... we're still pulling our mortars. Patton got to our jeeps. And when our jeeps were knocked out, we're going along this sunken road, dusty and dirty, we hadn't had any hot chow for I don't know how long, and we ... we're going through a bunch of guys and they were Rangers, and they were ... they sitting there and with their backs up against a hedgerow up in the sunken road.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Hedgerows on each side of the road, and some of them would be eight foot high, and you could sit there with your back up against them. And it was all dirt roads; there was no blacktop or anything.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I understand.

Mr. Ollar: And so, we going through it, and ... and we're not paying any attention. These guys ... we're pulling those mortars, and *pow!* Somebody come up and hit me on the back, and I turned around and I said, "What the hell?!" And here, it's a guy from Rock Island, Illinois.

Ed Metzler: You're kidding!

Mr. Ollar: A guy I knew from ... when I was (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Small world!

Mr. Ollar: A guy by the name of John Hudson (sp?).

Ed Metzler: I'll be danged!

Mr. Ollar: And he's a first sergeant in the Rangers. And I ... I ... he walked alongside me for a while and we shook hands and, "Good luck." And that opened up to Saint-Lô and at Saint-Lô Hill 192 in Saint-Lô, and then that opened up to go to Paris. And that time we ... we joined the Fourth Division somewhere in the hedgerows. And when we broke out of there, we were with the Fourth and we headed toward Paris. And the Fourth Division was a ... a damned good outfit. They had ... had a cloverleaf, four ... four cloverleaf emblem. And we were with the Fourth Division all the way across France and went through Paris with them. We were the first ones into Paris. We weren't in ... we kept ... three of our companies stayed back but Baker Company went through Paris first and went right by Notre Dame, crossed the Seine; there was Notre Dame! And I

said, "There's Notre Dame!" (chuckles). I mean, you know, that was something.

Ed Metzler: So, were you getting cheers from the crowd?

Mr. Ollar: Oh god, there was ...

Ed Metzler: I've seen those movies.

Mr. Ollar: ... girls were all over jeeps and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh huh!

Mr. Ollar: And they was hugging and kissing us and ...

Ed Metzler: Free bottles of wine and ...

Mr. Ollar: ... throwing flowers on us.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, kissing you.

Mr. Ollar: Drinking wine.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: The victors!

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And all the Jerries, we seen, I don't know how many; I did know but two or three, whatever it was, naked woman running and there's be five or six or a dozen French women chasing her and she was naked, and they had swastikas, they had shaved their heads and there was swastikas painted on their heads. And I saw a couple of them. When we went through Paris, there was still combat conditions. They had the parade two days later. There were Jerries there; they were snipers. We were ... I didn't ... we didn't get hit. None of my ... of our outfit got hit by snipers, but there was activity. In fact, we set up our mortars in the front yard in front of a factory, a Kodak factory, that manufactured Kodak cameras.

Ed Metzler: In Paris?

Mr. Ollar: On the edge of Paris, north of Paris.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: And we were firing our mortars into a pocket of Jerries to see what ... what happened. One outfit went through the middle which we were with, one of our companies went with another company of infantry on the right flank to create a

cir ... uh, pincer, and they caught this small group of Jerries in the pocket on the other side of Paris on the north side by going that way. The Fourth Division was a pretty smart outfit. And so, oh, we got orders to set up our ... our mortars, so we had to ... we had our jeeps by then, and we pulled in there, sat our jeep ... uh, set our mortars up and this guy was ... one of the guys says, "Look up there!" And there was a guy on the roof of this flat-top building taking our pictures (laughter), and we're dropping them mortars in there, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're on somebody's movies.

Mr. Ollar: Well yeah, later ...

Other Person: Kodak.

Mr. Ollar: ... they give ... we ... we got a copy of that.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), is that right?!

Mr. Ollar: A couple of the ... some of the guys went over there and they stopped in there from our company and got a copy.

Ed Metzler: I'll be danged!

Mr. Ollar: And then they ... they made copies and I got one! It's not a real good, but it's ... it's ... yeah. So anyway (chuckles), we're ... they ... they got ... we ... we eliminated that pocket, knocked the hell out of them, if I remember right, with ... and then we got march order to continue. And we run the Jerries all the way across Belgium, could never catch them. And uh, what the Germans were doing ... they weren't dumb, I'll give them that, they would set up an eighty-eight in an area that would cover an area that when we ... they knew we were coming on.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And they'd wait for us. And then when we moved in the area, *ka-wang!* We'd get it. And we had ... we had some casualties. And the kid from Minnesota was killed there, Michael Sun (sp?) or something like that.

Ed Metzler: Was he in your group?

Mr. Ollar: He was in our ... our battalion.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: Our ... our company, yeah. Yeah, he was in another ... another platoon, but he was in our company.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, kid was from Minnesota. Anyway, we went into, I don't know if you heard about Saint Vith? That's a ...

Ed Metzler: Tell me about it.

Mr. Ollar: Saint Vith is the last village before you go into Germany out of Belgium. And that's where we went through. And from in there, we went into an area they called it the Hürtgen Forest, and the Jerries had set up a Siegfried Line of pillboxes.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I've heard of Siegfried Line.

Mr. Ollar: Well, that was the Hürtgen Forest. So, we went through Saint Vith, and the Jerries were running, of course, to get to their pillboxes in the Siegfried Line. And ... them dirty bastards, one of them ... was ... kids, little kids, little Belgium kids. I don't want to talk about it.

Other Person: Oh, go on to something else.

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, you can tell him, I can't.

Ed Metzler: That's alright.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you came up to the Siegfried Line.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, we sat, and ...

Ed Metzler: Well, what did you do?

Mr. Ollar: ... I ... I was in with radio by that time. I was not in mortars.

Ed Metzler: Oh?!

Mr. Ollar: I was forward observer.

Ed Metzler: So, you changed jobs?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, I changed back ... some ... by ... sometime back before ... before I ever to the Siegfried Line I was in rad ... radio.

Ed Metzler: So, you are a forward observer?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: For the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion?

Mr. Ollar: (Silent response).

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Yeah, that was ... so anyway, we were forward and now I could see the pillboxes; they were right out in front of us about a half a block away. Of course, everything was cleared away, and it was uh, two or three pillboxes (slapping sounds), and they brought up a SP, self-propelled one-five-five, flat projectory, and that thing ... boy, when they ... that thing hit those pillboxes ... but it didn't do any good. And they were calling for fire with one-oh-five ... their one-oh-fives and mortars on their own pillboxes. They must have had six or seven foot of dirt piled on it. You couldn't hurt them inside. And there was a lieutenant and he was in our outfit, I can't remember his name, he got a Silver Star. He crawled out there with hand grenades and white phosphorous. Did you ever see a white phosphorous hand grenade?

Ed Metzler: Not that I know of; I know what you're talking about.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. We never carried white phosphorous, but I carried HE. But he ... he had ... he had some white phosphorous hand grenades; he crawled out there. How he did I, I don't know, and got up alongside that pillbox and they had these little portholes so they could see and direct fire.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Also, they could get small arms fire out of them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And they had little grates ... covered them, and he dropped ... he ... and they set back a little ways like ... and he was able to pull a pin on that white phosphorous hand grenade and shove it up in there and that burned them grates out and he ... he lobbed in hand grenades, took ... took the pillbox.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Ollar: Should have got a DFC; he got the ... he got the Silver Star. And after that things quieted down after that. And they were able to ... once they got the one, they were able ... we were able to somehow, I don't know how that all happened now, but anyway, it ... it was ... the Jerries were surrendering. And my buddy (chuckles) Frank Salic, called him Sad Sack, Sad Sack Salic, he ... he's out there

looking for sou ... souvenirs, and he's got his M-1 (chuckles), he's got his M-1 and he walks into a pillbox; he's looking for ... for a helmet or I don't know what he's looking for.

Ed Metzler: A flag or something, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And (chuckle) here he comes out with about twenty-five or thirty Jerries that were in there waiting for somebody to come in and they were going ... they wanted to surrender. They knew they didn't have a chance; we had them ... we had them with ... that one ... when they ...

Ed Metzler: So, they surrendered?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And here he comes out (chuckles) with his M-1 and he's got twenty-five, thirty of those Jerries all in tow (laughter). Sad Sack was something; he was a character! There was always a character.

Ed Metzler: Yep, that's true.

Mr. Ollar: Right? And he was our character.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, you're actually in Germany at this point?

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah, that's right.

Ed Metzler: 'Cause the ...

Mr. Ollar: We were in the Hürtgen Forest. So, we ... they were mopping, you know, taking prisoners and mopping up and getting rid of ammo, the Jerry ammo and all that kind of stuff. And uh, evidently, they were able to knock out or ... because if we didn't ... we weren't getting any one-oh-fives or ... nothing was coming in.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And I think that's how we really took them because somebody got to those ... artillery back there, and that's the only way I ... 'cause they ... they were just slaughtering us with that artillery; we couldn't get near their pillboxes. And so, everything was quiet. And we sat there taking prisoners and destroying small arms and stuff, you know? And it was a couple of our guys got hit and Sergeant Frazier (sp?), he was banged up, took some shrapnel and ... and came from Oklahoma, nice kid. And he was going back so I jumped on the jeep and we took him back to ...

Ed Metzler: Back to ...?

Mr. Ollar: Aid station.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: He had some shrapnel.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! You ever get any shrapnel?

Mr. Ollar: I had a little piece one time in my half ... uh, my left hand, and I went back; I was all out of uh, what'd they call that powder? Uh, it was ...

Ed Metzler: But it's an antiseptic, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: ... little pack of powder. If you got wounded or whatever, or it's your buddy, you sprinkled that on there to hold down infection. Sulfa, wasn't it?

Ed Metzler: Could be.

Other Person: Yeah, I think it's Sulfa.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. So, I ... I didn't have my sulfa pack; I don't know what happened to it. And so, I went back to the Aid Station immediately to get the hell off the line, you know? Anytime I ... I told them, I said, "I'm going back." "What are you going for?" "Oh, I got a ... I got hit." Well hell, it wasn't anything.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: It was just a little ... little chunk of shrapnel in there.

Ed Metzler: So, you didn't get a Purple Heart for that one, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Oh, they ... guy wanted to give me a Purple Heart.

Ed Metzler: Did he really?

Mr. Ollar: I says, "What? Are you kidding me!" And it turned out later, I (unintelligible). It's worth five points!

Ed Metzler: Could have gone home sooner!

Other Person: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: (Chuckles), no I had ... I had plenty of points 'cause my daughter had ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm! That's right. You had a child at home.

Mr. Ollar: Had ... I had ninety ... ninety-seven points, yeah, and you only had to have eighty-four.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle), were you still ...

Mr. Ollar: I'd have still ...

Ed Metzler: I'm sorry, go ahead.

Mr. Ollar: ... I'd of still had enough; I'd had eighty-six without her. I'd of still had enough for discharge.

Ed Metzler: Were you still there when the Battle of the Bulge happened?

Mr. Ollar: We were in Dillingen, [the] lieutenant and I, and we were directing fire. It was street fighting. Dillingen was a pretty good size town. We had crossed the Saar River (cough), there was three of us in the team. I carried a radio, the lieutenant carried his binoculars and a map, he had a bottle if he had one, and then the other, the kid, usually a kid didn't know anything carried a couple of sack ... that ... bedrolls so in case when we bedded down we had a bedroll. I couldn't have a bedroll 'cause I had a radio on my back and the lieutenant wasn't going to carry a bedroll.

Ed Metzler: Of course, not (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: Of course not.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, we're ... we got to go into Dillingen, and I'll never forget it, it was December 6th, exactly six days from D-Day. And the lieutenant, I don't remember whether he was with us D-Day or not, I don't remember him. Might be, I don't remember him being around D-Day; he might have been a replacement. But anyway, I was with him, his name's Rickowsky (sp?), he's a Pollock come from Jersey City, a typical Pollock.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: But he was a good soldier. And he could really read a map; damn, he was good! He could pinpoint a map and he'd give me those coordinates and we'd have that mortar shell come in, and it (blow up sounds), it'd be right on it. I mean, it's ... he was good! And I was very fortunate that I was with him 'cause between he two of us, we both complicate ... we ... we uh, were good for each other.

Ed Metzler: Complimented each other.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: And so, anyway, well, like I say, in Dillingen and I'm paddling that ... about six o'clock in the morning and it's pitch black, dark, black, and going across that Saar River from Saarlöten (sp?). Our mortars are set up in Saarlöten, and so, we're paddling across that river and I'm ... I thought, "Six months to the day." Isn't that funny how I thought about that? And ...

Ed Metzler: And your six-month anniversary of being in ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... mainland Europe.

Mr. Ollar: And I thought, "I don't know about this." It ... that's one time I was concerned, really. I was concerned about that. And by then I was pretty much an old pro, six months of combat you get to be pretty tough. And so, we got across, and pulled a ... pulled a little ... it was three of us in this little rubber raft, crawled up on a bench and ... and we went forward and there was a road, it was a bridge that was knocked out here, and we cross the river here, crawled up on an embankment and it was a highway that come right through there, and we crawled up and ... 'cause the highway was elevated because of the river, of course.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And so, it wouldn't flood, I would imagine. So, we crawled up there and it's good cover, you know, but you couldn't see from here to that end of the trailer; there was just coal black. And all hell broke out to our right, and no, you know, here we are, we're stuck out here and we're cut off going back and small arms just going like hell. And so, the lieutenant just ... he said, "Just sit, just sit." So, we sat and it felt good ... good. And he ran into a ... must have run into a couple of Jerries, sentries or whatever, or maybe a small squad of patrol.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: But anyway, we didn't know. And everything stopped. So, then we started working in on each side of that highway going into town, and eventually set up in a uh, a ... it'd be one time. It was probably either a warehouse or a manufacturing building 'cause it was two or three floors high. And we got up on the floor, top floor, and was directing fire, and it was small arms. It was

going house to house, you know? And we were ... fire ... our shells were coming in a block away, and we were just pounding the hell out of it. We set a record; our outfit fired over twenty thousand rounds in one week. Nobody's ever come close to that.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Ollar: And Rickowsky was directing and I was hollering through the radio (chuckles). We ...

Ed Metzler: So, you were forward observer still at this point?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, yeah. We were with ... with the infantry.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Had to ... had to be; you couldn't ... couldn't draw, uh, call for fire on the Germans back here; you had to be right up there ...

Ed Metzler: You've got a ...

Mr. Ollar: ... where you could see the Jerries.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And then that's when all hell broke loose up north in December. And Jerry [Jerries] counterattacked.

Ed Metzler: So, this is the Battle of the Bulge then.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, that's what they called it.

Ed Metzler: Bastogne and ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... the whole nine yards.

Mr. Ollar: And, of course, right away, they wanted our mortars. No, "Want those four-point ... four-point two mortars." And so, we had a march ... we pulled back and we crossed, oh, we didn't even wait for night. We ... we crossed over during the day, and Jerry knew we were pulling out. Of course, we weren't the only ones. We were evacuating that town because they wanted everything to go north. And the engineers were still trying to build a bridge across there and the never did. And we were up there over ten days. Yeah, they'd taken that city. So, they ... we got back to the company and we had march ... march order, and

boy, it never stopped, never stopped. And we got in on just the tail end of it. We set up and fired, but it was practically over by the time we got there.

Ed Metzler: Had Patton made it there yet?

Mr. Ollar: We were with Patton at that time.

Ed Metzler: Oh?!

Mr. Ollar: It was Patton. We had transferred from Patton from the First Army uh, Bradley ... we ... we really didn't ... they ... they wanted us, that's another story. They wanted us, the fire power; they couldn't take Metz. Metz was a fortress, and they couldn't ... couldn't take it. So, they heard about the mortars, of course, and they wanted those mortars. So, we went from Saint Vith, or the Maginot ... Maginot Line all the way down to Fort Metz.

Ed Metzler: The Maginot or the Siegfried?

Mr. Ollar: Siegfried.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Maginot is ...

Ed Metzler: Well, it's all right up there in that area too.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. We didn't ... I never seen the Maginot; that was the French line.

Ed Metzler: Right, and that was their fault ...

Mr. Ollar: It was built the wrong way.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle).

Mr. Ollar: Had you known that?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I ... I don't doubt it.

Mr. Ollar: It was. They hired German engineers; didn't know it, and they designed it so it was wrong.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: You know, the French are stupid, they didn't know it.

Ed Metzler: I don't know what to tell you.

Mr. Ollar: Pretty bad. That's what we heard, now I don't know if it's true or not.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah, that was a rumor, we'll call it a rumor (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: That was a latrine rumor.

Ed Metzler: So, you got up to Battle of the Bulge, you were with Patton's outfit. Did you ever see the man?

Mr. Ollar: Well, we were with Patton, yeah, well, yes, we were, we were ... let's see, yeah, we were with Patton because that was after Metz. When we were at uh, I just said that, the city, across the ... what's the city we ... Dillingen!

Other Person: Dillingen (unintelligible).

Mr. Ollar: When we were at Dillingen, uh, that was after the Siegfried Line. It went from there to ... down to Fort Durant, and that was a ... a bad deal there. (Cough), there's a little story there that probably nobody ever heard of. There was a regimental commander for this particular division, and I don't remember for sure, but I think it was eighty something, 84th or 87th or ... I can't remember, and they were fighting to get ... to try to take Metz, and Fort Durant and Metz was all tied together.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, Metz is down in France, is it not?

Mr. Ollar: That's right!

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: That's why we were ... went from the First Army to the Sec ... to the Third Army ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: ... to go down there to bail ... try to bail them out.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: And they ... this particular regimental commander, GI, was relieved of his command because he had ordered, every morning at eight o'clock ... this is the story you won't hear about, every morning at eight o'clock, he was ... the ordered a command ... a frontal assault. They were killed; they were slaughtered.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: We heard, I didn't see it, that there were hundreds ... hundreds of dead GIs because of that. This colonel was relieved of his command and sent back to the States. Nobody ever talked about it!

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. So anyway, we ... I never talked about it either.

Other Person: When did you go and guard the prison camp?

Mr. Ollar: I don't know ... I don't know how many, our guys, were killed there on account of that.

Other Person: When did you guard the prison camp?

Mr. Ollar: Huh?

Other Person: When did you guard the prison camp?

Mr. Ollar: Oh, that was way later; that was in the spring of '45.

Ed Metzler: This a concentration camp?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, the war was over quickly.

Ed Metzler: Which one?

Mr. Ollar: Auckdorf (sp?) or Auck ... it was a small one. But then, none of them was good. We ... there was bodies in the ... we had ... (unintelligible) trenches; there was three of them. And there was ... there's a picture I got of it.

Other Person: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Of a body that was ... they'd thrown him in there, yeah, that's a ... that's a bad deal there.

Ed Metzler: Yes sir!

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. That ... that ... but we ... they ... a little deal there that not too many know about. They ... they captured three, was it two or three, two, SS troopers. They captured two of them, and they didn't get away. They weren't officers. The officers, of course, got away.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: SS, and they got these guys and we were standing there. I ... I was just standing there watching the serg ... the show, you know? And felt like shooting the sons of bitches, so anyway, they ... they started to form a ring around them of able bodies, probably Jewish people, men. They were thin and some of them couldn't walk and (unintelligible) but there was some that had been there for maybe a week or so and were still able to motate (?), and they was crawl ... they

was ... formed a circle around these guys, these ... these two SS troopers. And we walked ... we walked away.

Ed Metzler: What happened?

Mr. Ollar: They killed them. They had piece of glass and pieces of steel or whatever they could find, yeah.

Ed Metzler: What's your opinion of the Germans?

Mr. Ollar: Well, at that time, I absolutely didn't have any feeling for them at all. I just soon kill them as shoot at an injured dog.

Ed Metzler: How do you feel now?

Mr. Ollar: I don't have any feeling. Yeah. There's good Germans, and there's bad Germans. There's good Americans, and there's bad Americans.

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Mr. Ollar: So, uh, when you get older, you know, you're supposed to get mellow (chuckles), but don't ever put an SS trooper in front of me.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle). Well, fortunately we don't have any more of them now, but I ... I hear what you're saying.

Mr. Ollar: You talk to any GI; he'll tell you that.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Were you there when the Germans surrendered or had you come home?

Mr. Ollar: Well, that's a different story again (chuckle). I don't know, they ... they had an X on us. Our outfit was selected to participate in a scientific experiment, and the company, or the battalion commander said it would be Baker Company that would participate. I don't know how it got ... come about, but the war was over, practically, and we were over in East Germany in a little town by the name of Erfurt and Gotha (sp?), it was three little cities. I can't remember the third one ... Erfurt and Gotha ... Weimar, those three cities.

Ed Metzler: So, that's getting over there close to the Elba River and ...

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah, that was eastern Germany. We were running them all the way back. The Germans were coming this way ...

Ed Metzler: Had you run into the Russians yet?

Mr. Ollar: Russians? Well, they weren't ... we weren't too far, the war was over as far as we were concerned.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And so, they stopped and they pulled Company B out. “What’s going on?” “You’re going back.” “What?” They sent us all the way back to Belgium to a castle outside of a little town by the name of Diant [s/b Dinant?], Diant, Belgium. “What in the hell are we out here for?!” We didn’t want this, but you don’t ... you don’t say, “We don’t want it.”

Ed Metzler: You just show up.

Mr. Ollar: You might say we don’t want it, but it don’t mean anything.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: (Chuckles), so, here we are.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: And we check into this castle, just this ... our company, Baker Company. The other three companies are going to Poland or whatever.

Ed Metzler: And Bavaria or wherever.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Uh, not Bavaria, we were going north. So anyway, we check into this uh, pal ... palace and it’s quite a place. It’s got a ... a ... vines running up this ... had the battlements coming out and a great big building over here for the carriage house and servants’ quarters up and down, up ... upstairs. So, we check in there, our company and our ... our kitchen sets up and we don’t know what’s going on. So, here ... we were there for a couple of days and (pause) I wanted to go up to company headquarters for something, maybe to pick up the mail or something. And at the bottom of these steps going up and ... and their winding stairway, beautiful stairway, this palace, it was really something. And I had never been in a palace before, and so, I wanted ... and ... and a radio was going. Somebody commandeered a radio, and they had music on. The war was over.

Ed Metzler: At least for them, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. So, I’m going to take a sentimental journey (pause).

Ed Metzler: Big band.

Mr. Ollar: I stopped ... I cried like a baby (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Did you really?

Mr. Ollar: Everything came out. And ...

Ed Metzler: That's (unintelligible).

Mr. Ollar: ... and I stood there and I stood there for quite a while, and tears ... tears running down my ... and the war was over. (Unintelligible) going home.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: You know?

Ed Metzler: Did you know you were going home at that point?

Mr. Ollar: I had no idea; I thought if ... I going to the South Pacific.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: The war was still going.

Other Person: Tell him what you were there at the castle for.

Mr. Ollar: So ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, why ... why were you there at the castle? What was the experiment?

Mr. Ollar: The experiment was they were perfecting or trying to perfect a system that they could track mortars. The Jerries had a mortar that was unbelievable. It was a hundred and twenty millimeter; that's a pretty good size mortar! When that thing come down, it was a hell of an explosion. Bigger than a one-oh-five. Actually, a one-oh-five was really not a big explosion. One-five-five was.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: But another thing about artillery, if it went over your head, you were safe! 'Cause it went out a hundred and eighty degrees. Mortars went out three hundred and sixty degrees because it came down like that. So, they were trying to perfect a tracking of a mortar, not (unintelligible) but from where it lit to where it came from. And the only way they could do that is to get a mortar squad or company back and fire mortars, and that's how we got selected. We were out and, Rickowsky and I, we were out in the field, just like combat conditions except there wasn't anybody shooting at us. And we had no problems with mortars or artillery or being spotted; it was leisure and called ... called for fire (phone ringing in background). And they were supposed to track that. And we did that for, I can't remember (pause) probably a couple of weeks. And you know, they got so they could come really close. I heard, I don't know how true it is, that they were within ten yards of where the mortars were.

Ed Metzler: So, they're using what, German technology to ...

Mr. Ollar: No, no, this was ... these guys were from the States.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: And probably from Fort Leavenworth.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: But they were something. They all had white shirts and black ties and they were scientists.

Ed Metzler: Uh ooh!

Mr. Ollar: Oh, they were sharp, sharp boys. They perfected this thing.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah! That's when radar was just coming in. It was some kind of radar.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Now it's ... they got stuff now that ...

Ed Metzler: Oh yeah.

Mr. Ollar: ... that I can talk about. But we were told not to talk about it. But don't make any difference now. Our mortars have been retired.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: So, that was the deal after the war.

Ed Metzler: So, did you go home after that or you ... did they send you back to Germany or what?

Mr. Ollar: Well, we went all the way back and joined the ... the outfit again.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Ollar: And then we were bounced around. We were in Austria near the Tyrol (?) Mountains which was sixty miles from Berchtesgaden.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: That's after we joined back, we went back. And then ...

Ed Metzler: This after the war is over?

Mr. Ollar: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Ollar: We were on vacation.

Ed Metzler: It's pretty country.

Mr. Ollar: The old man seen to that. We had a break, and the outfit was scheduled to go to CBI (China/Burma/India).

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah. The mortars were supposed to go to the South Pacific, our outfit at first.

Ed Metzler: China, Burma, India, CBI.

Mr. Ollar: That's right.

Ed Metzler: I think you're better off in the Tyrol than you are (laughter) CBI.

Mr. Ollar: I'd rather be in the hedgerows than the jungle. No. So anyway, we ... uh, I had enough points.

Ed Metzler: I was going to say you must have a ton of points by now!

Mr. Ollar: But ... but we ... we were there at the ... the Tyrol Mountains was ... we checked into a resort, and it was ... it was a valley. It was absolutely beautiful – mountains all around. And that's where Hitler had his ... up in the Eagle's Nest. And we were about fifty, sixty miles from the Eagle's Nest. And some of the guys went up there. I said, "Shit, I don't want to go." I could care less about Hitler.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: I had had enough of Hitler.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: So, but some of the replacements thought it'd be a big deal; they could talk about it, I suppose (unintelligible). So anyway, they ... we were there for, oh heck, a good month, and we had German house cleaners. They'd come in and clean up, and we each ... each squad had a building, and then we were on vacation. We ... well, we earned it, you know?

Ed Metzler: I think ...

Mr. Ollar: We had eleven straight months of combat.

Ed Metzler: I was going to say you earned it.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. So, yeah, then from there we went to ... to a place where we were guarding a ... a compound that had SS troopers. And our battalion moved in there, and we took ... took over to ... this compound. And it was set up and it

was quite a deal. They had one compound that was enclosed with eight foot high, and then they had all kinds of wire and ... barbed wire and razor wire up on top; you couldn't ... couldn't get over. At least I wouldn't have never tried it. And they had two rows of those on the outside going all the way around. Then on the inside, they had a section here like that, and then they had an opening of about, well probably, a hundred, hundred and twenty feet maybe. I'd say the length of this house. And ... and it was open. And then they had another compound over there. And one was women and one was men. The SS troopers had their women with them.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Ollar: A lot of people don't know that. And they were SS troopers. And they were just as mean as the guys. And ...

Other Person: Helga (chuckles).

Mr. Ollar: Probably more sadistic.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Ollar: So anyway, they had all these SS women, oh, hundreds of them over here and hundreds of the SS guys over here, a mean bunch! And I was like corporal like ... my ... my rank was froze as a radio operator. All the guys left in the squad ... one of them became a first sergeant, my squad leader and one of the other guys that I trained, he was a staff sergeant, and ...

Ed Metzler: Why were you frozen?

Mr. Ollar: I was frozen because of my ... what I did. And I told the lieutenant, I says, "It's not right Rickowsky, Lieutenant Rickowsky."

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), yeah, and that made a big difference, right? (laughter)

Mr. Ollar: And he says, "I'm sorry Ollar," he said, "I'm," he checked on it and he says, "I'd like to give you another stripe." But he says, "I can't." So, I come out a corporal. That's alright.

Ed Metzler: So, when did you finally get back to America?

Mr. Ollar: Well, I went to Le Havre first.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, okay.

Mr. Ollar: And there was, I don't know how many thousands of guys that was in Le Havre.

Ed Metzler: Waiting for ships home?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Like I said, I had plenty of points.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Ninety-eight points. And my buddy, Sad Sack, he stayed with the battalion. The battalion went back home, and they got a thirty-day furlough. So, he's home ...

Ed Metzler: And you're sitting in Le Havre.

Mr. Ollar: ... and he ain't got enough points and he's scheduled to go to the South Pacific.

Ed Metzler: Oh!

Mr. Ollar: Oh yeah, and we were a hot outfit. They wanted us in the South Pacific. And so, but I'm sitting over there with enough points waiting to go home, and he's home (chuckles). So, he ... he called my wife and told her ... told her that I was okay; I didn't have any arms and legs missing and I was fine. So ... and that was what we made off – if I got home before him, I was to call Marge.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: If he ... and so on. So, he ... he did that. So, I'm sitting over there waiting to go home. And I get a letter that she had got a call from him, and she was glad that I was okay and alright. So anyway, we (chuckle) eventually, I don't know how many thousand guys was on that ... in that area; we were shacked up in these uh, six-men tents. And they treated us real good; we had good chow and you didn't do anything; there was no duty. And the ... 1945 World Series was going on.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Ollar: The Cubs and Detroit Tigers. So, it was the last one the Cubs was in until 19 ...

Ed Metzler: Until just recently, yeah (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And his ...

Ed Metzler: Poor Cubs (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And they haven't been in since.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, (unintelligible) (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: But anyway, uh, we ... I ... I hear about this that they got a radio and they ... and they have a ... the World Series on up at the Red Cross tent, I heard about this.

“Oh,” I says, “I’m going up there.!” So, I walk in there, and do you remember I told you about this guy that come up and slap you on the back?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: He’s sitting at a table, John Hudson, he says, and I’ll never forget it (chuckles), he said, “Ollar, you old son of a bitch!”

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: “Are you still alive?!”

Ed Metzler: And you probably said the same thing to him.

Mr. Ollar: And we hugged and ...

Ed Metzler: And cried and ...

Mr. Ollar: ... and oh, jeez.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Ollar: And so, we watched the uh, can you ... a Ranger; he even commanded his battalion at one time. He got the Silver Star!

Ed Metzler: And you only got one stripe.

Mr. Ollar: I only got a Bronze Star.

Ed Metzler: Oh, well, that’s something to ...

Other Person: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Tell me why you got the Bronze Star again.

Mr. Ollar: Oh, I don’t want to talk about it.

Ed Metzler: You don’t want to talk about it.

Mr. Ollar: That’s five points, that’s what it was worth.

Ed Metzler: I see (laughter). It’s all about points.

Mr. Ollar: It was in Dillingen, yeah. But it was just something that happened. But anyway, they ... it was more of a commendation than heroism. I didn’t ... I didn’t do anything to be a hero. But anyway, but that’s another ... I ... I don’t talk about that much really. So, they ...

Ed Metzler: You finally get out of Le Havre and get back home?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. Well, that was really a nice deal in Le Havre. They treated us real good. The chow was good, and we had no duty. They had MPs everywhere, you know? And shore patrol guys, so uh, we didn’t have ... and they ... of course,

the Army was taking care or ... I don't know who took care of the chow – Army, Navy, whatever, but the eggs, it was awful good! Good food. And we ... I was there for about, oh, ten days maybe. I don't think two weeks. And there was ... one of the guys blew up and they call it ... got a letter from his girlfriend who was probably waiting for him to get killed 'cause she hadn't said anything about this. This is the story we got. 'Cause the tent was right across from us. He come out of there two or three o'clock in the morning [a] raving maniac, and he came ... he just ... he broke, and I never seen that before, but he was ...

Ed Metzler: They haul him away?

Mr. Ollar: I seen a ... one guy cracked up, but this guy went absolutely berserk. And he was throwing those guys around like they were teenagers.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: Took about five, six guys to get him down, and he was gone. Of course, they come and got him, took him away and said they needed him, I suppose, at the Red Cross tent or wherever it was.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: Uh, medics, and he was gone for two or three days.

Ed Metzler: Did he come back?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was he okay?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, he was like a whipped pup.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Ollar: Didn't talk to anybody or ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: ... he probably got over it eventually. But here this ... this gal had sent him a Dear John letter.

Ed Metzler: Dear John, yeah.

Mr. Ollar: And he was all, you know, all wrapped and going to get married and ... and ...

Ed Metzler: Headed home and ...

Mr. Ollar: ... all this time they're going back and forth, and she's not ... she's going along with it. In the meantime, she got married and had a kid. And then she finally had to tell him.

Ed Metzler: Holy moly!

Mr. Ollar: By that time, she knew he was coming home. She was waiting for him to get killed.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: If he got killed, she'd be free and clear.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, no issues. Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: Or if he got paralyzed or ...

Ed Metzler: Or whatever.

Mr. Ollar: ... hadn't lost his legs or ...

Ed Metzler: So, did you come back across the Atlantic on a troop ship or ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, troop ship. It was an Army transport; it was as white as that paper. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, it was a hospital ship-type paint job?

Mr. Ollar: No. Well, it was, no. It was only ... been commissioned about ... it was ... I ... I understand was ... it had a maiden ship trip and then this one. So, it was practically brand new. It was a troop ship built toward the end of the war.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: And it was built straight ... straight to bring back troops.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Ollar: Or transport to the South Pacific, whatever. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're still in? You don't know whether you might go to the Pacific?

Mr. Ollar: Oh no! I knew I wasn't going.

Ed Metzler: 'Cause you had points.

Mr. Ollar: I had ninety-eight points.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Ollar: And I was scheduled for a discharge because 84 and under [points] you would have stayed in. You had to have 85 or up.

Ed Metzler: And you had ninety something.

Mr. Ollar: Well, I had ninety-eight! But twelve of those points was my daughter. And uh, but I had the Bronze Star and I had five Battle Stars and had the Arrowhead and uh, we had a ... a (pause) that battalion equal to the DFC, uh, Presidential Citation for D-Day. We were very proud of that.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, it was a Presidential Citation signed by Roosevelt. Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And that's before he died. He died in April.

Mr. Ollar: He couldn't have signed it by April.

Ed Metzler: Maybe it was Harry Truman.

Mr. Ollar: Must have been Harry Truman. It was the President because (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it was the President, we know that.

Mr. Ollar: It was ... it was a Presidential, and it says right on this ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, the Presidential (unintelligible).

Mr. Ollar: ... our citation.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ollar: A Presidential Unit Citation!

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: And at that time, it was the only ribbon that was worn on the right breast.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Ollar: Later they came out with a red one. And they wore that on the right breast with the red ... with the blue one ... with the braided gold border all the way around it. I got one over there. We were very ... we were very proud of that because we got that for D-Day.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. Where did you land when you came back to the States?

Mr. Ollar: Patrick Henry.

Ed Metzler: Where is that?

Mr. Ollar: Virginia.

Ed Metzler: Okay. Norfolk?

Mr. Ollar: Norfolk.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Patrick Henry was the name of the camp ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: ... in in Pat ... of course, Norfolk is the bay.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Ollar: And we came in. I was detached; I didn't know anybody.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: I was all by myself. And ...

Ed Metzler: When you had to get home, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Well, I was with hundreds of troops.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: But I mean, my outfit, I was nowhere near any of my outfit anymore. They were all ... they were all being discharged and way before ...

Ed Metzler: That's right, you were separated.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah! So, they ... (unintelligible) and them guys all got out before I did because they were home at the time the war ended. And ... in Europe ...

Ed Metzler: In Europe?

Mr. Ollar: No, in ...

Ed Metzler: Oh.

Mr. Ollar: ... in CBI.

Ed Metzler: Oh, in September?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah, and they were home. They had a thirty-day furlough.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle), that's right! Carried them through (laughter).

Mr. Ollar: So, while they're on furlough, the war ends so they ... they were processed and sent home, and we're still over there in Le Havre, or I was (chuckles). But that's the way it was. I did ... it was not a bad deal. It was a vacation.

Ed Metzler: Do you ever dream about or think about the war horrors that you saw?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you at first, and do you still?

Mr. Ollar: It never leaves you.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: No, I ... never leaves you. Uh, and I don't know why, but I just ... I think a lot of it is because of all these interrogations. I ... so many years ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), too many interviews, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah!

Ed Metzler: Oh dear (laughter)!

Mr. Ollar: I think a lot of that is 'cause a lot of ...

Ed Metzler: 'Cause it stirs it back up again, huh?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Other Person: He's remembering.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: I really don't.

Other Person: He doesn't have any serious ...

Ed Metzler: That's good.

Other Person: ... screaming nights.

Mr. Ollar: I ... I don't like really to talk about it. But when I came back from the 70th anniversary of D-Day, when I was over there, let's see, I was standing on the beach, and I would ... trying to find ... figure out just where I landed.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: And I looked up there on this hill, and (pause) they had built houses up there.

Ed Metzler: A subdivision.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. And it took away something. And ...

Ed Metzler: But you know ...

Mr. Ollar: ... and I said to myself, "I guess there's no sense in holding it in if they don't have any more ... any more resolve, uh, any more respect for what we did on that hill."

Ed Metzler: But you know, Vern, if you hadn't done what you did, they never would have been able to build any subdivisions there.

Mr. Ollar: What they should have done ... that should have been sacred ground.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Ollar: And that should *never* have been used for houses!

Ed Metzler: Hum. Well, certainly the cemetery is sacred ground.

Mr. Ollar: That's up on top of the hill.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I've been there, and that's got to be one of the most moving places ...

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... I've ever been.

Mr. Ollar: Did you see the Jerry (unintelligible)?

Ed Metzler: No.

Mr. Ollar: Cemetery?

Ed Metzler: I can't remember.

Mr. Ollar: Black crosses.

Ed Metzler: No, I didn't.

Mr. Ollar: Black crosses, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah. I was amazed when I seen that. They guys, the Germans that died there, they were no different than us. There was some SS there. But the Wehrmacht was pretty much just like us.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Ollar: They were just soldiers.

Ed Metzler: Yep.

Mr. Ollar: And ... but the SS troopers, uh, they were the bad guys. And the press made a big deal about how bad they were, you know, and they weren't ... we didn't treat them very nice.

Ed Metzler: No, I know.

Mr. Ollar: So, you know, the ... I ... I have flashes of to this day goofy stuff that happened.

Ed Metzler: Hum. Well, you getting about worn down here?

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Me, too.

Mr. Ollar: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Can I just thank you for spending your time with me and letting me interrogate you (chuckles); I appreciate it.

Mr. Ollar: Well, I ... I get so I don't want to talk about it.

Ed Metzler: Oh, that's ...

Mr. Ollar: I'm reversing back to ...

Ed Metzler: No, I understand.

Mr. Ollar: ... yeah, in a way, I ... I have flashbacks.

Ed Metzler: Well ...

Mr. Ollar: Were you in the service?

Ed Metzler: I was not; I was a Vietnam era and had an occupational deferment and never had to go.

Mr. Ollar: That's what I should have done. And I wouldn't have any flashbacks.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. I want to thank you again, thank you for what you did for our country.

Mr. Ollar: Well, I did what I was told.

Ed Metzler: We appreciate it.

Mr. Ollar: I'm no hero. I did my job, and I can hold my chin up.

Ed Metzler: You bet! You should be proud. I'm going to end this.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
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