



AD SVQ 202 HARRY JACK GRAY

Date du téléchargement: 2025-01-18 at 03:00

Interview with Harry Jack Gray [Undated]

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Annette B. Fromm

Today is March 5th, and this is Annette Fromm with Mr. Harry Gray in Palm Beach, Florida.

Harry Jack Gray

This microphone is sensitive enough to pick up both of our voices?

Annette B. Fromm

Yes. Yes, I think. So why don't you speak for a minute and see.

Harry Jack Gray

My name is Harry Gray. I live at 11094 Beach Club Point in Lost Tree Village, North Palm Beach, Florida.

Annette B. Fromm

Now, Mr. Gray, where were you born?

Harry Jack Gray

I was born in Georgia on a farm called Milledgeville Crossroads.

Annette B. Fromm

And how long did you live there?

Harry Jack Gray

Until I was approximately nine years of age, just before ninth birthday.

Annette B. Fromm
And then?

Harry Jack Gray
And then my father took me to the Chicago area, on the western part of Chicago, in a place that's subsequently become a part of the city. It's called -- it was called Austin, at that time, A-U-S-T-I-N.

Annette B. Fromm
And did your family move there, make a life change?

Harry Jack Gray
Well, we made a life change -- my mother died when I was six. My father sold his farm, and so the move that took place when I was almost nine was in the '28, '29 time period, 1928, 1929 time period.

Annette B. Fromm
And tell me about your education.

Harry Jack Gray
Well, I went to a public school, went into grade four at the Spencer School in Austin and -- because there was no one at home during the work hours. My sisters -- I was living with my sisters. My father had gone out to work. That's another long story. And it was just the two sisters that provided a home for me. And I was on the street after school myself, and I became a discipline problem, too -- I guess too active. And they would leave at 7:00 in the morning to be at work by 8:00, and they wouldn't get home until after 6:00 in the evening, and school was over at 3:00. So I became a problem for them, and they put me in a school that was a very economical private school in a place called Dakota, Illinois. And I went there, it was called the Baltzer -- Mr. Baltzer was the headmaster, and it was called Dakota School for Boys. It was out in the western part of Illinois and not very far from Freeport. The town itself was called Dakota. And I went to school there for a little more than two years, two and a half years approximately. And my sister, who was paid by the City of Chicago as a teacher, was paid in script, and he couldn't accept script anymore and she couldn't come up with the dollars, so I had to drop out of that school, and I went back into the public schools. But by then, I was two and a half years older, a little over 11, and I was more manageable, I think, at that time. And then I finished high school in Chicago, or in Austin. I went to the Austin High School, and then went to -- in 1936 to the University of Illinois, where I got a job, was a dishwasher, and then subsequently a waiter, and worked my way through college.

Annette B. Fromm
What did you study in college?

Harry Jack Gray
A lot of scientific subjects, which was my strong interest. But I didn't have enough units to graduate, so I compromised on communications. And I had my 140 credit hours, and I got the degree in the college of journalism, and it was a B.S. in communications.

Annette B. Fromm
And you told me that you were in ROTC in college?

Harry Jack Gray
Yes, all four years. Two years at the University of Illinois was compulsory because of being a land grant school. And two years, junior and senior year, we were paid a stipend for serving in that, and I needed the extra money so I took all four years.

Annette B. Fromm

What year was it when you graduated?

Harry Jack Gray

We graduated in 1941. I went to school in '36-37, and '37-38, I had to drop out for lack of money. I went to work for a year and went back to school in '39 and graduated in 1940. I beg your pardon, '41. I would have been in the class of '40 to start with. But because I dropped out for that year, I came back and I -- irrespective of that, I did graduate with honors.

Annette B. Fromm

And when did you join the service?

Harry Jack Gray

I joined the service in August the 7th, 1941. We got out of school about mid-June, and I took a little time off. Because I had volunteered for service, didn't wait to be called up, I got to set my date, and I went to -- went in the service on the 7th of August, 1941.

Annette B. Fromm

What branch of the service were you in?

Harry Jack Gray

Originally was in the Army and specifically in the field artillery and subsequently in the infantry. I served in the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division, United States Army.

Annette B. Fromm

Why did you choose to join the Army of all the services?

Harry Jack Gray

I felt as I had learned, I guess, many times over at school that the Army is the queen of battles. You cannot win a war without occupying a land. You can't win it by aerial bombardment. And I felt strongly that we needed to win the war. We had our president saying it was unconditional surrender, and that meant that somebody had to occupy the land and take prisoners, so I joined the Army. I had an offer to go into the United States Army Air Corps, but I stayed with the infantry and artillery.

Annette B. Fromm

What do you recall of your first days in the service?

Harry Jack Gray

Actually, they were pleasant, well-organized. We went to a -- really a training course, a 90-day training course to provide us with the education necessary to be an officer. The Army did not trust its ROTC program very well, so those who volunteered immediately got to go back to a training school. And so we spent 90 days learning what we had learned over four years but with greater proficiency.

Annette B. Fromm

Where was that?

Harry Jack Gray

Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Annette B. Fromm

Oh, how did you think of Fort Sill and Geronimo's grave?

Harry Jack Gray

Well, we were very busy. We were a very serious group of young men. We knew there was a war coming, even though it was August. It was pretty apparent to anybody who was a thinking individual at that time that we were going to be at war, and so we spent all our time there, and I don't remember ever paying any attention to any of the Indian history or lore.

Annette B. Fromm

Was that considered your boot camp, or did you also have boot camp after that?

Harry Jack Gray

No, that was it. We were actually nonranking individuals. We were students. Even though we'd been commissioned at graduation in the ROTC as second lieutenants, we were treated as though we were enlisted men, going to officer candidate school. It was a similar training program. In fact, we had officer candidates in our classes. And we went through the necessary learnings of how to direct artillery fire, which is a main purpose of an artillery outfit.

Annette B. Fromm

So after the training at Fort Sill, where did you -- where were you sent?

Harry Jack Gray

Well, I again graduated with rather good grades, and so I was given the choice of a regular Army division, not a reserve division. So I reported for active duty with the 5th Infantry Division in Wisconsin, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin.

Annette B. Fromm

And how long were you there?

Harry Jack Gray

Let's see. Approximately two months. I reported for duty in late October, as I recall, or early November. And so war was declared -- we went on winter warfare maneuvers, which was our first experience with the snow and -- and simulated combat. And then we were ordered out to embark on ships to go to Iceland. And we were the first division overseas. And we were at the port of embarkation in December of 1941. The exact sailing date, I don't recall, but I'm sure it's in my Army records.

Annette B. Fromm

What was your port of embarkation?

Harry Jack Gray

Port of embarkation was Brooklyn Navy Yard. And we had to get there, and we were allowed to take, as I recall, three days en route. It wasn't a leave. It was in transit. And we had to get ourselves there at the appointed date, move on board the ship, and we were off on the high seas, and went to Iceland and arrived in Iceland in the month of January sometime in 1942.

Annette B. Fromm

Do you recall anything about the crossing? Is there anything memorable?

Harry Jack Gray

Very, very, very bad. It's winter in the North Atlantic, and we were in a very old ship, Army transport ship, and it had to stay close to shore. And when you're in the North Atlantic close to shore, the wave action is very, very bad. And there were no -- no hydraulic stabilizers on those Army transport ships, so the

crossing was pretty bad. And we had to avoid German submarines. We got fired at several times but fortunately never hit. And the German submarines were operating offshore of Canada and offshore of Greenland and offshore of Iceland. But we landed at Reykjavik with some skirmishes with some submarines, but we were never hit. It was a convoy, and the convoy had Navy support, Navy destroyers basically, and we landed in Reykjavik in Iceland, and we were there for 18 months as -- as troops who occupied the positions to prevent the Germans from taking any of the land. They were able to use the fjords for the submarines, recharging of their batteries. Because everything was operated on a battery basis in submarines, and they had to recharge the batteries and run the diesel engines to do that. But the coast of Iceland is just full of fjords that you could hide in. You couldn't possibly defend the entire thing. We were posted out at a place called Hvalfjordur. At Hvalfjordur, there was a naval anchorage, and we were -- we occupied the coast and had a duty as a guardian -- it was basically an infantry occupation of the coast to prevent any landing operations by personnel from the German submarines.

Annette B. Fromm

Did you have any interactions with the native people, with the Icelandic people?

Harry Jack Gray

Actually, we were pretty much isolated from them. But there were some farms up around the edge of the Hvalfjordur, and we had occasion to visit with some of the farmers, those that could speak English. There wasn't much English spoken up there except in Reykjavik as a city or any of the other little cities around the island. Not much interaction with them.

Annette B. Fromm

So you were there until, say, mid 1943?

Harry Jack Gray

Yes. We shipped for '40 -- in 1943 we shipped for Firth of Forth in Scotland. And from there, we went through the Midlands down to a place where we were to get our trucks, guns, other military equipment that would enable us to enter in the invasion. And we were at Tidworth Barracks, which is below the Midlands, and it's the site of the training ground for the British artillery. And the place most famous for it is called Stonehenge, which is those very large stone slabs that are erected vertically that the people have still not figured out how those ancient Celts could ever erect them without pulleys. And then we shipped for Northern Ireland. And we were stationed in Northern Ireland for -- until we got ready to go in, in '44, to the invasion. And in Northern Ireland, we were at -- in the County of Kilkeel, which is south of Belfast, and we were there for a training period of over eight months. I've forgotten exactly the exact date.

Annette B. Fromm

At that time, had you attained the rank of captain?

Harry Jack Gray

No. No, I was promoted to a first lieutenant at that time, and then I was given command of a battery, a C Battery of the 50th Field Artillery, which I trained in -- in -- in Ireland, Northern Ireland. The reason we were there is because Ireland's broken up into very small fields that are lined by rocks, and the planners felt that these particular fields were almost a duplicate of the French fields in Normandy. But those fields are hedgerows, and the difference is that the rock walls were probably about 2 1/2 to 3 feet tall and maybe about a foot to foot and a half deep, whereas the hedgerows were 4 to 5 feet of dirt with hedges growing up 8 feet out of the dirt and completely entwined with root structure and made them excellent fortifications. So while we were trained to use our operations in very confined spaces, it did no good when we had to fight in the hedgerows.

Annette B. Fromm

Did you feel the time you -- while you were in Iceland and while you were in England and Ireland, did you feel anxious to enter battle?

Harry Jack Gray

Oh, certainly. First of all, from the patriotic point of view that you wanted to defeat the enemy. We had been called upon to have an unconditional surrender, and so we were anxious to get it going. We did not, however, have any idea of the timing. We just trained up until the time we were told to get on the ships and head for France.

Annette B. Fromm

So tell me about that, please.

Harry Jack Gray

Well, about the embarkation for the attack?

Annette B. Fromm

Uh-huh.

Harry Jack Gray

It was --

Annette B. Fromm

Did you understand the magnitude?

Harry Jack Gray

No. No, we did not. What -- we were in what was classified as the third basic attack wave. We went in to relieve the 4th Infantry Division, which was a part of the 1st Army, General Bradley's 1st Army. And all we knew is they had been fighting since D-Day, and we were to go in and relieve them. And they were to pull out, and we were to continue fighting, and we didn't know what was going to happen to the 4th Infantry Division. They had suffered a lot of casualties. As it turns out, so did we. And I have the statistics on that if you want to know what our casualties were for entire months of combat, a little over ten months of combat that we were in. All I remember is a lot of logistics, planning and getting ready to go in, the training for how to act in a landing craft infantry, how to have it beached, how to get out the front -- front portion that was a big metal gate that dropped and then you ran out in the water. And when we landed, we were still subject to enemy gun fire, artillery fire, and so we had to -- we had to train very seriously. We did land according to our training. We did not suffer any serious casualties.

Annette B. Fromm

Wow.

Harry Jack Gray

Because we were the third basic wave, so there -- time had gone by. We then marched up the beach into the high ground. And the whole time, you could hear the firing going on, the shelling that was necessary. We were dive-bombed. There was still some German aircraft in the air. We had not gotten complete air supremacy. But again, I don't remember any serious casualties. We moved into position, and I was busy getting my operation ordered. By then, I was in the 19th Field Artillery Battalion and, as I recall it, Baker Company. But I was either A, B or C, and I'm pretty sure it was Baker Company. And when you do an occupation like that, you pick a spot where your guns have defilade, so that means the Germans can't see your gun flashes. And you get your men situated, you get your guns laid, and you do that by an aiming circle. It's a geometric circle that's allows you to lay the gun barrels in a direction so that you can

fire a coherent fire. And while we were in the process of doing that, I had a messenger come back from the division artillery headquarters -- and I'm going to keep the name out of this. We'll just refer to it as "Captain X." Had done a bad job of putting his unit into -- his battery into position. He did not have good defilade. The Germans observed him and began artillery fire against him, counter -- what's called counter battery fire. And he suffered a lot of casualties, and he broke down under the firing and ran screaming from the area, and they caught him back at the beaches and put him in the hospital. He wasn't hurt. He just went psychologically unsound. And he just panicked, which had given a real scare to his men. Nobody was busy putting their guns in line. They were either all in the holes that they had dug or they were digging holes, and the artillery fire was still coming in. I was called to division artillery headquarters and told that I was taking over the command. And so I went there, and by then it was twilight. It was -- it was getting -- not dark, but it was twilight. Remember, this is the summertime in France. And I heard from the first sergeant, a Sergeant Miller, who was the same sergeant that I had trained with in Northern Ireland, England and Northern Ireland, and we had a prize-winning organization for being able to go through the normal tactics of occupation of a position and setting up to deliver fire to support the infantry. And he told me that everything was in panic. And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what we're going to do. Where are our cooks? Where is our kitchen?" We had a kitchen truck. "Oh," he said, "it's safe, and it's back in the woods." And I said, "Fine. Let's go back there." And we went back, and I told them to get all their Marmite cans, their big insulated pans -- I'm sorry, insulated containers, food containers that takes two people to haul. And I said, "We'll fill this up with food, and you and I will take them up in trucks, and we will go around and feed everybody in the holes." He said -- he says, "Lieutenant, you're crazy. We'll get killed." I said, "No. We won't get killed. It's getting dark. We'll do it." And I said, "It's the only way in the world you can get these men back under command and get them organized again, is to show them something they can have confidence in. And we're not going to cringe in a hole, so you and I are going to deliver the food." And we did, and there was a lot of people telling us that we were not doing the right thing or it was crazy. We got an occasional round coming in, which is what the German tactics were after they've neutralized a unit. They fired an occasional shot at us, but we didn't get hurt. We hit the ground. We delivered all the food to everybody. And as soon as it was dark, I got out in front of them all -- and it doesn't take up much more than a few hundred yards that you're in gun positions, and I started in a rather loud voice telling them they'd all been fed now and time to get out and we had to move these guns out of this position and get them into another position I had already picked. I had done that after we fed everybody and before it was completely dark. And I had looked at the map and found a good position with defilade where we could fire. So we moved them all out, all got in. We got rid of -- got our casualties taken care of and got the dead removed. I can't remember the statistics exactly, but I recall at least six people were dead and probably about 15 to 20 that were wounded. A lot of them came back to action afterwards. They weren't that badly wounded. Some of them we had to send to the hospital. Probably lost about ten men altogether. Six of them dead and four of them badly wounded. That was one thing I remember, the first day of combat. And then we went on, and we provided our support for the battles as we went across France. We were the -- we became the Bridgehead Division of the 5th Infantry Division. We were the bridgehead operation. And initially, until the Battle of St. Lo, which was a critical battle to break out of the hedgerows, that battle, from that point on, we were pulled out of the line and refurbished with some new equipment and a lot of men to replace our wounded and killed, and then we were attached to General Patton's 3rd Army. And from then, we were part of the 3rd Army, and we went through the entire rest of the war as a part of the 3rd Army. I got the Bronze Star with a "V" device in the Battle of Normandy, and then I got the Silver Star from the Battle of the Bulge.

Annette B. Fromm

So tell me about the occasions when you earned these honors.

Harry Jack Gray

Well, one of them was in the -- the Bronze Star with the "V" device was earned in the Battle for Normandy, and the exact location of the -- of the area is cited on the citation that I was given with the

medal. But it was still a part of the Battle of France, and I have forgotten exactly the nearest town to us. But the occasion was related to our being stopped in our advance and had to bring up a good deal of artillery support, and we had to have forward observation in order to lay down the necessary fire. And I got an artillery observer in position. I was still a first lieutenant at that time. I got a second lieutenant into position to do the observing fire, but he had to go out ahead of the infantry in order to get good visibility for his targets. And we had a couple of -- his radio operator, his driver, and a couple of infantrymen provided protection for him while he was out there, but then the Germans shot out his communication wiring. We laid hard wire up to him so he'd have telephone communications. But because there was some open space in between where he was as an outpost and the infantry, they destroyed his wire, and he was isolated there for a while. And so we had to get additional lines out to him. Hopefully we got a better path to lay them. And this last time when we laid the wire out there, I went out with a couple of wire layers, and we brought the lines around in a different direction, got him connected again so he could be an observer for that particular battery, which was B Battery of the 50th Field. And he resumed his fire. We brought him up supplies and things. And in order for me to do that, I had to cross a lot of open territory on foot and on my stomach in order to get out to him, as did one man who came with me. We did get the supplies out, and I think that's recorded in the citation. I haven't read the citation for a long time. And we got him back in action, and then we had to get ourselves back again. So I think that's -- was recorded that somebody thought it was worth a -- a citation.

Annette B. Fromm
Uh-huh.

Harry Jack Gray

I didn't get that until quite a while after the battle was over. I don't even remember when I got it because we moved so fast after that that -- that had to be before the Battle of the Seine River. So it was probably after Bretteville and after St. Lo and probably one of those towns that I don't recall right now, but I can look it up if you want to.

Annette B. Fromm
That's okay.

Harry Jack Gray

That was pretty much it. The rest of it was kind of routine things. We -- the artillery was always in position somewhere between one and three hundred yards behind the infantry outposts. That was a philosophy that the division artillery commander had, which came from General Patton. That was keep your 105-millimeter, which was the caliber of the guns that I had, 105-millimeter howitzers, to keep them up as close to the supporting infantry as possible. And a hundred yards was considered to be reasonable, which was pretty -- you know, pretty close. If you'll remember, a football field is a hundred yards. And never more than about 300 yards back. So you were all in -- and you had to provide for security at night. We had to outpost it. And we did that similar to what the infantry did. Now in the Army, the artillery and infantry are melded together, so they don't make a separation. In Korea, as well as in Vietnam, they fought pretty close to one another. And that tactic was developed during World War II. And there were a lot of occasions of things that happened, but I don't know if you want all those details.

Annette B. Fromm

Well, did you have any interactions with the French people while you were there?

Harry Jack Gray

Sure. Most of the time, we were moving so fast through the countryside that we would go through the towns, particularly, in daylight because we didn't want to be observed. At nighttime, they would bring out wine for us, food if they had it to offer. But we had plenty of --

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Harry Jack Gray

-- most of the time. But there were occasions where you could get the kitchen into position and cook some food, and you bring them up in these Marmite cans. They stand about 2 1/2 feet tall. They're about 18 inches in diameter. And you can put a lot of food in those things, and they're insulated, and you bring them up. And, as I said, we were equipped with mess kits, which we subsequently threw away. But we always had a cup, a spoon, and a canteen of water. And we had the normal logistic supplies to keep the soldiers in a reasonable condition of food. We had difficulties. I think the -- one of the things that was most memorable was our being bogged down in front of the Maginot Line, which the Germans had reoccupied. Moving across France as we did, crossing the rivers, most -- we never crossed a river except at Frankfurt, but we did it in little boats, either rubber boats or wooden boats. And the picture there on the wall shows what the wooden boats looked like, and there's some pictures in here of the wooden boats, in these books I have here. But most of the time, it was a combat crossing, where you had to fight your way across the river, and then you got the infantry across to establish a bridgehead. Subsequent to that, you had the combat engineers come up and build a pontoon bridge, which is a bunch of rubber boats laid end to end -- actually, side to side, and then you put a -- they put a tread way on it, and then you can take the trucks and guns across. And the infantry, by that time, has moved the bridgehead out so that you can put the artillery pieces in. All they had to do is get out a hundred or 200 yards and you can start putting the artillery pieces over, and that is very close support for the infantry. But in the battle of -- which really started after the gas rationing, when as far as we learned, our fuel for the tanks and our fuel for the artillery trucks was cut off in early September, just after we had gotten to the western side of the Maginot Line. And we would have been able to occupy it probably with one division, the entire line, had the -- had the Germans not reoccupied it. And we were called to a halt in early September, could have been the day of about the 4th or 5th of September, and told to hold our positions. No gasoline was to be used because it was being deflected to Montgomery so Montgomery to close his -- up to his mission. Then about the 10th or 11th or 12th, sometime in there, of September, we got gas again and started back on the tact to take over the fort. The one we were after was Fort Driant. And we were on the road in sight of the fort, and the Germans had reoccupied, and they had armed the western side of the Fort Driant. The French had never armed it, but while they occupied France for the four years that they were in there, they rearmed it so they could shoot in both directions, both to the east and to the west. And they knocked us off the road, and then we had to deploy out and take up infantry positions and artillery positions and tank positions. And that started a long contest from September into October.

Annette B. Fromm

That's '43?

Harry Jack Gray

This is 1944.

Annette B. Fromm

Okay.

Harry Jack Gray

'44. And it was rain, very bad rain. All of our slip -- all of our foxholes filled with water. Just a miserable time during October of 1944. And eventually, instead of taking it with one division, we had three divisions involved in the capture of the Maginot Line. And we had a lot of other heavy artillery support, and we had bombing by the B-17s. Didn't do any damage to the forts, they were so well built. The Germans were very, very secure inside the forts, and we had to take them using Bangalore torpedoes and hand grenades and machine gun fire and a lot of casualties, but we did take it. And finally, we took the City of Metz in about

November the 20th, 21st of 1944. And the Germans surrendered there, and we took over Fort Driant, which was the main fort. We could see in the inside the fort, there was no damage, even on the first level, meaning the top level. They had a huge concrete dome that none of our B-17 bomb drops could penetrate.

Annette B. Fromm
My goodness.

Harry Jack Gray

So that was a miserable period between September, October, and November that -- where we were just slogged absolutely in mud for that whole time, and there's pictures of that in here if you want to see them. Next we went on to -- from the Battle of Metz, we were now in Germany, approaching Germany. And the next major battle that we got ourselves involved in was in the area -- let's see. It was called -- they've changed the name since the time we fought there, but Saarlautern was the name when we were there. It's now changed to Saarlouis. And we fought in there in December on a house-to-house basis. And I was -- I was, again, mostly with the battalion that I supported, but now I was a captain. November the 21st, I think, is my temporary rank of captain. But I lost my observer, forward observer. In fact, I lost two of them. I had one left. He was out on another flank, and I went in, and we went through the house-to-house fighting. And that's an interesting technique, particularly now, in view of the way we talk about fighting in Baghdad. And we had to do what's called mouse-holing because you couldn't use the streets. The Germans had figured the streets as likely spots to put guns, and they had machine guns and 20-millimeter guns in -- put in the basements of houses. And they were all camouflaged, and you couldn't tell that they were there. But if you got on the streets, you know they were there because the next thing you know, they were shooting at you and people were getting killed or hit. So the technique of mousing from house to house consisted of using what's called a satchel charge because it looks like a little small suitcase. It's full of dynamite. You put it up against the wall, you detonate it. It blows a hole in the wall and immediately -- the people who put it down immediately take their hand grenades and throw them into the room. That has caused German casualties, and most of them have gotten away upstairs. And you come in with -- we had submachine guns, and most of us had what are called grease guns, which are 45-caliber stamp-metal guns with a good -- a good barrel on them. But then we'd spray those around, and then finally we'd convince them to come down and surrender. Now we'd go to the next house and the next house, and we -- it took you a lot time to get through a city block, but the houses are built so close together that you can do that. You can blow holes in it. Sometimes there's a little piece of ground in it, so you got to use another satchel charge. So it's quite a logistics problem to keep you supplied with both the hand grenades, the satchel charges, and enough ammunition to take prisoners or kill the enemy.

Annette B. Fromm
What did you do with the prisoners?

Harry Jack Gray

Took them back -- had them -- there's a great logistics program that's all set up in the Army that you -- you take your prisoners when you're with the infantry. You then turn them over to some people who are -- they were called POW couriers, and they would take them back into the quartermaster area way back of the lines, and then they would be trucked off to a prisoner enclosure. But all we ever did was disarm them, and we had to be very sure that we got them disarmed. Because particularly the SS troops that we took had -- very much like the suicide bombers in the Middle East right now, they had themselves wired with hand grenades. And they'd wait until they got close to you, and then they'd throw their arms up. You'd think they were just putting them up, but it just blew them up and any soldiers that were near to them.

Annette B. Fromm
Really?

Harry Jack Gray
Oh, yeah. The SS did that. They had convinced those young people that they needed to take some Americans with them when they died, and so that was -- that was a tough problem. So we had to capture them and tell them to put their arms downside beside their side, hold their hands. In some cases, we tied them up with ropes. Some cases we just let them hang out there because we couldn't carry enough -- we didn't have handcuffs or anything like that, so ropes was the best we could do until we got up where we could search them. And if they had dynamite on them, we could take it off of them. You do that very carefully, but you hold a gun to his temple while you're doing that. And your buddy, one of the two of you has got a gun to his temple so that if he makes a false move, you can kill him before he does anything to you. That's a technique you all learn. Anyhow, that was going on in Saarlautern in December, when we were told, sometime around the 20th, as I recall, that we had to turn the operation over in Saarlautern to the Rangers. The Rangers were going to relieve us, and some of the initial outfit that we had relieved -- it was a National Guard unit, 300 and something. I've forgotten the name of the regiment. And we then mounted on everything that could move. And within 22 hours, we were in position in [Luxembourg](#).

Annette B. Fromm
Wow.

Harry Jack Gray
And the only reference you may have seen to that is in the movie Patton, when all of the general staff were together, and they were talking about the situation. And General Patton said, "I'll have troops in position in 30 hours." And his aide said to him, "General, be careful. Don't make that commitment. You don't know what the problem is of transporting. It's terrible weather." And he said, "I stand by my statement. I'll do it in 30 hours." Well, we actually occupied combat positions in 22 hours from the time they took us out of Saarlautern until we were in position, shooting at the Germans in [Luxembourg](#). And we've got the towns in one of these buildings. Where it was, I don't know. We came in in the dead of night. All I know, it was 22 hours later.

Annette B. Fromm
How did they transport you? Just on trucks?

Harry Jack Gray
Trucks, tanks, Jeeps, everything that was motorized. In fact they even had a bunch of sidecar motorcycles. And one guy rode the motorcycle, and two men were in the sidecar. It was only supposed to be one, but they got two in there.

Annette B. Fromm
And you stayed --

Harry Jack Gray
Same outfit, about a hundred -- about a hundred miles to the north from Saarlautern to where we went into battle, which would have been east of [Luxembourg](#) City. And the towns, again, I don't recall right off the top of my head, but they're in these books if you want those names. And at that particular time, I then volunteered -- because we had to change the liaison between the artillery and the infantry, I volunteered to turn my unit over to another man who had been with them since the landings in Normandy. And he took over my battery command, and I took over his artillery liaison command. And from that point on, I

was a part of the infantry. And it was during that period of time -- and I was there until the end of the war in May, until we were told to stop on May the 7th, that I was with the 3rd Battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment throughout that entire time without any relief. And it was at that time that I got the award of the Silver Star in the Battle of **Diekirch**, crossing the river. And it was that picture that's painted in there that was painted by an account of the regimental commander and me and the maps we had because it wasn't from a photograph. Nobody did any photographing, as I said before. Nobody had cameras. So that's -- those are pretty much the things. The rest of it is a bunch of incidences, some --

Annette B. Fromm

Any humorous incidents?

Harry Jack Gray

No. I can't really tell you anything that was humorous that I can remember that -- oh, I guess there was a certain sense of humor in one incidence. The battalion commander, Colonel Conner, Robert Conner, and I and Captain Thompson went out on a reconnaissance to cross -- I think it was the first crossing of the **Sauer** River, which was in France still but very near Germany. And we had to crawl up on our bellies to get a view of what this river was we wanted to cross because the regimental commander, Colonel Rolfe, had put a circle and said, "That's where you're going to cross your battalion," which is the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment. And Conner said, "I think I want to look at that land, Colonel, before we say where we should go." And he was told in no uncertain terms, "That's where you go across, and that's where you go." So we went out, and we looked at it. And what we did find was a -- in the circle that the colonel had described, we were on a cliff, and there was no beach. There was nothing. It was just sheer drop to the water, and the water -- it was a curve in the river. And the water, of course, erodes away the side that the current's going, and there was no place to put a boat in the water, so we -- we went back and picked a spot where we could do a crossing. And we got a big laugh out of it because we figured that if anybody should cross at that spot, it ought to be the colonel himself, but we didn't cross there. We got a laugh out of that. He later gave us the dickens because we crossed at the wrong spot. But not too far away, and we accomplished our mission. And that -- Thompson was the S3 of the battalion, and the colonel was the commanding officer, and I was the artillery liaison with them, so all of us had to have an input as to where we were going so that I'd know where to lay the fire down for them. And this **Sauer** River crossing that is at **Diekirch**, that was the third crossing. And it was at that spot that I had to fire all this -- the mortar shells. I started out by -- nobody was left who had any observation knowledge of how you lay down fire so that you get an effective screen to protect your men crossing the river. The Germans had flanking fire, which means perpendicular fire. And I had figured that out and got up on a hilltop that I exposed myself to and dug a hole under the cover the darkness. And by the time it began to get light enough to cross the river -- because remember, we're in January of 1945 now. It didn't get light until almost 7:00 in the morning. We had started an attempted landing at 1:00 in the morning, and it was so cold and the snow was so deep that one of the infantrymen who was carrying the boat dropped it, dropped his side of it, it hit the water, and the Germans opened up with their flanking wire. And we lost a couple of men, and we got quite a few wounded, but they got the boats back out of there. And then the colonel, Colonel Conner or and I devised this system of laying down the smoke so they couldn't see through it. And that meant we had to have about almost a thousand yards of white phosphorus smoke in line so that you couldn't see through it, and that meant an awful lot of firing. We started out with the 61-millimeter mortars and then went into 4.2-inch mortars, which were part of the heavy weapons company. And from then on, I got the artillery in, the 105-millimeter howitzers. And then eventually, before the 12 hours were over that we laid down that white phosphorus smoke, we had 240-millimeter howitzers firing and 171 -- 170-millimeter Long Toms, the long-range artillery. We would fire up all of the white phosphorus ammunition in the entire division. But we got the regiment across, the whole regiment. And then we took the town, and that became a critical part of the relief of the Bastion, the relief in Bastion. And that's where I got the Silver Star from, and that's also -- the citation explains that.

Annette B. Fromm
Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Harry Jack Gray
Those are some of the vivid memories I have.

Annette B. Fromm
How did you stay in touch with your family, whether you were in training, the various places where you had training or when --

Harry Jack Gray
Well, I --

Annette B. Fromm
-- you were --

Harry Jack Gray
We used to have -- we had two types of mail. One was called a V-mail, which is a very light stationery that had a self-sealing envelope on it, as you folded it up, it formed an outside envelope. So you didn't have to have two pieces of paper. You had one. And the other was a penny postcard. And I used to write the penny postcards when I was in the States. And also, I wrote some of them while I was in Europe as well. But the most effective way was the V-mail because they always had a good supply of those at the regimental headquarters. And we'd ask for some, we'd get some, and I'd scribble out some words, and we got mail in return. Mail was kind of indefinite because it was as low priority. Ammunition was first priority, food was second priority, evacuation of wounded was a third priority. So mail came down the line quite a bit before you became a logistics problem.

Annette B. Fromm
Now, all this time that you were in combat in Europe itself, did you have any leave?

Harry Jack Gray
One time. After the Battle of the Bulge, and it was in the month of late February or early March, as I recall it. I think it was late February, but I can't be sure. Those of us who had been awarded a Silver Star -- well, actually, the Bronze Star and the V was the -- was the common denominator. Not a regular Bronze Star, but Bronze Star with a V, Silver Star, or anything above that was granted a 48-hour leave. But it wasn't a 48-hour leave because you had to get out of the unit, turn your command over to somebody else, get back to a staging area and then flown to Paris. And from the time you left your own unit on the front line until you got to Paris used up about ten hours of time. They were very slow-flying planes. They were the old DC-3s. They had another designation for them, but they're -- that's the civilian designation. And then you had to get into quarters, and they had -- they had leave quarters in some of the hotels that they had taken over. And then you had to report back within the next 24 hours to a staging area and return to the front. So your total elapsed time was 48 hours, but an awful lot of it was taken up in transportation. Because going back from Paris into where the war was at that time in Germany would take you some 14 hours of driving just to get through because you had to go through a lot of area that was broken up and destroyed. And you got close to the front area, you had congestion on the roads with different troop movements going along. But what happened is -- I guess it was a fortuitous situation. The fellow who had been doing my job while I was gone, a man by the name of Baker, was killed doing exactly what I would have been doing. And so when I came back to take over, the next senior officer was in command of the unit, and he had been put aside, and we got him evacuated out. I can remember seeing him. He was killed by a concussion from the V-1 flying bombs. They turned them on the infantry in that part of the war. Not the V-2. Those were saved for -- for London. But the V-1s they began to use against infantry. And the

concussion killed him. That missile landed, must have been less than a hundred yards from him. The concussion just killed him instantly. He never knew what hit him.

Annette B. Fromm
Wow.

Harry Jack Gray
And he is buried in [Luxembourg](#). And my wife and I went back to see his grave. We never saw him after they evacuated him, but we did go back and look him up. So I had two occasions like that. The fellow that relieved me when I went up to take over the battery from Captain X who had bolted out in terror, he was killed doing what I would have been doing. So I got two -- two saves there. And the third close situation was this one under the tree where I got slightly wounded and the guy next to me got killed, where -- the Germans had a -- they didn't have timed fire like we did, where the shell exploded above the ground. We had a mechanism in the firing rings, the fuse rings, that would cause it to go off from 20 feet down to as low as 6 feet above the ground, and they didn't. They had to fire in the trees and hope to hit -- and that was effective during the summer and early fall, when there were leaves on the trees, but it wasn't worth a darn during the time of when all the trees are bare and you just had to hit a twig. That's pretty hard to do. But that was three times that I escaped without getting killed and very fortunate.

Annette B. Fromm
What did you think of Paris?

Harry Jack Gray
My recollection is that I got there, and I had one night in Paris. I stayed in a hotel which was an officer's quarters for leave, and it is -- it was a nice hotel. It was -- you know, it was not set up for tourists. I went to the Crazy Horse Saloon, which was a floorshow. We drank in some of the bars, stayed up all night. And finally, I guess we got so tired, we went back to the hotel and fell asleep. I don't even remember what time it was. And the next thing I knew, we had to report back in. When I woke up, I looked at my watch, and I knew what time I had to report back in to the motor pool in order to get a ride back. It's not much of a clear recollection of Paris, not during that particular leave.

Annette B. Fromm
Now, where was the last place that you served in the European continent or that you saw battle?

Harry Jack Gray
Well, the last place where we occupied -- the last place we saw battle was at Volary, Czechoslovakia, which is in the Sudetenland. The last place where we served was in Passau. Passau is the junction of the borders of Austria and Germany. It is a city on the Rhine River, and it's south and a little west of Volary, Czechoslovakia. I can show you on a map where it is. But that's the last place, was Passau. My experience there was defending a couple of soldiers who were accused of leaving their post. They had a post -- a guard post guarding a barge, a river barge that moved -- they moved freight along the Rhine River on these barges. And these fellows were accused of leaving their posts, and I defended them and got them off. I proved that the officer who eventually arrested them never could have found them because he never went down to where they were, and the post was ill-defined. It was kind of a dramatic military court.

Annette B. Fromm
Wow, wow.

Harry Jack Gray
We made a -- we made a three-dimensional model of the thing, and it was -- it was crudely done, but it illustrated the point. He claimed that he had taken the entire post. He had gone around the entire post

and his headlights would have been seen by the soldiers. This was in May, probably something around the 20th or something like that, well after the fighting was over. And I proved in a three-dimensional model by using flashlights to simulate two beams from a Jeep that the light never would go over the buildings around there, and he wasn't where they were walking. So there was enough of a doubt in the court-martial's staff that they threw -- threw the case out.

Annette B. Fromm
My goodness, my goodness.

Harry Jack Gray
But they actually were off their post, but the post was actually ill-defined. They weren't doing anything bad. They -- there was -- a couple of the barges had -- the captains had their families on it. During the war, the whole family stays together. And they were probably talking to some girls. I just told them, "Tell me what the truth is, and I'll build a case around it." And that was -- that was the arresting officer's claim, that they should have seen his lights. And I said, "Did you ever actually see them off the post?" And he said, "No, sir, I did not." And I said, "Then we cannot accuse them of being off the post. Did you go down, right to the water's edge?" He said, "No, I didn't. But you could see my headlights." And I said, "Well, let's take a look at this model." And I turned the flashlights on, and there was a shadow right where the water's edge was because of the warehouse buildings that were there. You couldn't see the lights. I had it pointed towards a military tribunal that was there. It was very apparent to them that my case was a good one. He couldn't prove that he had actually arrested them. He arrested them later, when they returned to where they were walking around. He picked them up. But that's the only thing that I can remember about Passau. The rest of it was just ordinary, monotonous duty. After the war is over, people get very restless, and you had to put them back into training. And we were told we were going over to Japan, so we committed to go on with our warfare training. Yeah, we were. We were slated to go in on Red Beach in Japan, and we had 30 days' delay in transit when we got back to the States. We got back to the States on the 15th of July, 1945. And 30 days later would mean that the 15th of August of 1945 we had to report back for duty. And what happened on the 10th of August was the President Truman dropped the atomic bombs, and that was the end of the war.

Annette B. Fromm
So that time between July and August, where did you go?

Harry Jack Gray
Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Annette B. Fromm
Oh, so you weren't released? You were still --

Harry Jack Gray
Oh, no, no. We came back -- we came back on the transport boats, the Army transports, and landed at Boston --

END OF DISK 03, TRACK 1. BEGINNING OF DISK 04, TRACK 1.

Harry Jack Gray
-- We landed at the Boston Navy yard. It was -- I don't know that it was called a Navy yard, but it was a Boston dock, and there was a bunch of Navy personnel there. And we went on to a train from the transport and were taken to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. At that time in 1945, it was called Camp Campbell, Kentucky. It's now a fort.

Annette B. Fromm

Is that where you ended your service?

Harry Jack Gray

That was July, I say about the middle of July. And it took quite a few days to get back. I had five days, maybe, something like that. We did not have high priority on the train tracks because we had this 30-day delay in transit so we got put on the side quite often, and I think it took either four or five days to get there. Then from there, we were allowed to go back to our homes, and I went back to the Chicago area. And again, my family was -- my sister was living in the Austin community, and I took the leave and spent the time with her and her husband. And I was out on the shore of Lake Michigan on the other side on -- in the Michigan side when we received news that the atomic bomb had been dropped. And my recollection is that's about the 10th of August. It was some day like that. And I was not supposed to be back at camp until the 20th, as I remember, 20th of August. Because we landed, I think, on the 15th, and it took five days to get to Campbell and get released. So on the 20th, I think my 30 days began, and I had to be back on the 20th of August. It was in that interim that the bomb was dropped, and that's my best recollection without checking any records. And from there, I asked to be discharged from the Army. They tried to convince me to stay in, offered me a regular Army commission as a captain with full pay from the date of entry, and I turned it down. And they also promised me an assignment in Hawaii, and I still turned it down. I went back to the University of Illinois and said I wanted to get on with my education. Because I had just finished school, and I didn't have an interest in a full-time Army career. And I packed whatever belongings I wanted and left everything else there, turned in my gun, everything, and took off and went to the University of Illinois and made late registration, so I know it was the last part of September 1945, because I had to get permission to register late. And I went on for a master's degree.

Annette B. Fromm

Did you take advantage of the GI Bill?

Harry Jack Gray

I did, but it -- it didn't afford enough money in graduate school to really pay for your education so that you could, you know, work -- work full time on the degree. You could get a master's degree in a year. At that time, you had to write a master's thesis. They don't do that anymore. But in 1945, you still had -- in fact, until 1950 you had to write a master's thesis, which was a junior version of the Ph.D. thesis. But it was a serious thing, and I -- mine was quite thick, so I know it was a lot of work.

Annette B. Fromm

Excuse me. What is your degree in?

Harry Jack Gray

The degree is also in -- is it getting warm in here?

Annette B. Fromm

No, I'm fine.

Harry Jack Gray

You're fine. I just wondered whether it's me from talking too much or whether it is the heat from the setting sun. No, it's 77 in here. No wonder I'm warm. We'll put it down. I put it on 74.

Annette B. Fromm

So your master's is in communications?

Harry Jack Gray

Also, yeah. And it turns -- well, it turns out that the reason for getting the degree in communications in the first place, not having sufficient engineering courses to get a degree in engineering -- because engineering was a five-year degree, not a four. So I didn't have enough for that. And so by compromising and going into communications, it turned out to be a very lucky thing to have done because I would have probably been just an ordinary engineer and never had a chance to run a business like I did. Being a good communicator turned out to be a benefit.

Annette B. Fromm

And what kind of business did you go into?

Harry Jack Gray

Well, first I taught at the University of Illinois in business English and I -- in the college of commerce.

Annette B. Fromm

Hmm.

Harry Jack Gray

And did I that so I'd have enough money to live on, and I wanted to get married because I had been overseas all that time and didn't really have much of a chance to enjoy the States during the times of -- wartime years were evidently pretty fun years for the young people, but we didn't have that. We were in Iceland, and that was a seven-day week, and that was not fun. So I wanted to do that. And in order to do that, I had to teach. And I taught business English with a three-quarter teaching load, and I took a half-time load as a graduate student. So it took me two years to get the degree, but I did work three-quarter teaching time during that as a teaching assistant. And I was offered a permanent job, and I turned that down. I decided I wanted to go into business, not -- not be a teacher. And I went to work for the Chrysler Corporation selling trucks. And I did that until an opportunity came along to sell buses, which were school buses and inner city buses. And their -- the inner city buses were copies of what the Greyhound -- General Motors and the Greyhound Corporation developed as a design. The reason that that ended is because the Korean War started in '50, and all our steel rations were cut in half so that meant I made half of the income because I was on a commission basis, not a salary basis. I had a drawing account and commission. That was very good -- very good income in the bus business. Then I went to work for the Greyhound Corporation in Chicago, and I became their youngest division manager -- almost said "commander" -- division manager, and I worked for them until 1954. And then I heard about the possibility of getting stock options with a company on the West Coast, and I resigned from Greyhound, and I went out there, and I convinced this company I should work for them. And that became Litton Industries, which was a very hot corporation in the stock market in the 19 -- late '50s and '60s. And I worked for them until I got the offer to come to United Aircraft Corporation as its president. And then I became the chief executive officer, president, and the chairman. I had all three titles, and I worked there for 16 years.

Annette B. Fromm

So much of your adult life was in California?

Harry Jack Gray

Yes, much of it. The longest period that I was anywhere in the United States has been in Connecticut, but I did work for Litton for 17 years.

Annette B. Fromm

I don't know which to ask next.

Harry Jack Gray

I beg your pardon?

Annette B. Fromm

I'm not sure which to ask next. Do you feel that your military experience influenced your thinking about war and about the military in general?

Harry Jack Gray

Certainly it did. I had a great deal of respect for the military organization, particularly in combat. I did not have an interest in a military organization during peacetime because I thought it was too bureaucratic, and I didn't want to work with an organization that had so much overhead. And so that was the real reason why I turned down the rather attractive offer to become a regular Army captain and get an assignment in Hawaii. I just thought that I had to do something more serious in life and that sounded like a very attractive thing, but it was only going to be attractive for a few years, and then it would get to be the same old stuff. The military is a repetition of the same thing over and over and over again, and that was not what I wanted to spend my life in. I didn't think it had any creative attraction. But it certainly influenced my thinking, and it certainly helped my understanding of organizations. Understanding how a military organization works helps you in a civilian organization as well. But the difference is you just don't have these massive staffs and -- in the civilian things. You have to do an awful lot yourself, and you have to try to get along with a minimum of overhead and therefore a minimum of general staff for the corporation. And I had a rule when I took over that function at United Aircraft. I said the corporate headquarters -- it was a \$2 billion company at that time. I said, "The corporation is never going to be more than 400 people." It was about 310, 15 at that time. And so everybody said, "Well, how do you expect to grow if you're not going to grow the corporation?" I said, "We'll grow the corporation, and we'll never have more than 400 people in the headquarters." And we never did. And we grew to \$17 billion from 2 and never got over 399 people. I never would appoint the 400th person. I always took somebody out and transferred them to a division.

Annette B. Fromm

Have you been active in veterans organizations?

Harry Jack Gray

Only during the very first years while I was in the reserve. I stayed in the reserve until '52, as I recall. I think the last year I was in the reserve was 1952, and then I was a member of the American Legion and did -- did not join the VFW, although I certainly was qualified to be. But that -- American Legion was pretty much where I was.

Annette B. Fromm

Uh-huh.

Harry Jack Gray

But then in '52, I got so busy with my business career, I was with the Greyhound at that time, that I just didn't have time for military organizations or -- you know, like the reserve or for the veterans organizations.

Annette B. Fromm

But I see you've been a speaker at the Air Force Academy?

Harry Jack Gray

Yes, I have. I've been a speaker at the Air Force Academy, I've been a speaker many times at the Military Academy at West Point, and I've also spoken at the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Annette B. Fromm

Is that because of your business achievements or combined with your military achievements?

Harry Jack Gray

Well, I guess so. They've invited me. That's how I've been a speaker. And I spoke about how to organize a business and be able to function without having the large overhead. I spoke a lot about incentivization and cost-cutting, things like that that were all civilian experience, but I thought the principles were applicable to the military to get rid of some of the -- what I considered excessive overhead. And those were my topics. And they were always very nice to me. They gave me a statue of General Eisenhower -- a bust of General Eisenhower when I spoke one time at the West Point, and another time the Cadet, and another time a parade sword. So while I didn't get any money, I got very nice treatment.

Annette B. Fromm

Now, I see your photo with the Shah of Iran?

Harry Jack Gray

Yeah. I went to Iran to sell aircraft engines for civilian aircraft and also to try to interest him in Sikorsky helicopters. And we also sold him products out of Hamilton Standard, which was another division of United Technologies.

Annette B. Fromm

And is that also a photo of Prince Bandar?

Harry Jack Gray

Yes, it is. It's Bandar bin Sultan. He is the son of the -- I guess the defense minister now. Still is the defense minister.

Annette B. Fromm

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you also are quite a contributor to the arts?

Harry Jack Gray

Yes. We've -- we're tried to make contributions to the arts, to education, and to health, those three general categories. And my wife and I have given to cancer institutes, to hospitals, one in Hartford, Connecticut, and one down here at Good Samaritan, and we've made a lot of contributions to education at --

Annette B. Fromm

Yes. I see this education building at the National Science Center?

Harry Jack Gray

Yes, uh-huh. That -- the National Science Center is an education program that I started where the concept was to make the learning of algebra easier for students. And it's concentrated in two areas, one

using computer-aided techniques to teach algebra. And the second area is teaching -- teaching English to Spanish-speaking people. And in each case, it's done with computer technology. The lessons, instead of being in a book, come on a screen. They're broken down onto a screen. They're broken down into 30-some lessons. And the system is based on the old concept of rote. And that is -- it's a mastery program in that unless you can pass Lesson 1, you can't begin Lesson 2. The machine won't allow you to do that. And it grades your -- your answers to the questions and it generates homework. This is all done randomly, meaning that the principles of the problems are the same, but the alphanumeric are different. And you do that by random access. And therefore, students can't help one another. They have to learn it themselves and they can't have somebody else do their homework. Because you can discover that as well because the next lesson the next day is based on the principles of the homework the night before --

Annette B. Fromm
No kidding?

Harry Jack Gray
-- with a different set of alphanumeric. So if you didn't learn the principles, you won't be able to do the test the next day.

Annette B. Fromm
And you developed this?

Harry Jack Gray
With the -- yes, yes. Yeah, I did that. And I raised the money to do it from industry. And it was a done in concert with the president of -- former president of the University of Georgia and a couple of very good technicians in the use of computers for teaching.

Annette B. Fromm
Wow, wow.

Harry Jack Gray
And now we're -- we're tackling this ESOL program, English Speakers of Other Language, and that is -- our current funding for that comes out of the U.S. government because they need a fast method of teaching Spanish-speaking people how to speak English. It's become a real problem in the United States.

Annette B. Fromm
Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered?

Harry Jack Gray
No. I'm very proud of my service for the country. I'm very happy to have lived through it. I did learn a lot, and I hope I contributed something. I've told you everything that you've --

Annette B. Fromm
Asked for?

Harry Jack Gray
And I can't think of anything else except some details, which I've offered to show you these books.

Annette B. Fromm
I would like to see in the books.

Harry Jack Gray
Okay.

Annette B. Fromm
I'm finding that many veterans have returned to the places where they saw action. Have you?

Harry Jack Gray
Yes. In 1984, a number of the officers of the 2nd Infantry Regiment joined me with their wives, and we flew to France and landed up in the area of our original engagement there, not too far from Caen. And we -- it was an airport there not too far from Caen, and then we took a bus which held about 24 people, as I recall. It was a narrow bus that could get into the hedgerows. And we took our wives back to the beaches at Utah Beach, parked the buses, walked them down a hill, let them stand in the sand, looking up at the hills that we had to climb in order to get into the hedgerows, took them in all the back rows of the hedgerows and into the small towns. And in some cases, we actually were able to find some people who were children at the time --

Annette B. Fromm
Really?

Harry Jack Gray
-- who still remembered the Red Diamond, which is -- this is a letter from General Patton. And we took them back through the early battles, to St. Lo and -- here are some of the original spots here. There's a July departure line, when we got into combat. But we took them to -- let's see. St. Lo was one place, then Fontainebleau was another, Epernay, Reims, which is pronounced "reams" in this country. I took them back through some of the battlefields of World War I and the areas of the Battle of the Marne. Bretteville was the one that I told you was the first one that we were in, and that's -- we showed them through that and showed them what it was like fighting in the hedgerows.

Annette B. Fromm
And you talked about this [museum](#) in [Luxembourg](#)?

Harry Jack Gray
Yes. We took them -- we took them to the [museum](#) in [Luxembourg](#) as well.

Annette B. Fromm
And you also made contributions --

Harry Jack Gray
Yes. I --

Annette B. Fromm
-- of objects to that [museum](#)?

Harry Jack Gray
Yeah, and we got -- we raised funds for it as well. Here's one of the hedgerows that'll show you how we plowed through it. And we had these big -- let's see. Where is my other book? Oh, here it is. This has a good picture showing you how we got through it.

Annette B. Fromm

This is the 2nd Infantry Regiment book?

Harry Jack Gray

This is the 2nd Infantry Regiment book, yes. And this is what Iceland looked like, but that's not what I was trying to do, is show you a picture of the -- this is shooting through the hedgerows. This is the hedgerow fighting. Here is what I wanted to show you. These are an idea for what they called teeth. Others had them cross-braced as well.

Annette B. Fromm

And this is in front of the tank to help --

Harry Jack Gray

Yeah.

Annette B. Fromm

-- get through the rows?

Harry Jack Gray

And what you do is drive it into the hedgerow, lock one track, drive the other one, then lock this one, drive this one, and then you --

Annette B. Fromm

So you'd zig and zag at angles?

Harry Jack Gray

You push yourself actually, and the whole hedgerow falls down, like this other picture shows you. And then, while that's going on, while the tank is doing that, the tank is buttoned up, meaning their tops are down, the artillery is firing time shells to keep the Germans down in their holes. And when they break through, they then point their machine guns at the corners because that's the only thing that the Germans would do, is to arm the corners. And then the infantry would pour in through the hole and then down the side and throw hand grenades in these holes that they were firing out of, and that was the end of the problem. You killed -- you killed whoever was there. I was trying to find a hedgerow picture to show you what these fields looked like from the air.

Annette B. Fromm

Now, how did you feel when you went back for this visit in the '80s?

Harry Jack Gray

Well, we -- actually, some of the thoughts we had were kind of sorrowful because of the loss of friends and very unpleasant experiences, and some of them -- here we are. It shows you how this --

Annette B. Fromm

Right.

Harry Jack Gray

And they would fall back field by field. And we had some good feelings as we met some of the older farmers who had grown up as children and still ran their farm, and they remembered our Diamond and remembered being treated reasonably well by soldiers. Didn't have much nice to say about the Germans.

And there was a lot of fun and laughter. And, you know, you forgot -- you forgot most of the bad things. I've told you some of the pain we had in the battle for the Fort Driant of the Maginot Line, but I think we all felt pretty good. Acheres (ph) is another town that we took, which is the home of —

(recording ended)

Transcription by bp_2025-01-18



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