

Interviewee: William “Bill” Devitt

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 25 September 2002

Location: living room of the Devitt home in Edina, MN

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, October 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, December 2002

Bill Devitt was born 25 May 1923 in St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota. He attended local schools, and graduated from St. Thomas Military Academy (now St. Thomas Academy) in 1941. Bill was a student at the University of Minnesota when he was inducted into the US Army in early 1943. Because he had attended St. Thomas, he received an officer’s commission.

Bill instructed recruits in Basic Training at Camp Robinson, Arkansas, and attended the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, when he suffered a knee injury and spent seven months in rehabilitation. Healthy by mid-1944, Bill passed through Fort McClellan, Alabama, before being shipped out to Europe in August 1944. He was assigned to E Co, 330th Regiment, 83rd Infantry Division, and saw action in Brittany (Aug – Sep 1944), Luxembourg (Sep – Nov 1944), the Hürtgen Forest (Dec 1944), and Belgium (Jan 1945).

On 3 January 1945 Bill was badly wounded while on front line duty, and evacuated. He spent January to April 1945 in hospitals in Belgium and England, and was in Germany enroute back to his unit when in May 1945 the war in Europe ended. Bill returned to the US, and was discharged in March 1946 with the rank of captain. Bill also served during the Korean Conflict.

Again a civilian, Bill returned to St. Paul, got married, and together with his wife Mary raised a family of eight children. Bill graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School (class of ’55), and worked locally as a lawyer; he retired from the Cenex firm in 1988. In retirement the Devitts moved to Edina, Minnesota, where Bill wrote an account of his time in the service, *Shavetail: The Odyssey of an Infantry Lieutenant in World War II* (North Star Press of St. Cloud, 2001).

Interview key:

T = Thomas Saylor

B = Bill Devitt

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is the 25th of September 2002. First, on the record, Mr. Devitt, thanks very much for taking time to speak with me today.

B: You're welcome.

T: Also for the record, I want to say that Bill Devitt is the author of the book *Shave Tail: The Odyssey of an Infantry Lieutenant in World War II*, a book published in 2001 by North Star Press of St. Cloud [Minnesota]. It makes for good reading, too.

B: Thank you.

T: Let me begin. I know you grew up in St. Paul and went to St. Thomas Academy, right?

B: Correct. St. Thomas Military Academy when I went there. They later dropped military out of the name.

T: When did the name get changed? Do you know?

B: No, I don't know exactly. At the time when they were going to change they talked about it so there was some publicity then. I think perhaps in the 1960s.

T: You were born what year, Bill?

B: In 1923.

T: So you were eighteen years old when the US got involved in World War II.

B: I'd have to go back and...

T: Do the math. That was in 1941.

B: I think I would be. A freshman in college.

T: With regards to the attack on Pearl Harbor of December 7, 1941, do you remember what you were doing when you first heard that news?

B: Yes. It's in the book. When I first heard the news it was on a Sunday. We'd just gotten back from Mass and we were going to have a brunch, breakfast and lunch together. It was around noontime. We heard it over the radio.

T: On the radio. Was this at your folk's house?

B: At my parent's house. Yes.

T: How did, as an eighteen year old, first year college student, how did you react to that news?

B: Surprise. I don't know if I was up with the current news of the time or not, whether I realized at the time we were negotiating with the Japanese, that sort of thing. It was a surprise. I had never heard of Pearl Harbor. I didn't know where it was, I'm sure. As I say in my book, some of the people thought the Japanese were sneaky, dirty rotten people. I don't know that I ever thought that way. I thought if you're going to fight a war, I think that now and I think I thought that then, you fight the best way you know how to win, without the niceties of rules and all that sort of thing.

T: Were you concerned for yourself? The US entry into the war would most certainly make you part of that as well.

B: No, I don't think I thought about it. I did know that when I got to twenty-one years old I was eligible to get a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army. Reserves. A Reserve commission. So I got through the rest of St. Thomas although I don't think at the time I worried about going into the Army. I thought probably if I went in, I'd enjoy it. I didn't think about the bloody part.

T: What was the reaction around your household? Maybe of your parents to the US entry into the war? Do you recall?

B: I don't recall. Maybe they talked about it, I don't know. As I say in the book, my sister's boyfriend, Bob Moberg, was there. He said something about those dirty yellow bastards or something like that, which was uncommon language in our household. He said it quietly, but I remember that. I don't remember that I felt that way. Maybe I didn't have enough feeling. I don't remember really.

T: When you were at college, was this at the University of Minnesota?

B: No. St. Thomas College [in St. Paul].

T: What do you recall about the mood on campus among people you went to school with?

B: I have no recollection.

T: In your book you describe training and what happened before you were shipped to Europe. By the time you went to Europe, when were you actually shipped over there?

B: I got in the boat in late July of 1944, after D-Day.

T: After D-Day you actually arrived. Did you go to England or straight to France?

B: England. We landed at Liverpool. I spent a week or so in England and then we were transported to France on boats. They didn't make us swim. *(laughs)*

T: Thank goodness. The packs were heavy, weren't they?

B: Yes.

T: Well by this time it was clear that you were going to be part of the war against Germany. What were your perceptions of the enemy, of the Germans, before you got over to the continent?

B: The early perception of World War II was that the Germans were really unbeatable. They walked through Poland and the next spring they went through the Low Countries and France, then Denmark and Norway. The perception was that they were very good. I think they were very good at war. I learned that later, when I was in combat, they were very good at it.

T: Now, by 1944, the tide had shifted a bit for the Germans. Would you say you still considered them rather invincible by then, or was it just a good amount of respect for them?

(1, A, 112)

B: It was a good amount of respect. I could read the paper. By the time I got there they had broken out of Normandy. They actually had the Germans, at least in some places, on the run.

T: So this was a beatable enemy by the time you arrived there? In your mind.

B: Yes. I always thought we were going to win. Somehow or other. Once we got in. I was surprised that we suffered any defeats at all in North Africa and so on.

T: Really?

B: Yes.

T: How do you account for that opinion?

B: I don't know what I am by nature. I suppose I'm optimistic. I don't think the roof is going to fall in or the world is going to collapse about me. I always thought we'd win the war, and we did. It wasn't based on solid facts, I don't think. Some sort of optimism.

T: Before you got to the continent and were involved in combat situations, what kind of preconceptions did you have of what combat was going to be like?

B: I don't know. I went through infantry school at Fort Benning [Georgia]. They tried to make war and battle as realistic as they can. I did find out that when you're playing a game it's quite different from when you're in the game. I don't really concentrate on it much. I must have thought about it some. I don't think that I realized that it could be as nasty as it turned out to be in my experience. When you're playing soldier you're attacking hills and that sort of thing. They aren't really shooting at you. It's a whole different story when they're shooting at you and people are dropping like flies around you. I don't know that in training that they go in much to the deadly part of the battle for an infantry man. If they did that maybe no one would show up for the real fight.

T: In an infantry unit that's where the combat actually takes place. On the ground.

B: That's right. As I say in my book, there are infantrymen and there are front line infantrymen. The front line ones are the ones who are eyeball to eyeball most with the opposition.

T: Quite literally sometimes, as you describe it.

B: Yes.

T: In your book you describe in some detail combat situations in Belgium and also in the Huertgen Forest in western Germany. I don't want to ask you to recount those because they are in the book. Talk about conditions or surroundings. A soldier in a combat situation. What were the most important things for a soldier in a front line combat situation?

B: I suppose I should have an easy answer. I have to think about it. Firstly, keep your head down. I think all infantrymen know that. What's the most important thing for a soldier? I suppose the important thing is what the opposition was doing. You defend yourself. My combat experience is all offensive, on the offensive side of the ball. I was never involved in any of the German counterattacks. I more times carried the ball against the Germans. There are any number of things that are important. If you're in a wooded area you have to have foxholes with logs on top.

(1, A, 180)

T: At this point I've got a couple of words and I just want to throw the word out to you and see if you can tell me just what kind of reaction you have and maybe an example that indicates your feeling on this. They're simple concepts. For example, the word "cold." Frequently in your book the concept of being cold comes up. That weather matters. What is the impact of being cold on a soldier in a front line situation?

B: It's a real concern. I don't remember the cold so negatively at this time. I suppose I did fifty or sixty years ago. I was in Europe during the winter. December, January. Lived outdoors in foxholes in pretty cold weather. Not quite so cold as Minnesota has. I don't have this terrible negative feeling about cold. I think I froze my feet somewhat. My two big toes have been numb ever since that time. But I wasn't evacuated for trench foot or anything like that, so I don't have some of the negative feelings a lot of people would have. I just don't remember. Maybe it wasn't as bad. I'm sure mine wasn't as bad as some people's experience. But when you're living outside in the boondocks and you have an overcoat and maybe a blanket, you're sure to be cold. I just don't remember it as suffering from that. And I don't know why. I probably did somewhat. I don't have negative thoughts that some people have.

T: How about lack of sleep?

B: I don't have any bad thoughts about that either. I'm sure. I remember lack of sleep more when I was going to school, especially college that I crammed the night before that you're not supposed to do but I always did. I don't remember that affecting me at all in my combat experience.

T: A couple other concepts here. The concept of fear comes up in your book in your experiences a number of times. How would you define fear from your perspective?

B: Being afraid.

T: Are there different levels of fear or different types of fear?

B: I'm sure there are. When you are in combat, you're in danger of dying in the next minute unless you're a saint or something. It's a natural instinct to be fearful. The real question is how it affects you and how you react to it—do you do the job or not? I'm sure that I had fear, probably all the time. Although you somehow made it, somehow, if you have a job to do. An advantage in being a leader in a combat situation is that you have some responsibility, so you can't spend all your time thinking about yourself.

T: Is that helpful?

B: I would think so. You're probably less fearful because you don't have much time to think about yourself. I discuss that at some length in my book. That's an

advantage of being a leader. On the other hand, the disadvantage is that your likelihood of getting killed or injured are somewhat higher I presume. I haven't looked at the statistics on it but I would guess that is the case.

T: Do some people, from your experience, did some people handle this constant fear better than others?

B: Oh, yes. I had a few examples where people, a fellow lying on the ground kicking, yelling and screaming, when mortar shells were dropping around him. He went too far and we got him out of that. Oh, yes. People react differently.

(1, A, 243)

T: What is it do you think that pushes people too far or over the edge maybe to use that phrase?

B: They called it combat fatigue or something like that. I think one of the things was the amount of time you spent in combat in serious danger. It must have an effect on you. On some people the effects came out as like in my outfit, one fellow was lying, kicking and screaming, out in the open. I think the steady danger that you're in must have an effect on everyone to some degree.

T: In cases like that do the other soldiers around tend to be empathetic with someone in a condition like that or are they angry because they're no longer pulling their weight?

B: I don't know. I guess if you sat around and talked about things or were introspective. I never did that. Maybe because I was a lieutenant and others weren't. I don't know. I didn't get into that sort of stuff.

T: You mentioned being an officer. How would you describe the difference between enlisted men and officers?

B: The officers got paid more. But in my case my platoon sergeant was paid more than I was because he had more time in the Army so he had longevity. The pay stages were so close that he ended up getting a little bit more. He got combat infantry pay. Officers didn't. What's the difference?

T: Yes.

B: I think that the enlisted men looked to the officers for leadership, to the fellow in charge. That's who they looked to. Sergeants who often took over from lieutenants who were out of the game for a while or were killed or wounded. I think the enlisted looked at the officers as people who were in charge. I think they looked at them, some of them, nobody said this to me, but as a privileged bunch who had it so easy, but I'm certain combat people didn't think that. People I was around.

T: How did you perceive enlisted people?

B: People who were, as far as I was concerned, entitled to be treated decently. I tried to treat people decently and expected them to treat me that way too. I think the officer system probably worked out pretty well. I think some of the armies tried to do away with officers and that idea of people in charge. I think someone has to run the show, and that is what the officers did, but you read stories about some of these veteran sergeants really running the army or something. It wasn't my experience in combat.

As far as people in my platoon, I was the platoon leader, rifle platoon, and the men looked to me as they should. That's what I was getting paid for. It's a different story in the officers and enlisted men. The difference is so great in a peacetime situation or when you're in an encampment where the officers are separate. They have an officer's mess, an officer's club. That sort of thing. I was around that for a while, took advantage of it. That's the way it was. In that sort of situation the enlisted men would say, some kid who was a private and ate well and so on, and maybe didn't have a club to go to, and we'd go out Saturday night dances at the officer's club that sort of thing. So there's that stuff. It was a social thing. Once we got to Europe all that stuff was out. That's when you showed whether you had what it took or didn't.

(1, A, 299)

T: You lived in much closer contact with enlisted men.

B: That's right. You're closer to them. I was never real buddy buddy with these fellows. I never... no one ever called me by my first name. It was always lieutenant.

T: Was that the case with other lieutenants who did build a closer relationship with the men as individuals?

B: I don't know. Never asked anybody, even in my company. We had six officers in the rifle company. A hundred and eighty seven men, six officers. I don't know.

T: One of the themes of the book is that people died. Let me ask you on the subject of death and dying, how did you deal with the constant proximity of death?

B: I don't think I thought about it much. I'm sure it affected me. You don't break down every time you see someone injured badly or have the top of his head blown off. Real trouble, people around you are in real trouble. I suppose I took it rather coldly. My combat experience was really quite limited, but I did see some people die. People I knew who died.

T: Other people. What thoughts did you have of your own mortality? I mean there were times you mentioned in the book that it was a close call.

B: That's right. I think after I lasted through [the battle in the] Huertgen Forest, which was a great part of my combat experience, after I got through that, we walked in with maybe a hundred and ninety men and walked out with about forty, I thought I was fairly impregnable. I knew you had to be cautious and be careful. I just thought I was lucky, and maybe I was going to live through it all pretty well. I learned otherwise later on.

T: That's right, you did. On the subject of luck or chance, Bill, how much do those come into play? Or how much did those come into play?

B: Luck or chance?

T: Yes. I mean you were one of the forty who did walk out. Was it luck or chance, skill? What was it?

B: I don't think it had anything to do with skill. A philosophical thing. I don't know if it's you or it's me. I don't think I felt especially. Yes, I guess I thought I was lucky in the Huertgen. I had close calls and got through it okay. I got nicked in the head once with a grenade. It didn't bother me at the time but I think back now, I got nicked in my forehead. Another inch to the left and it would have gotten an eye and I could have lost an eye or something. I didn't think about it at the time.

T: You didn't think about it at the time?

(1, A, 331)

B: No. The first sergeant said, "You're bleeding in the forehead, lieutenant." I said, "Yes, I know. I got that little nick from a grenade." I didn't think about it. We were busy thinking about other things, more important things, like how we'd get through the next day or the next hour. I didn't do a lot of philosophizing. I think if you did you'd go batty. I didn't intentionally not think about things. Maybe I was just a dumb kid with a lack of imagination. I don't know.

T: You mentioned the next hour or the next day. Was it helpful or necessary perhaps to keep the focus short term like that? Not think of three months or six months in the future?

B: I don't know if it was necessary or not. I think when I was in combat I was busy thinking about what we were doing right now, or as soon as it happens. I'm sure philosophers or college professors probably think about those things.

T: Some of them do. For the tape, can you describe an example of where luck or chance came into play for you?

B: Oh, yes. I think I was just describing this little nick on my forehead. Luck I suppose. Another inch to the left I would have got a small piece of shrapnel in an eye, which I think would be pretty hard for the eye to combat (*laughs*).

T: Can you describe that scene? How did you get to the point where you were in the proximity of the grenade that went off?

B: Our company was down to maybe sixty or eighty men or so. We were going to attack. We were attacking a brick house which was occupied by the Germans. The American tank outfit, we thought that the Americans were there, so that we were surprised that the Germans were there. We got near the house and they were firing at us. Firing back and forth. We finally got them into this big old brick house, and there was an American tank which the Germans had knocked out. One of my sergeants jumped up on the tank and started firing the fifty caliber machine gun, American machine gun, against the Germans. Not surprisingly a minute or two later the German potato masher grenade came, tumbling out of the window, and dropped where he was, atop the tank. It exploded, and he fell off the tank into my arms, and at that time I felt a little nick in my forehead from the grenade. Shrapnel from the grenade.

We prevailed that day. We captured the Germans who were there and sent them back, and we spent the next day at the house. We went down the basement of the house. The first sergeant was still with the company. He hadn't been hit yet. He saw my head bleeding and he said, "You're hit, lieutenant." I said, "Yes, but there's nothing to it." He said, "You'll get a Purple Heart for that." I said, "I won't get a Purple Heart for something like that." Turns out I did. The good part of it is, that when the war was over, on the point system you got five points for a Purple Heart. It helped me get home after the war was over. After the war was over it was good that it happened.

T: You didn't know that at the time, of course.

B: No.

T: Another theme in your book that you mention a number of times is sort of second guessing yourself, or wondering whether it was the right decision to make, or the right thing to do. Why do you think you may have second guessed or rethought about situations?

B: I'm trying to think of the instances. Why? I suppose it takes a philosopher or a geneticist or something to figure that one out. I don't know why. I know you'd like a better answer. I'm trying to think of things. One of the times I was self-critical, and I deserved it, I called artillery once in Luxembourg, and I didn't know enough about calling artillery. The guns I thought were behind us were really to our right, so I botched that mission up. So it was self-critical. It was true. Not necessarily bad or strange or psychologically important to be critical of one's self when it's really true. I don't know.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 384.

T: On the same subject, Bill, have you spent time since 1945 rethinking or rehashing experiences in your own mind, where a different decision might have had a different outcome?

B: No. My analysis of myself is that I was good at it. I was a good platoon leader. If I had been a company commander or a battalion commander or something like that, I think I would have been lost.

T: Why is that?

B: I don't know. I read the Civil War stuff about how Lee and Jackson were so clever, and saw the big picture. I don't know if I ever saw the big picture. I had a sense of duty and I think that probably carried me through to do the job as well as I could. I thought I was supposed to do what I did. The only thing is, doing what you're supposed to do for an infantryman may be the highest sacrifice you can give him. That means putting your life on the line twenty four hours a day, which was my experience. So if you do your job, it's a marvelous thing.

T: I wanted to ask you about the sense of duty. You have a page in the book, page 158, where you talk about what the motivation is and what causes people to do things or to act in certain ways. You focus on this concept of a sense of duty and you just mentioned it here now. How would you define the sense of duty? What does that really mean?

(1, B, 418)

B: When you do what you're supposed to do, and what you're expected to do.

T: What's expected of us is sometimes easy to identify. How does that work then under extreme pressure, in situations where it might be easy to forget those kinds of things?

B: Tell me again.

T: The sense of duty we can often learn this is what you're supposed to do. In a stressful situation where people are perhaps firing mortars or something at you how does one stay focused on that sense of duty and not let the demands or the fears of the moment get in the way?

B: I don't know how you do it. You do it or you don't do it. I don't know how it is. I don't know how the brain works or that sort of thing. I'm sure you're not looking for that either.

T: I'm not looking for anything. You talked about it and you mentioned it was important to you, this concept of a sense of duty, and there are a lot of other factors that come into play as well. Why do people do certain things? On page 158 of your book, about reasons of motivation, you write that: "I think it was usually this sense of duty, this feeling that I should do what was expected of me, which drove me." I'll ask you to comment on that.

B: I think it's accurate. I probably spent a week or two on that page. Sense of duty came to my mind readily, because I think that's probably a big motivating factor for me.

T: Your sense of duty to yourself, or your sense of duty toward others.

B: I'm not sure that I understand that. If I ever thought a sense of duty vis a vis myself and usually others are involved. I don't know that I have ever parsed that so I can answer it accurately.

T: I guess what I'm trying to get at was the sense of duty that: "I feel I have a responsibility to myself to act in a certain way, respond in a certain way, or I have a sense of duty toward these other people to act or not act in a certain way."

B: You're over my head. I don't know [that] I ever dug that deeply into it. Duty to me was what one is supposed to do, or must do toward himself and for others. One of my little stories is I grabbed this fellow and pulled him out of danger momentarily and threw him into a foxhole. You do stuff instinctively. But he was one of my men and I should help him, and he was involved. I thought it was something. I wasn't thinking, "Must I do this, or not." I just did it. Instinctively. I wasn't thinking, "This is something I must do."

T: Let me shift gears then. You were raised in a Catholic household?

B: Yes.

T: What was the importance for you at that time of your faith? What role did that play?

B: It was always important. What role did it play?

(1, B, 480)

T: How did faith or religion help you, in combat?

B: I don't know. It might be since I believe in life after death that maybe dying was not so terrible for me, but I don't think I ever consciously thought that. I think it was the same as the next guy—I didn't want to die. Frankly, I didn't think I was going to die most of the time.

T: Really?

B: Yes. Maybe I wasn't in it deep enough to have that affect [on] me, although I saw some people die. But I didn't ever think that, there but for the grace of God goes I. I never really felt that. If he's dead, he's dead, and go on to the next thing. I think my religious faith is and has always been of utmost importance to me.

T: To move to something else entirely different here. When you were in the Army, segregation was part of military policy. From your own perspective, did you see or come into contact with blacks for example in the military? And if so, in what capacity?

B: I had very little to do with blacks in the military during World War II. As far as people, blacks in the military, I just have one story in my book about this lieutenant who was in the hospital with me, and got a private room. The rest of us were out in the ward. He was a black guy. He was an officer. It always struck me as odd that this supposedly inferior black fellow got a private room and us superior white fellows didn't. I thought the same thing. I was from St. Paul. I had really almost no experience with black people. We had a black postman. Nice man. I got to the South, I saw segregation and separate drinking fountains and separate toilets and that sort of thing, and that is one of my little stories. I said to these southern fellows, "What's going on here?" and they told me it was none of my business what was going on. It was segregation. I had really no contacts with blacks who were in the military except that lieutenant, and now I'm very sorry I didn't sympathize with him. The racial thing.

T: You didn't at the time?

B: I didn't at the time. That was life then. If you're a bunch of philosophers, as all college professors are, you'd be asking questions like that.

T: Since I am a college professor I guess I feel compelled now. In your rifle company, or in the supply units that serviced your platoon and company, were there blacks in different jobs there?

(1, B, 543)

B: Oh, yes. You're right. When we moved, we moved by trucks often, and usually the driver would be a black fellow. I remember that, so I did have that experience. There's one of the stories in my book where I fell asleep in the truck cab in cold weather and I was warm. There were my poor men in the back of the truck freezing, and I fell asleep in the cab. I did not mention in the book that the driver was black, but I suspect he was.

T: What did you observe about, when you were over in Europe, how white soldiers and black soldiers interacted with each other?

B: I don't think I saw it. Except how I interacted with the driver. He was just another guy. Maybe I was politically correct or not, but I treated him the same as I treated anyone else.

T: He was enlisted, right?

B: Right. They didn't have any captains or colonels driving trucks in those days *(laughs)*.

T: How about other minorities? Hispanics or Native Americans, for example. Did you come into contact with any of those, or observe contact between Native Americans, Hispanics and other white soldiers?

B: Yes. We had one fellow called the Chief, who was an Indian, a Native American, that's the word today you want to use. I still call him an Indian. I'm a white man so I'm one of those who can be discriminated against. Such a terrible person *(sarcastically)*. Those who were putting their lives on the line largely were white men. We weren't all bad. I am being a little sarcastic.

T: This fellow who was called Chief, did he seem to mind that nickname?

B: I don't know. I don't think I called him that. I think the men did that I talk about in the book... I don't know. He was a very quiet fellow. I didn't have heart to heart talks with people.

T: You kept your distance from enlisted men?

B: Yes. I was called lieutenant. I think there's something to be said for that. People are going to put their lives on the line for what you say, and if you're just one of the boys, he's less likely to do it as fast. If you're something apart, I think there's some truth to that. I think [the fellow who was called Chief] got along with other fellows fine, as far as I know. We might have had other "Native Americans" *(sarcastically)* too, but I don't recall.

T: You were in a number of hospitals for one thing or the other.

B: Yes.

T: Did you come into contact with women in different capacities either as nurses or as Red Cross workers or USO workers, these kind of things, or as WACS or WAVES?

B: I don't think I had anything to do with WACS or WAVES. I knew about them. I remember that. I'm sure we had some Red Cross people around, some nurses.

T: What can you say about women in uniform from your perspective?

B: They looked nice.

T: The uniforms were flattering, you mean?

B: What are you supposed to say? Am I for women being in combat? No. It's bad enough to have my sons in combat, let alone my daughters. Would women behave well in combat? I don't know. In England during the war the women stood up under the blitzes better than men. Am I for women being in combat? No. Is that sexist? Whatever that means. Maybe, I don't know. Do I care? Call me anything you want. (*agitated tone*) But my feeling generally is that I would rather have my sons to face that sort of stuff than my daughters.

(1, B, 605)

T: From your observations, Bill, how were women treated by men in uniform? As equal, as inferior?

B: As equal as you and I are equal.

T: You were in a couple hospitals along the way, right? A number of places.

B: Overseas I was in a number of hospitals. I had a knee operation [here in the States].

T: You were in the same place all the whole time?

B: Yes. Seven months.

T: You must have moved in and set up shop there.

B: Yes.

T: You were away from home for a long time. What was it like to be away from home for a long period of time? How did you deal with that?

B: I don't know.

T: Was it difficult for you to be far away from your family?

B: I wouldn't cry myself to sleep or anything like that.

T: How did you stay in touch with family and loved ones while you were away?

B: Letters.

T: Were you a regular letter writer?

B: What do you mean by regular? Did I write Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays? No. I didn't write as often as my mother would have liked. I wrote regularly.

T: How important was it to you as a soldier to get mail from people?

B: It was very important. Looked forward to it. I think everyone did.

T: Why is that? What did mail from home bring?

B: You hear about people you're really interested in, for one thing. News from home. How things are going.

T: What kind of things could you or did you tell people in your own letters?

B: Tell about what I was doing and what was going on. When I got to Europe I think I wrote some stuff you weren't supposed to tell. Not that I knew anything earth-shaking. The Germans probably knew more about what was going on than I did.

T: What kind of restrictions did you feel when you were writing letters then? I mean, how did that impact what you said or how you said it?

B: I don't think I worried much about it. The letters that I wrote generally weren't censored. The officers censored the mail of their men.

T: Did you do that yourself as well?

B: Yes. I don't think anyone censored my mail. I don't think I gave any great military secrets away. I didn't know any. I think you were careful not to say where you were. You'd say "somewhere in Germany," or "somewhere in Belgium," or "somewhere in France." Pretty easy rule to follow. I suppose there were certain things you thought about and were careful not to do. I don't remember what they were.

T: How was it to have to censor the mail of other people?

B: I didn't mind. It took time. It was kind of a pain in the neck. Most of the fellows didn't have anything surprising to say. Sometimes it was personal. I don't think I ever held anything... no one said I was a rotten guy or anything. They had enough sense not to do that.

T: Was it hard to read people's personal feelings and things like this?

B: I'm not big on feelings, all that stuff.

T: Maybe not, but you must have seen that stuff in letters sometimes, right? People talk and maybe are quite heartfelt and then you're reading this stuff. Did you feel like that was an intrusion into someone's life or not?

B: Nah, that's baloney! Intrusion! There's a war going on!

T: They knew you were going to read the letters, too, right? I mean, they knew to expect censoring.

B: Yes.

T: So they maybe self-censored as well. Another theme: Did you make lasting contacts during your time in the military? People you kept in touch with after the war?

(1, B, 658)

B: No. I had contact with people before the war who were in the military. I'd write to some of those guys, my high school classmates that I wrote to during the war. But no one that I was with in combat that I keep in touch with.

T: Let me ask you then, for a lot of guys that's something that they do. I'm wondering for you, why is that something that you didn't do?

B: I don't know. Ask some psychologist. They'll give you a good answer, unless you're one of them.

T: Have there been unit reunions that you've attended over the years?

B: Yes. I didn't know about it until the 1980s sometime. They have an 83rd Infantry Division Association. It had been going on since 1946 or something like that, and I hadn't heard about it. Someway or other I discovered it. I did go to a couple, I think three reunions, but each of them were disappointing. Of course now they are, because there are so few left. I haven't been to one for over ten years. I think I went to maybe three. I looked forward to seeing some people and no one that I had been in combat with showed up. Of course, you have to realize, we got this turnover. I was in a rifle company, so we probably had a turnover during my time of almost a hundred percent, and probably other times, in combat, it was two or three hundred percent. It wasn't as though you were in a rear echelon where you knew fellows for three or four years and you lived with them. We didn't have that closeness, at least in my experience.

T: You used the adjective "disappointing" to describe some of these unit reunions. In what sense were they disappointing?

B: I didn't see people that I knew, first of all, and then I surely didn't see any that had been in combat with me. I remember the first one, I think it was the first one I attended, I was going to contact some fellows within the company and I think most of them I didn't know. I was going to have a little party with them in my hotel room and I bought some beer and some booze and some goodies, and I think there were about maybe about seven or eight fellows that were from the company, and only two or three of them showed up at all. That was disappointing. They probably didn't know me anyway except I had written these people before and I said it would be nice. We were all from E Company of the 330th Infantry. That was disappointing, and then the fact that even those who were there I really didn't know. One had been the company clerk, who was not in combat. He stayed back and did all the paperwork that had to be done. No reflection on him. He was the only one I think I can remember. There was another fellow who was a sergeant that was in the other platoon that I knew. I went to three of these things, and I think I knew only just a couple of fellows all the times. So it was a letdown.

(1, B, 700)

T: So for you, a couple was enough to realize that you weren't actually going to make connections with people that you had known or you had seen?

B: That's right. That's right. Yes.

T: When these guys get together for these reunions, what do they talk about?

B: I don't know. I never did much talk with anybody. I went, my wife and I, and didn't have a very good time. I remember that day when we were lying on the ground and the Germans were firing their 88s at us. There was no one there to talk about that with.

T: Maybe that's different for guys who were on a submarine crew together, or where there wasn't the kind of constant turnover, where they can make references to this incident or that incident.

B: Yes.

T: Turnover is very high in rifle companies.

B: Yes. It depends upon what rifle company and what war you're talking about.

T: Bill, do you remember where you were when President Roosevelt died on the April 12, 1945?

B: Yes. London, England. I was on leave from the hospital. I was going back to my unit [in Germany]. One week leave in London. That's one of my war stories. I was

on leave and so I was out with some of the fellows in London. We got back in the evening sometime and heard over the radio that President Roosevelt had died. They said that all London was quiet, even Piccadilly Circus was quiet. That's what the news said—but they're liars. We'd just come from Piccadilly Circus, and it was a very active social spot. We hadn't heard about it. So, as I say in the book, I learned to listen to the news with some skepticism after that. It was a good story, as though we all fell to our knees and were sobbing. I didn't care—I never liked Roosevelt much anyway. I didn't look at him as the savior of the country. I looked at him as kind of a rich dilettante who manipulated people, but I think he ran the war well. I'll give him that credit. As far as I was concerned he was another dead comrade. It was too bad, but I didn't care.

T: So the transition to Harry Truman for you didn't represent any kind of great thing to worry about.

B: Of course not.

T: What do you remember about V-E Day, May 8, 1945?

B: I was in [the German city of] Mönchengladbach, which was near [Nazi propaganda minister Joseph] Goebbels' hometown. I was walking down the street with a couple of lieutenants, and we heard the news. We were happy. That was several hundred miles away from the front where my division was, and I would have joined them shortly thereafter. I went back to my unit. So we were very glad. One of the fellows fired a rifle shot out of the window, and we ran up to the building and I shook my finger. I found out who it was—the barrel was hot. I found out. This one guy, the guy firing, and I figuratively shook my finger and said, "You can't fire shots like that." Well, here was a fellow who had just been in combat, and he had lived by the sword. I'm sure I didn't convince him of anything. That's the story.

T: The war in Europe was ended but the war with Japan was still on. Were you or was your unit at that point scheduled for reassignment to the Pacific?

B: No.

T: So you knew when the war against Germany ended that the war was over for you?

B: I didn't know anything.

T: How long was it before you knew that you were not going to the Pacific for sure?

B: I'd guess when the war ended.

T: In the Pacific.

B: Yes. I don't know if there were any promises. I don't know if our 83rd Division, I don't know if the division was scheduled to go there. But as far as infantrymen, they needed bodies as well as units, so that could have happened. It didn't worry me.

T: It didn't worry you?

B: No.

T: Some units were immediately scheduled for reassignment.

B: They didn't tell us about that stuff. I remember someone asking me about an attack or something. This fellow, a very bright guy, he knew something about everything. He said, "Did your security people tell you about what was going to go on?" I think I said, "You've read too many books." We were front line infantry. There wasn't anyone out in front of us. They weren't telling us what was going on. They were lucky to have us hanging around and being there. I don't know what the plans were. I think that my division was not scheduled to go there immediately, but maybe they were. I just don't remember. But I wasn't worried about it. I think I probably hoped it would be over soon in the Pacific. We were getting up closer to Japan. If we had to attack [Japan] that would have been a terrible slaughter, because the Japanese were, they weren't as good at war as the Germans, but they were die-hards and they would have taken a lot of people with them.

T: Bill, were you on occupation duty at all?

B: Yes.

T: Where was that exactly?

End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.

T: After the war ended in May 1945, you remained in Germany on occupation duty. You mentioned this was in Bavaria. Was this a large city or were you in a small town?

B: Small towns.

T: What exactly did you do as part of this occupation duty?

B: Well, right after the war ended, when the occupation duty started, we searched houses. I remember they were little cow towns, little farming towns, and we'd go through and search for weapons. That was what we were looking for. Perhaps they thought there might be an uprising or something, I don't know. But anyway, we did that.

T: Were these announced or unannounced searches?

B: Not announced, when we were going to search for rifles and any kind of items.

T: How were the relations between the occupying American military and the German civilians from your perspective?

B: I think at first they had this policy that you weren't supposed to talk to Germans. Non-fraternization policy. We tried to enforce that. They finally did away with that. That was pretty hard to keep a bunch of young American boys away from German girls, especially, so they cut that out. I think probably the first few were cool toward us, but then I think it got somewhat better. I always treated people decently.

I think there were no Nazis in Germany when the war ended. One of the famous phrases was "Nicht Nazi," I'm not a Nazi. Some of us thought it was a pretty good idea. It must have been full of them, or they wouldn't have fought so hard. As time went on I think we got along better. I never saw any arguments or that sort of thing. A lot of the men were gone, I believe. When [the German soldiers] started to come back, I don't remember that specifically.

T: Talk about, if you can, an incident that is maybe a good indicator of how the relations were between the Americans and the German civilian population.

B: You're asking me to give an incident?

T: Yes. Or one incident, or one time, some specific story you can recall of how the Americans and the German civilians interacted with each other.

B: I do remember our company ended up in a little town. I wanted to get an American flag up. I was mad at the Germans. I'm mostly Irish but I'm a fourth German. My grandmother was born in Germany. I don't know where. I was mad at them. They were an advanced people in certain ways. How they could have tolerated such a system as they did? I do recall we were in this little town after the war was over and I think I got an American flag. I was the company exec officer. I was not the company commander, but I think I suggested that we make the Germans in this little cow town, as they walked by the flag, they would have to salute the American flag or something. I think he said no to it. I think he was right. I'm sure I wasn't the only one who wondered at the Germans, who were mad at them. When people try to kill you... naturally you have some feeling about it. Not that those people in those towns were trying to kill me, but... But I can't think of anything, any incident. We got along all right. Little cow towns. In Europe people live in a little town and then they go out in their field, contrary to this country, where there are bigger fields for one thing, and people live in their own houses on their own farm. In Europe that wasn't the case.

(2, A, 95)

T: How long did you stay in Germany after the war ended, Bill?

B: They had a point system. I think they started sending people home after the war finally ended in Japan, and that was in August. We hung around and played soldier and all that sort of stuff for a month or two, and then the point system started coming in and I had quite a few points, so I got home. I finally got home, I think it was, the day after Christmas 1945.

T: It took you a number of months to make your way back here.

B: That's right, and I spent time in camps waiting for transportation.

T: Stateside or over there still?

B: Over there. Once I got off the boat I was home within a couple days.

T: So you spent it sounds like about five, six months over there waiting.

B: The war ended what, August 15?

T: August 15.

B: September, October, November. So I spent probably a good three months in Europe after that. Then I started home and got home right after Christmas.

T: When you were in towns in Germany, were you nervous or distrustful of the Germans as you walked around town? Or by that time did you figure: the war is over.

B: No, I wasn't afraid for my own life, that there was an enemy that would go off and plug me with a Luger [pistol] or anything. I don't think I was. I don't remember that. We were in just little towns. They were kind of cow towns. Although occasionally we might go into a good size city. I remember the city of Passau.

T: You were way down south. Passau is on the border to Austria. So that's way down there.

B: Yes. I think it's on the Danube, isn't it?

T: Yes.

B: I remember the name. I don't remember being in there, but I probably was in there sometime. Although we didn't go in there on passes or anything. We just stayed in the little towns. I remember we did have a dance in a little town. Our company was in this little town of Granite, and I remember we had at least one or two dances. We brought some girls in from someplace, maybe they weren't German. I can't remember. There was a little town. There weren't enough people to have

girls, for those who wanted to dance. But I don't think we were mad at the people we were living with. We were in a little house. The officers lived in a lady's house and we'd treat her well.

T: She was still in the house as well?

B: She stayed in the house. I think she must have had a husband somewhere, but he was probably gone. Probably hadn't gotten back from the war. We treated her decently. I might have been more abrupt than a lot of people. I had a nagging anger about the Germans when I got home. I was married, and several years after the war my wife said, "What are you so mad about?" I explained to her. Maybe some of the Germans were my relatives even.

(2, A, 151)

T: If you can recall, what was your unit's mission in this small town? Just to show the flag, or was there a specific purpose?

B: First we did the search. I think it was only that town. Maybe they went out to some other towns, I don't remember. A place to live. We lived in houses. Either we took over the houses and made the German people leave or... I was the company exec, and the company commander and I lived in the house and maybe a couple other fellows, the other officers. We had five or six officers in the company. It was largely a place to be out of the cold.

T: We had a lot of troops we had to put somewhere.

B: That's right. Until the war against Japan ended. We had training schedules, so we did train. You've got to keep the troops busy, you know. We did train. We played a lot of softball and that sort of thing, too.

T: Keeping men busy, really.

B: That's right. Yes.

T: How did the end of the war against Japan in mid-August impact you?

B: I was glad the war was over. I don't think I personally felt in much danger myself of going over there. Maybe I was. No one told me what their plans were. It was a relief it was finally over with. I don't think there was any wild celebrating like they had in the States. It was understandable—the big war for us was in Europe.

T: That was the one really to celebrate?

B: Yes. It took us out of danger.

T: One of the reasons that the war against Japan ended so quickly was that the US Government did [in August 1945] use atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the time, Bill, did you feel that our government was correct to use atomic weapons against the Japanese?

B: Sure.

T: How have your feelings changed on that since 1945?

B: They haven't.

T: Let's go back home. December you are back in the States. It took a number of months and you made a number of stops.

B: We got into my feelings about it. I've heard revisionists who read about war, and these ideas that it was naughty to do that, and how could you do it, and that sort of thing. I think those who had their lives on the line [in the Pacific theater], and I wasn't one of them immediately but I could have been, saw that it was a quick way of ending things, especially for the Americans. American lives and probably a lot of Japanese lives, too. It's great for the revisionists to sit around and ponder it when you have nothing else to do. I'm sure you can think of arguments why it shouldn't have been done, but innocent women and children... I look at war as my life was as worthwhile as any woman and child that was back somewhere away from it. At least in those days we were all in it together, and some civilians died and it was too bad. I still don't think you can differentiate. If there were these terrible white males that were killed, that was okay to discriminate against them and say you're not discriminating, which our current law is. It's turning the world upside down and we still allow it. That's baloney.

T: Bill, you were officially out of the military in early 1946, but you were back here in St. Paul right after Christmas. Did I get the dates right?

(2, A, 212)

B: Yes. Christmas of 1945.

T: Then you were discharged in early 1946.

B: Yes. I think it was terminal leave or something. It sounds like you died or something (*laughs*). I officially ended, off active duty... How did that work?

T: Did you have leave built up from being overseas?

B: Yes. I had leave. I suppose that terminal leave, active duty until you got off leave. I know I went in on March 2, 1942, and I think I was finally discharged later in March of 1946. It was a little over three years. Maybe I have to rethink. I got home

right after Christmas. Maybe it was not right after Christmas because my mother left the Christmas tree up into January or something. Maybe that was it. It was a pretty saggy Christmas tree by then.

T: You do remember a Christmas motif in the house.

B: Yes.

T: How was it to see your family and loved ones again?

B: It was wonderful. Wonderful.

T: In what ways were you a different person now? You're three years older than from when you went in the service.

B: There's something college professors know about. I don't. I forgot, you're a college professor!

T: I'm a college professor.

B: Gee whiz! I forgot. *(pauses three seconds)* I was older. I knew more. I had been through a lot of things which I still remember. I didn't sit around wringing my hands or philosophizing about what I am, or that sort of thing. I knew I had to get a job sooner or later. I probably should go to school for a while longer. I wasn't afraid to talk about it, my war experience. I got married and had children. And the wife heard all my stories over and over. The war didn't affect me adversely that way.

I do remember, after the war was over, being out in the country and I'd see a hill or something and just automatically say, "How would I attack that hill?" Or be in a town and see some houses and, "How do I get to those houses?" There's my discussion about combat fatigue. You might call it that. But it was a different day. I didn't do that before the war. I didn't have the experience to do that sort of thing. I don't know if I was different. I didn't have any great psychosis or anything like that. I had injuries which didn't inhibit me terribly.

T: Your knee was not so bad you couldn't get around okay.

B: After the knee operation I went to Europe and got through that, and they called me back into Korea. Although the knee did get me out of Korea. I did have trouble with it.

T: You mentioned a little bit ago that you were angry at the Germans after the war. How did you get past that as the post-war years went on?

B: It was time. It was gradual.

T: As you built distance up to the wartime it just sort of fades away?

B: I guess so. I think so, yes.

T: What was your initial reaction to being out of the military? It had been your life. It had been your world for certainly a number of years and suddenly the uniform is off.

B: I just picked up where I left off. Went back to college.

T: Did you go back to school right away?

B: Yes.

T: In 1946?

B: Yes. I remember, in March. My sophomore year I switched into the Institute of Technology at the University of Minnesota. I got out [of the Army] in March, in the middle of the quarter, and I did take a course at the University, just for something to do. Then I signed up for the next quarter, which was summer.

T: So you got back to school very quickly then.

B: Yes.

T: Were you working at the same time too, at some job?

B: No.

T: Just going to school. And were you living at home with your folks?

B: Yes.

T: How long did you live at home with your folks then?

B: Until I got married. That was 1952. I went to Law School for three years. My GI time ran out. The GI Bill--I used it all up. So we moved back in with my folks the last year. My poor wife had to live with her mother-in-law, who happened to be my mother. I remember a friend of mine saying, don't ever do that because the women won't get along. I think it worked out okay.

T: So you weren't one of these people who had to try to find an apartment in 1946 or 1947?

B: No.

T: What was the easiest thing for you in readjusting to being a civilian?

B: I didn't think it was adjusting. I didn't ever think I adjusted.

T: So you took the uniform off and really just got back on the treadmill of life?

B: I never considered myself a professional soldier or anything like that.

T: Come on. You were an officer for a couple years, and you don't think you were a professional soldier? Or is that a mindset thing?

B: That is a mindset. Unless you define it as what I was, I don't know. The professional soldiers were regular Army people. Career people. That's a professional soldier. It was my job at the time. I felt that, it's kind of interesting, after the war was over Colonel Norris, the battalion commander, made me the company commander of H Company in the battalion, and then he came out to talk to me one day. We chatted. He thought I had done a good job. I thought so too—as a platoon leader. I didn't command a company in combat. So then I thought about staying in. "What do you think, Colonel?" And he said, "No, I don't think I'd advise that."

T: Really?

(2, A, 297)

B: Now the reason was, I think, I was, immodestly, I did a good job in combat. You read the book. Modest enough, but there's enough there [in the book] for you to see that I did all right. But during the war I had this incident in which I lied to the regimental commander, and that must have embarrassed Colonel Norris very much. He was a lieutenant colonel. A full bird colonel was regimental commander. I lied to him about something, that's in the book. That must have made him think that...

T: That's the incident about a sentry being posted in the woods.

B: Yes. The colonel came around on inspection and said, "Where are your sentries?" And I said, "They are out there in the bushes." And the colonel said, "Let's go find them." We couldn't find them, because I hadn't sent any sentries out there. I don't know what the answer was except it was obvious that I lied to him. Why I lied, I discussed in the book. I still wonder about it myself. Colonel Norris let me know that that was enough of a black mark on me. For some reason he thought that I wouldn't fit as a regular.

T: Did that bother you at the time, Bill, or not really?

B: I don't think so. It didn't surprise me. And he was a nice man and he thought well of me, I know he did. He put me in for that Bronze Star for having diarrhea. Like I said in the book, if you did your job that's about the highest commendation you can

give an infantryman. That means he's putting his life on the line. I did. On some occasions. I almost bring tears to my own eyes thinking about that stuff. This was the sacrifice that the great bulk of the people in the military never faced. It's no reflection on them. You did what you were told to do. If you were told to drive a truck, you drove a truck. If they told you to walk across an open field and they're shooting at you, you did that. But there's quite a difference between the two. If you did what you were supposed to do as an infantryman, that alone was worth a commendation.

T: There's quite a difference between that and being a truck driver, you're absolutely right.

(2, A, 322)

B: That's right.

T: When you think back on it now, about the war, when you think about what the war meant to you, you're an accomplished author now...

B: *(laughs)* We smile at that.

T: What did that war experience mean for you, in a larger sense?

B: I'm glad I went through it. It was the biggest thing in my life. My wife wouldn't want to hear that, of course. I think so.

T: Would you have said that in 1946 as well? I mean, if I had asked you what it all means, would you have said, "Oh, it's kind of a life defining thing?"

B: Life defining is kind of a fancy phrase. I felt once it happened I was stuck with it.

T: What's the most important way that your war experience changed your life?

B: I don't know. Probably give me another half hour to think about it. Giving me three hundred dollars a month now for disability. I suppose that's not an ear-splitting memory. I'd like to say something wise, but it doesn't come to mind. You'd think I would have sat around and pondered it. Again, if I was a college professor I would be thinking about these things and wringing my hands about it. I just haven't done it. I've had college professors. And they're good and bad and they're indifferent, just as there are good and bad lawyers, you know.

T: I've taken this in good stride, don't worry *both laugh*). How do you think your war experience changed the path your life took?

B: I really don't know. It seems to me that I probably would have ended up in the same, ended up going to law school. I delayed the entry. I'm not sure I would have got in today.

T: They're tough today, aren't they?

B: Yes, I think so. If the war hadn't come along I might have gone into engineering or something, although I think I wasn't as suited for that as I would have been in the law business. I was in engineering school for a while. If I hadn't gotten out of it maybe I would have stayed in. I don't know. In that way it might have changed the direction of my life.

T: On the subject of your book, why did you write the book?

B: I don't know. I've been asked that question before. I really don't know. I think maybe at the urging of some of my boys. A couple of them are interested in military stuff, and I suppose I promoted that somewhat. To hear my stories. I've got one boy who has read a lot, my second boy, Sean, he might have urged me, but I don't remember it really. I should ask him really. Somehow or other somebody thought it would be a good idea if I put it down on paper. I really don't know who did, unless it was my son. I might have with some urging done it myself. I know a couple of my boys thought I should put it down.

(2, A, 365)

T: Was this a book that you could have written thirty years ago?

B: Oh, I would think so. I'd remember a few more things probably. There was stuff that I still remember that I did leave out, some horrible things I can't shake off.

T: In what ways did you change as a result of writing the book and putting it into written form?

B: I don't know if I changed but I enjoy the stuff. I enjoy the nice things that are said and generally people say nice things rather than naughty things. As I say to people, "If you like it, let me know; if you don't, just be quiet." *(laughs)* And I think that happens. I suppose there's some that don't like it but I think generally it's favorable. You go visiting and things and you're up in front of some people and they're saying what a great guy you are whether you believe it or not. I've enjoyed that part. I know that's not quite the question you asked.

T: It is in a sense. Bill, at this point I'm finished. Is there something that you would like to add before we conclude? As a lawyer this is the final...

B: This is the summary?

T: Yes.

B: No.

End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 382.

T: So the final words are yours, Bill.

B: I haven't prepared anything. As lawyers who try a lawsuit say, the key is preparation, preparation, preparation. I give a reading, I prepare. Again this topic, I harangued about dropping the bomb and the rightness or wrongness of it. I think it saved a lot of lives. Revisionists say it would only have cost so many, and how do they know that? They just know that, because they learned that at Harvard or something. You might guess I'm down on some of those intellectuals, or whatever you might be called.

T: Yes. *(laughs)*

B: Hindsight is always 20 -20.

T: It is.

B: But I tell you about that. Old Harry Truman, I think, he had a pretty good view of the situation. I wouldn't have wanted the job. I didn't vote for him, by the way, did not. I don't think I would have been the one to want to drop that big one they dropped. You can't tell. With all the Japanese military, [they kept fighting] even after they dropped [the two bombs], until the Emperor stepped in and said, "We've got to stop it now." There could have been countless American and other deaths if they hadn't done it. My view of war, at least war then—I won't tell you what war is today because it's different—people died in Germany and England and Japan, even the civilians were not immune from dying. I have some sympathy for them in a way, but I don't think the fact that they were civilians meant necessarily they should not have been involved in the war, and although the A bomb was terrible stuff, that was still part of the war.

T: Bill, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW