

Interviewee: Rev. Fred Miller

Interviewer: Dan Borkenhagen

Date: 25 November 2001

Location: the Miller home in Minneapolis, MN

Transcribed by: Dan Borkenhagen, March 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, July 2002

Fred Miller was born on 16 July 1911 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the son of German immigrant parents. He was raised in the Twin Cities area, and from 1924-30 attended Concordia College, St. Paul, for both high school and college. Herb then went to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and in 1934 was ordained a minister in the Lutheran Church. Soon thereafter, in 1935, Fred was married (wife Frita), and moved to his first congregation in the small town of Akely, Minnesota.

In mid-1941, Fred decided to enter the Army as a military chaplain; after Basic Training, he was commissioned as a 1st lieutenant and subsequently posted to Europe. Fred served as a chaplain with the 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion, 3rd Armored Division, until the end of the war; the unit saw action in France, Belgium, and Germany. After 1945 Fred remained in the military, serving until 1964 as an administrator and teacher with the ROTC program. He then decided to retire from the military and go back to the pastoral ministry.

Fred served with Trinity First Lutheran Church in Minneapolis until he "retired" in 1976; now more than 90 years of age, Fred still serves part time at Trinity First and at St. Peter's Lutheran in Edina, Minnesota. At the time of this interview (2001) Fred Miller lived in Minneapolis.

Rev. Fred Miller died 17 Mar 2012, aged 100, in Minneapolis.

Interview key:

M: Rev. Fred Miller

D: Dan Borkenhagen

[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.

D: This is an interview on November 25th, 2001. My name is Dan Borkenhagen and I'm here interviewing Pastor Fred Miller. Thank you very much for agreeing to the interview.

M: You're welcome.

D: I'm just going to start out with some basic biographical questions, to give people a general framework for your life. When were you born and where?

M: I was born in Minneapolis, on the 16th of July, 1911. Born in a house, right across the street from the present Northwest Abbot hospital.

D: Who were your parents?

M: My father was Joseph Miller, born in Germany in 1861, came to Minnesota in 1891. My mother's name was Stance, born in Germany in 1872, came to Good Thunder, Minnesota, a little town south of Mankato, in 1876.

D: So you were the first generation American then?

M: That's right, full-blooded American if you want to call it that. *(laughs)* I started school here in Minneapolis, the first grade or so. Then we moved to a little area which is about two miles south of the present Buck Hill. Then I went to a country school, and graduated there from the 8th grade in 1923 and came to Minneapolis. I stayed with a pastor to take one year of confirmation, my mother had given me my first year of confirmation. That was at Trinity First Lutheran, where I'm still a member. I graduated from there in 1924, and went to Concordia College, St. Paul six years at that time, and graduated in 1930. Then I went to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and graduated in 1934 after one year of internship, or vicarage, in a big town north of Bemidji known as Tenstrike, Minnesota. *(somewhat sarcastically)*

D: So your vicarage was in Tenstrike, and you graduated from seminary in St. Louis. Where was your first call [official appointment as pastor]?

M: First call was to a small town between Walker and Park Rapids, Minnesota known as Akeley. Had a congregation there and another ten miles south of there. That was my first parish. I was there about four years, then I moved to a town about

ten miles away, Walker. That's where I completed the first portion of my parish ministry. Because in 1941 I was commissioned as a 1st lieutenant to be a chaplain in the ensuing, the pretty-soon-to-begin World War II. I stayed in the service for 23 years. I was discharged in 1964.

D: You stayed in the service for a very significant amount of time.

M: Then shortly after that I received a call from Trinity First and I was a pastor there from '64 to '76. Then I retired from the ministry and I was asked to be a vacancy pastor at St. Peter in Edina, where I went in July of 1978 and I stayed there, and I'm still there. I've served in various capacities, interim, vacancy, primarily in the latter years as assistant to the pastor. I do my own thing here and there. I am assistant to the pastor, if you want to add a little humor, this position is to laugh at the pastor's jokes, polish his shoes, and take his wife out shopping! *(laughs)*

D: You've fulfilled all those roles then?

M: I am fulfilling them now and am quite adept at it.

D: Good to hear. Okay, so that takes us up to the present day. When were you married, Fred?

M: I was married on the 16th of May 1935, in Minneapolis. We have two children. Boy and a girl, first of all born in '38 and the son in '42, '43 I believe it was. The daughter has two grandsons and the son has two granddaughters. And the one granddaughter has two children, which is the third one, so we have two great-grandchildren.

D: Let's go back to your military service. When did you sign up for the chaplaincy?

M: Well yes, the synod [Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod] knew, pretty much in conjunction with the national government, that we were going to be involved in the war. They asked individuals who were my age to think of signing up to apply for the chaplaincy. I did that and received my ecclesiastical endorsement from synod, and then was commissioned in May of 1941. Went out to active duty in September in 1941.

D: You said you received your commission from the synod and then you did some other training beyond that. What did it take to get your commission from synod?

M: Nothing. I just applied but, because of my graduating from Concordia Seminary, that equipped me from the synodical standpoint to be eligible.

D: But you did do some training with the Army then?

M: Yes. It's been since 1918, we had not been involved in any major conflict. 1918, '28, '38, that's some 24 years, why with the losses now, we should proceed. As a chaplain, I was of course not eligible to carry any weapons. Also as a chaplain I would not be eligible for capture. But they threw us into the same slot as those that were going to be out on the battlefield. So after I was commissioned, I was called to active duty on September 10, 1941, and they sent me Fort Knox. There I had the same rigorous training as the field officers did. We had to have knowledge of tactics, and maneuvers, and various things. In fact, I even conducted a class, because the fellow that was supposed to conduct it, but apparently he had too many Pepsis [throughout the interview Fred will use the term Pepsi loosely to refer to beer] the night before, and he couldn't make it. That was quite a joke, our chaplain conducting a field exercise for the rest of the troops.

D: So you actually went through Basic Training?

M: Well, we'd call that a Basic Training, it's a Basic Training for officers down at Fort Knox. We learned about field exercises, the enemy's over here and they got so many troops, and you've got so many, how do you deploy that? What is your procedure? That was the assignment I had on Saturday morning, through default.

D: Why did they have all their chaplains going through this stuff as well? Was there actually thought that they would be involved in it?

M: Well, I guess they couldn't just right at that time distinguish where that fine line would be, and in order that they didn't miss anything they said, "Let's put them through the whole business." I also went to Harvard, I went to Harvard because the chaplain's school was there. That was specifically for chaplains; it was a six or eight week course. That was at the beginning of 1942.

D: So after you had done the Fort Knox thing for the general training, you did get sent to some specific chaplain training classes as well?

M: Right.

D: I'm going to ask you about a date that comes before that, December 7th, 1941.

M: Oh, December 7th, that's right, that's the Pearl Harbor date.

D: Where were you when you first heard that news?

M: All right, after my so-called officer's Basic Training at Fort Knox, I was sent to Pine Camp. Pine Camp is in the northern part of New York, and I was a chaplain there. And on this specific Sunday, December 7th, 1941, I conducted services in the morning. Then in the afternoon, I thought, "Okay, I'll go to a movie." So I went the movie and saw it. I distinctly remember the name, *How Green is My Valley*. I don't know if you've ever heard of that. Well, I came out of the movie and everything was

in a disarray. People were talking about things that seemed no sense to me. It all added up that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

(1, A, 161)

D: So you just kind of heard the news via people talking after the movie.

M: That's right, after we came out of the movie.

D: What was your first impression, what were you thinking?

M: Well, it was so foreign that I just couldn't quite comprehend what that all meant. Of course President Roosevelt hadn't made his speech yet, I think he made his speech on Monday, if I'm not mistaken. I think we all assumed we were going to be in a war, but the official declaration, I think, was made on Monday. "The day that will live in infamy," President Roosevelt said.

D: What was the reaction of people around you, family or friends?

M: *(chuckles)* Well, I get very much of a kick out of my brother. My brother, he lived here [in Minneapolis] together with my mother, he lived with my mother, still he was very close. So I called home and I called my brother. Oh, it's so close, that's this same Sunday afternoon. "I'm so glad, I'm so surprised to talk to you. I thought you'd be overseas already." *(laughs, then snaps fingers)* Declare war, first thing you know I'd be overseas. That's about all I remember. My father had passed away in '40, and my mother was living here in Minneapolis. I believe I, rather my brother had conveyed the information to my aging mother already.

D: Now, your wife... Fred, did you have children at this time?

M: I had a wife at that time, and one daughter.

D: And where were they at this time?

M: They were in Minneapolis. They had moved from Walker, Minnesota to Minneapolis, and joined with Trinity First.

D: So they stayed there while you were away for the war?

M: Yes. I can inject this, all about where I was.

D: Go ahead.

M: From Fort Knox I went to Pine Camp. Pine Camp back to Fort Knox. Fort Knox we chaplains were distributed to various armored divisions. The best divisions, so to speak, were the first ones that were selected, that is, you had a choice. I was the

last guy, and I got Camp Hope, Louisiana. So I went down to there, lived in a town by the name of Leesville, which is right next to the river. There my wife and daughter came down. We lived among bed bugs there for quite a while. We stayed in Leesville for maybe three, four months.

And then we, the whole division went out to the Mojave Desert, to train to go to North Africa. Because we were fighting first in North Africa. However, during the time we were out there, it was hot out there in July, July to September, why, the campaign in North Africa ended; we beat [German General] Rommel. So then we came back to the East Coast, to Camp Pickett, which is in Virginia. From Camp Pickett we went to Indiantown Gap, which is near Harrisburg [Pennsylvania]. And my wife, I think my wife and my mother, and our daughter came along, because we had an apartment while I lived there.

Then we were ready to go overseas, to England. My wife was pregnant. We were, we got, the whole division was all full of the right type of people for the right position, about 13,000 troops. So there was quite a few, you can't get any vacation, you can't get anything unless there's a death. So, on the 23rd of August [1943], my wife gave birth to our son John, but I couldn't get home to see him. So we then departed from New Jersey and shipped overseas. So I didn't get to see my boy until he was 2 ½ years old. *(pauses three seconds)* Got to England. In England, we trained from September though about the 20th of June, and then we went into Normandy [in France].

D: Thank you for the outline, now I kind of have an idea where we're going. I'm going to jump back now and catch some details then. You were up in New York, is that right?

M: Pine Camp, Watertown New York, northern New York.

D: And then from there, at some point you went to Harvard, was that around that time somewhere?

M: No. I came back to Fort Knox, and from Fort Knox, then I went to Harvard. Before I went to Camp Polk.

D: What exactly did they have you doing at Harvard?

M: Well, at Harvard, we were more or less, I'm afraid that most of it has escaped me. But in the first place, also to be acquainted with how the position of the chaplain was in the military. He was not in any position to give any information that I might have, or to instruct, or to say anything contrary to what's being said by the commanders we had. Also chaplains were not to carry a weapon. We are also eligible to go to the battlefield, if the enemy's there, and minister to the people that are on the field, without any punishment. We had a white band around our arm, same as the Red Cross, on there. Which made us eligible for that sort of a situation.

D: So the enemy were supposed to stay away from you?

M: And then of course we also we also did some rigorous training, physical training, because we were subject to quite a bit of uncertainty out on the field. They gave us a jeep and a driver, but maybe you had to walk in case the vehicle was hit. So we had to be able to adapt ourselves to whatever came along, also to dig a fox hole, and a trench. They gave us real good information—that all the ministry to the soldiers there did not in any way conflict with our theological or church theology. I thought that was marvelous.

Okay, for example, Sunday morning came, I conduct Protestant service. I conducted service for everybody. Tuesday evening I conducted a service for Lutherans. And what about Presbyterians and Baptists? We had fourteen chaplains. There were Baptists in my unit. By the way, I had the 1200 in my unit, which was the 23rd Armored Engineers, part of the 3rd Armored Division. There was a chaplain over in the 33rd Armored Regiment, who is Episcopalian, and I'm going to give you his name and also when he has services. So he would have those services. So I gave only to Lutherans, because at that time, we were part of the fellowship with all Lutherans, so there was no restriction there. A marvelous arrangement that we had, for example if you were a member of Trinity First here, and you went into the service, and you went into the area or into the 23rd Armored Regiment, or part of the big 3rd Armored Division, then I got your name. I got your name and you were informed when we had Lutheran services.

Division chaplain didn't like that arrangement, so he said, "Miller you're supposed to give communion to everybody." I said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Yes, you are." I said, "No." He said, "Ok, I'll go to Washington." He went to Washington, to the chief of chaplains, and the chief of chaplains came back and he said, "Miller is right." So I didn't have to serve communion to them. A marvelous arrangement. This is all an offshoot of your question, "What did I do at Harvard?"

Also we gave first aid, in case of no medic. And of course to minister to the spiritual needs, especially to those who were dying on the field. Although I wasn't so much in the field. You've got to remember that I was one of the older chaplains. Eventually they took me away from the front and put me in administration, called divisional training.

(1, A, 283)

D: So they gave you a lot of special needs circumstances, these are the kind of situations you'll be running into on the field, or here or there, and trained you for those types of things in that six to eight weeks.

M: They also encouraged me to hold services. The front would move up, keep on moving. Then we stopped, for some reason. Maybe we needed the Marines to soften up, or we needed supplies. When we tried to get information, how long are we going to stop here. We'll stop here for a day. I was very close friends with a Catholic chaplain. He was assigned with me to the 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion. So we stopped and had six companies here, and that would mean we'd also have six services. Instead of my going and making arrangements for six services, in addition, I said, "Mac, when do you want your Catholic services?" So I went to three of these,

"I'm going to have my protestant, Chaplain Mac will be here for Catholic service." He took the other three, and he said, "I'm going to have Mass here, and Miller is going to be there." A very excellent arrangement, so we had our services all in the field. Hedgerows in France, it was a beautiful arrangement. My property about adjoined yours, but there were trees, you know, like right here on Lyndale or one of the avenues here [in Minneapolis], the trees, we could keep by ourselves without being seen by the enemy.

D: They did a good job of arranging things so you could conduct services the way you wanted to, the way you'd been trained. And the other people who were trained for Catholic or Baptist services conducted those.

M: We had a harmonious relationship, especially with Chaplain Mac. He was a great guy. He was, he liked his Pepsi—I use that term liberally. *(laughs)*

D: Yeah, I noticed! *(laughs)*

M: So we get to a place where we're going to stop, he said, "Fred, I'm going over to my tent." And the company commander of the 8th was also named McCarthy. And he said, "You come over tonight at 9:00 and you bring me back to my tent." So I go over there at 9:00 and I say, "Mac." And he says, "Ohh" *(makes groaning noise)*. I said, "You're supposed to get back." He said, "I don't want to go back." So I practically dragged him home, and of course had to take his shoes off. Put him in bed, make sure he was comfortable. Next morning, he walked over, "Thanks, Fred." A real good relationship. The Missouri Synod was tops with giving service to their people, because we had the Armed Forces Commission and through that, these names were given to us and I knew that there was a new man that was in the company which was part of my daughter regiment. And I'd get there and make sure that he knew that Missouri Synod or Lutheran services, and also Protestant.

D: So they made sure to get you all the names of the LCMS members, or Lutheran members. Sounds like you were able to go over and almost do a home visit thing, and find them in their tents.

M: Very much, as much as we could.

D: Okay. So you got that training at Harvard, and from there you were shipped to Louisiana.

M: No, I went back to Fort Knox and then I made the wonderful transfer to Camp Hope. That was quite an arrangement. I've got to tell you. We got down there and the division chaplain tells me, "I'm so happy to see you. We've got three others here looking for a chaplain. So tomorrow when you come, we'll go down and visit one of them."

So the next morning the chaplain had selected the 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion. So we went down there and walked down into the room of the barracks

and saluted, Colonel Tandy. And the divisional chaplain says, "Colonel, I have a man here who can maybe serve you as a chaplain." Colonel Tandy says, "What the hell do I want with a chaplain?" So we started heading off. So Colonel Tandy says, "Wait a minute. Why don't you stay here. This is Tuesday, Thursday you come down and we'll see how we can work." So I went down to the barracks.

Then Thursday morning I went over and reported to him, and saluted him again, he's a colonel, and he says, "Yes, we've got something you can do. First place, we do not have a battalion newspaper. And we need one, all the other units have one." He was always looking at some of the other units that had some of this stuff. So he says, "I want you to go to the personnel officer and have him go through the personnel records to see individuals who in civilian life had the ability to write a newspaper." So that's one thing, we put one out every week for our unit. "And we don't have a drum and bugle corps, either. We line up for a parade and we need a drum and bugle corps. In fact a fife and bugle corps, I think we need. So again I want you to get over to the personnel officer and pick out some individuals with musical ability, and maybe you can find one who is able to lead." And he goes on and on. Next he says, "We also need somebody to go to Devicker, which is ten miles from here. There's a USO there and the girls from the community come and our boys go down and dance. So I want you to go in your jeep and go down there and make sure the individuals there behave themselves. Take a couple officers with you to help you." But he wasn't done yet. "It's just about time to start the baseball season. So we need a baseball team. All the units have one. You can do the same thing, and if you can't find somebody, I want you to coach it. And, hey, if you've got time, you can preach on Sunday." So that arrangement to do those things ended, however, in September, when the organization of the Army authorized a Special Service officer which, until that time, that was us, the chaplains.

D: So you got to do all those miscellaneous jobs.

M: Well, I'll tell you, I got a fellow who was very happy to put out that newspaper, and the back page we always had something about Colonel Tandy. He was, he didn't care what it was. So I got to the point where I showed a picture of the barracks early in the morning, cleaned up, everything going. Here comes Colonel Tandy, and the second picture, and the third one Colonel Tandy is in there and things are going like this (*makes motions with hands indicating crazy pace*). And then things are going like that. And the last picture the barracks has collapsed.

Couldn't find anyone with any experience with the fife, so I got a drum and bugle corps. In fact, I've got a picture someplace right in front of the drums, I didn't lead it though. And baseball, we never got quite organized with a baseball team. Because after that, we had to go to the Mojave Desert for training. Those were the things. But there was one other thing. Oh, so then of course on Sunday. On Tuesday I would have the Lutheran communion service. My room, so to speak, was above the game room in the barracks and Colonel Tandy didn't have any friends. He was down there playing solitaire. So one day when I came back after, he said, "You play cribbage?" And I said foolishly, "Yes." So he says, "Chappy, take your stuff up and come on down, and we'll play cribbage." Every time we played cribbage, so it got so

I went through the back door upstairs. But the barracks were so shaky, he took a broom and hit the roof up there, "Chappy, come on down." And he would always play for money. He still owes me fifty-five cents. That's from five cents a game.

D: So you were a fine player, too.

M: Then we got out to the desert. We went from there to the desert. I drove out, I asked if I could drive out. I knew some folks in Texas and we stayed there. I got out there, in the Mojave Desert. Ever been out there?

D: No.

M: You're lucky.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.

M: And we got out to the desert and all the troops were where the tents were. At the other end of the road there is a fellow whose face was covered with that type of prevention from the sun. (*This is reference to Colonel Tandy*) And his lips were with white stuff and he saw me, "Chappy, Chappy. Nice to see you. Listen, we're not going to be doing much training here in the heat of the day because it's just too hot. From 3:00 to 8:00 in the evening and the troops have to have something to do during the day." He thought that, so he said, "I'd like to have you go to E company and have the company commander make six softball diamonds." We had six companies. I said, "Colonel, we only need three because they'll play each other." He says, "Okay, three softball diamonds, and six horseshoe boards. Then I'd like you to make a boxing ring." It was an elevation of about this high, and about as big as this room (*two to three feet off the ground, room is around twenty square feet*), "So that keeps the kids out of trouble." So I went over to E company and got that all made. And I don't know how far we got along in using it.

One day comes a command, all the troops at 6:00 tonight are to come around this boxing ring. Each company, there were four sides, so it went A Company, B Company, C, and then the rest. I don't know what was going on, are we going overseas, or what? Here the announcement was Colonel Tandy, "I've been transferred." And if the troops could have cheered they would have cheered, because nobody like the guy. But that was the last time I saw him, and I don't know quite where he went. I don't know what he did.

He had some other peculiar ideas. I was still special services officer and the 23rd Armored Engineers were known as beer drinkers. We were all beer drinkers, and so much money was allotted to each company each month to spend on recreational things. And come the 20th of the month, we have a whole lot of money left. So Colonel Tandy says, "You get beer, we're going to have a beer party." So we did have a beer party, on the 23rd. I arranged it; even they couldn't drink all the beer.

And another thing, the doc, I became very close to the medical officer, the doc, because he was also (**). In fact, when we were in the desert, he and I, after I

conducted Sunday service we'd go into LA, drive in with my car. Anyway, he says, "You, I want you to also, when we have our ten mile hike, I want you to, I'm going to put doc in front of A Company. And Chappy, I'm going to put you in front of B Company." To lead it. A ten mile run, it was a ten mile run, full packs and all that. So we started, and of course Doc is about my age. And we were about ten years older than all the other troops. I was about thirty and the troops were about twenty. And of course, so that started as slow as Doc could go, so they passed him up, and eventually they passed me up. And when we got to the end, both Doc and I were both at the further end, barely coming in. *(laughs)* And we told him, everyone had to carry his M-1 rifle, and we said, "Well, we don't carry a weapon." So, "Okay, you carry a shovel instead." And a full pack. So it was real interesting. Of course, we hadn't gotten anywhere close to battle yet, we were still in the Mojave Desert. This was July through November 1942.

D: You heard at some point in that time that Rommel had been defeated and that there wasn't going to be a need for a desert campaign. So they transferred you at that point?

M: We ended our desert training. I don't remember at this point how long we were supposed to be there, whether we had completed it or not.

D: Where did they send you at that point?

M: Then we came back, back by train, but I had my mother and my wife and daughter with me at Pasadena. Yeah, we had an apartment there, so we drove back, crossed the Southern part of the States to Camp Pickett, Virginia. There we stayed for a very short time, just over Christmas of '42. Frita, my wife, worked in sales, they needed somebody to work in a sales store, as a clerk. We stayed there for, I don't know, until February [1943] or so. Then we went to Indiantown Gap, and then we staged and made the preparation which was appropriate when we were at that particular point in our total training. There we stayed until August of '43.

Then we were sent to New Jersey, which was the port of debarkation, and from there we went on ships. And the ships, we went in quite a formation, because the Germans were already, at that time, doing quite a bit a sea warfare. And during the time on the ships, I taught German to the troops, because we were going over to Germany, and the troops were going to have to speak German. I had German training just about every day.

D: So on the way over with the ships, they kept you busy with some other special service stuff.

M: Special services, I think at that time, maybe special service was already maybe, but this was something because I was able to speak German. And of course I conducted services.

D: How long did the trip over take?

M: We went over on the *Queen Mary*, and it was five days, maybe about seven days.

D: The whole 3rd Army ended up there?

M: The 3rd Armored Division, not the 3rd Army. There was, because we had a 3rd Armored Division, there's a mix-up between that and the 3rd Army. The 3rd Army was down south with Patton. But we were part of the 1st Army, 3rd Armored was part of the 1st Army.

D: So you went over with the 3rd Armored?

M: The 3rd Armored division, about 13,000 troops.

D: 13,000 troops and you were all sent to England.

M: Sent to England, for waiting for waiting for the invasion of D-Day. Which was at that point, we didn't know at that time, but it in history was about ten months away. It was in August [1943], we go there [to France] in June [1944].

D: So where did you disembark in England?

M: I think it was Bristol. From Bristol, then we went through an area which was about sixty miles west of London, known as Salisbury Plain. Two little towns, the closest town was the little town was Cogford near Warminster, which was near Salisbury. That's where we went, ended up out in the fields.

D: You were out in the fields there, not in a formal base or anything?

M: No, we were not in, we were in the tents.

D: And what did they have you guys doing there then?

M: Well, we still conducted our services for our units. I got acquainted with some English people. In fact, I got acquainted with the Royal Air Force, that's what they call the British air force. On my time off I went down and cultivated a yard with Brussels sprouts. You ever eat Brussels sprouts?

D: Yes.

M: That's what their main food is, like rice is with Chinese and sauerkraut for the Germans. And we were adapting ourselves to the conditions which would be, as we would be conducting services in the field. We would also occasionally have movies. Show movies on a small screen. I think we were still doing that, even though that was a special service function. Practicing also carrying out the injured, how we would be ministering to them, while they were on the litter, even while they were being carried. That was rehearsed.

(1, B, 169)

D: So you actually practiced what you would do for field activities, as a chaplain. Fred, what time then did you leave England to head over to the continent?

M: D-Day was the 6th of June [1944], and I had services before, because we knew it was going to come. So I had a service before, and I went back to my tent real late. So the next morning, on the 6th of June, I woke about 10:00 and of course, D-Day had taken place about four hours earlier. So D Day was the 6th of June. And the time for the armored units to go wasn't; the Marines had to go, the Seabees, and all that, and the infantry had to, so to speak, soften it up. Make it eligible for us. We didn't go until, I believe it was June 22nd.

June 22nd was when we finally went over. An interesting trip, across the English Channel. We went over on the LST, a landing ship. Which was a glorified rowboat, and it was rough. I traveled across the Pacific and across the Atlantic, but this was the worst. So we got over close to the other shore, but we couldn't get too close, because the area both on the shore and into the water was devastated with bombshells and even with landmines. Anyway, we could get maybe a block from the shore, and that's as close as we could get, and then we had to go into the water.

This chaplain and I were there, and I says, "Chappy, who's going to go first, you or I?" And he said, "I'll go first." And he went first and his jeep went down [in the water]. It came up again, but his stuff was soaked for almost the whole day. So my driver says, "Where do you want me to go?" I said, "Anyplace but where he went!" Fortunately, we got onto the shore real well. And then we were at St. Lo, which is into France about five, six miles. And there we stayed almost a month. Our Air Force and the RAF had bombed positions, the armored units were going in and things moved pretty fast. Our unit was the first division, we went through St. Lo and Viverre, Chartres, just skirted Paris. Then we went up to Aachen [which is in western Germany]. On the 16th of January, no, the 16th of December [1944].

Then we came down, and were encircled in the Battle of the Bulge [which began in December 1944]. We were in there during Christmas time. And I had Christmas services in a chicken coop. And we didn't know. You people here in the—you weren't living then, but the people in the United States knew more about what was happening than we did. We knew there was something real critical. We were told, "Duck, don't get out, stay where you are." And I had to make... if you do go out, go as fast as you can. I had to go to a tent, by this chicken coop. In Germany, chicken coops there are attached to the houses, like car garages are. I conducted my service there and I think I stayed in that chicken coop. And I had C rations with me, which was a slice of Spam, and a chocolate Hershey bar. And it was like that for a couple of days.

D: That was your Christmas dinner, was it?

M: Christmas dinner, right, I remember that distinctly. *(pauses three seconds)* On the 24th or 25th of December, 1944.

D: What was it like? It sounds like you were close to the front area for quite some period of time. What was it like being that close?

M: Well, actually, I wasn't normally that close. When we got up to the front, some of the chaplains, the younger chaplains up in front had already administered, and the injured were evacuated to field hospitals. Field hospitals were established, and the United States did a marvelous job in its logistics and in planning those things. Field hospitals and food and equipment, all that was just marvelous. When the troops moved forward, all these field hospitals would move. If there was a great number of injured, they'd stay and another one would be established. I would say that I was somewhat limited in getting close, but occasionally I would get up there.

D: Did you ever deal with dead soldiers?

M: I saw more dead Germans, but they weren't being taken care of because our grave registration had to handle our own people. The Germans were... some of them were buried, but more Germans were just left lying. I wish I could tell you, or inform you, that I was closer to those up on the front, but when I was, why my business would be to administer, to say a prayer to the individual, because the medics were right here to transfer them back to one of the field units, field hospitals.

Then I visited the field hospitals. Way back we had general hospitals, the 97th General Hospital in Frankfurt. But we always received literature which we could give them every month; the synod would send out a little devotional booklet. To which I referred to in my messages, in fact they even sent us messages, or outlines, that we could use.

D: That addressed topics of the war, or that would be relevant to those people?

M: To encourage those people, bolster their spirits, and refer them to the Lord Jesus, that they're carrying out a mission, which is in conformity with what we think He wants us to do. And to be sure that He will take care of us in whatever way He sees fit.

D: How were the people around there, were they really rattled by this?

M: Happy that we came, the French were very happy that we came. And once in a while when they saw us, when we came through, they'd stop and throw vegetables into the jeep. When I went to Paris, I went to Paris once, I went inside Notre Dame Cathedral, and when I came back, my jeep was filled with the produce, eggs and all sorts of food. And when I got back, I took it to the kitchen, and said, here, use this. So basically, they were very happy that we were there. Until later on, when we got real close to the end of the war.

When the war ended, it had already been determined which parts of Germany was to be allocated to the French, North was for the British, East was for the Russians, South was for French, and then we had West. When the war ended, however, we were past that line. We were in the areas that the Russians would take.

One of the most interesting things, I'll tell you this, unless I'm going too fast, I'm getting to the end of the war.

D: No, go ahead.

M: When the war ended, we were in a little town by the name of Sachsenhausen, which was ten kilometers from Eisleben, Germany. Eisleben, Germany is the town in which Martin Luther was born and in which he died. So I said, man, I got to go down there. So I told the jeep driver to go to Eisleben. Got down to Eisleben, the town was deserted, nobody was around. I knocked on a couple of doors and nobody would open then. I went to the *Burgermeister*, like the mayor of the town, and I asked him, is anyone here that would know anything about Martin Luther. He said, "Well, this fellow over here." So I went over to that house, and I knocked, and he gingerly opened the door. I told him who I was, an American chaplain, that I was here, and hopefully we would be able to be on good terms with them. Finally he opened the door.

This was the first floor on the house in which Luther had died. So I told him, I said, "You know, I'm interested, I'm a Lutheran pastor and would be interested in seeing this." And he said, "Yes." I don't know whether it dawned on me at that time, but this was also the place in which he was born. Or he had died, one of the two, it wasn't too long however, when I saw that this was a house where Luther was born, and across the street where he was baptized, and there was the marketplace, this here was the house in which he died, and here was the house in which he preached his last sermon. So I said, "These troops have been out in the field, and now they've got to stay here, they'd love to just spread their wings a little bit. I think, maybe it would be great if I could organize a tour."

That day I first came and met that guy who gingerly opened the door, why right there was the guest book. Now this was May 1945, and the last person to sign it was 1939. Nobody had visited in that long. So I signed my name in there. Then in the house in which Luther died, the man gave me a plaque, sticks out something like that, it's Luther's bust, which I considered out of the house in which Luther died. My children are contending for it, I think my daughter is going to get it.

So I went to the house where Luther was born and the room was on the first floor. And I went to the church, and there was this fellow who lived in the house where Luther was born directed me there. Then I said, "This was the place where Luther was baptized, and I thought maybe a hundred soldiers or so could come through, and it would be nice if someone would play the organ there." "Oh yeah, we'll do that." And then went to the house, or church where Luther had preached his last sermon. I think it was February 12th or something like that. And there was no problem getting in there. And then the fellow that was helping me said, "He would like to go upstairs, see the room in which Luther had died." So I went back and organized the thing. And on Friday night—Saturday was to be the trip—I went back to make sure this was all in order.

Well, when I got down to Eisleben, here the house in which Luther was born was cordoned off. The *Burgermeister* says, "Well, we'd appreciate it if you wouldn't go there, the couple there committed suicide last night." He told me that they had

some connection with the Nazis, so they were afraid that they were going to be treated like Nazis. They heard how the Russians had treated the Germans. So, went to Eisleben, and come Saturday, there were over 400.

D: 400 guys showed up for the tour?

M: So we drove down there, the convoy of trucks was almost a mile long, and we got down there. I had them all get out. Dan, have you been to Germany?

D: Yes.

M: You know all the little towns have a marketplace then. I had them all get out there. I think I had a loudspeaker, I told them about the situation about the house, I said, you can walk around it and you can see from here, that's the room in which Luther was born. So they walked around and they could see the room. We went to church, and we had, there the baptismal font that Luther used was no longer in front, it was in back. We were able to go past and see it. Somebody played some hymns there.

Then we went into the church in which Luther preached his last sermon. That was always sort of the highlight, that I stood in the same place where Luther had preached. I recited, I think it was the 46th Psalm. I had my little Bible with me, and read, "God is our refuge and strength, our ever present help in trouble." And I told them a few things about Martin Luther. From there we went out and made that long walk up the stairs, where people could come up and then go down the other side. There was supposed to be theoretically the same pewter bowl, which his coworker had used to hold water to cool the fever of Martin Luther during his last hours, and a few other things that were there.

I stayed there in Eisleben during the night, then we left that area. People didn't want us to leave because they knew the Russians were coming in. So we went back and went to Darmstadt [near Frankfurt], and from there, the troops and the officers were given a vacation, while they were waiting to get everything settled to send them back home. The officers went to Cannes [on the French Riviera]. At Nice [also on the French Riviera] is where the enlisted men went. They applied for it. Some of us went down to Cannes. I spent seven days down there. It cost me ten dollars. Then shortly afterwards, I don't know how that happened, because the Passion Play at Oberammergau is every ten years, but they put one on, and I attended that. Stayed at a house overnight. That was in '45, they put it on. They missed 1940, because of Hitler and the war. I came home in September [1945] and I saw my son for the first time. He was a year and a month old.

D: What was it like seeing him again, or seeing him for the first time?

M: He was able to say, what's that guy doing here? *(laughs, then pauses three seconds)* Oh, my wife was so happy when I came home, because he was a terror. Frita, my wife, would take him to church, and she would already feel sick on Thursday, thinking about how he's going to act on Sunday.

D: Just looking at the whole time that you were ministering then during the war, what were the unique challenges that you had ministering to people that were going into battle, and also seeing these life and death situations there?

M: Well, I tried to comfort them also with the fact that I was in there, too. I was subject to the same attack as any of the others, because the Germans from twenty-five miles away didn't know I was a chaplain. But that this was also part of what we were doing to preserve our country, there are dangers there, of course. Some of us will not come back.

But it was in line with what we read in [the Bible book of] Romans, we are to protect ourselves, and if this hadn't happened, if we wouldn't be in the war, Hitler had in mind to take the whole world. Our faith and trust in Jesus Christ would pull us. He will sustain us and give us all the necessary strength that we need to cope with fear. I was surprised by, I think some of this was all really given them before they got there. I didn't find too many men cowards. I didn't find anybody that snuck back or went in the direction away from the front, I didn't see a traitor; I didn't find any of those. I found complete men.

D: What was the spiritual condition of the men like during that? Did you notice that things were harder for them when they were in battle, or was it a strength they experienced, or it just depended on the individual a lot maybe?

M: I think quite a bit it depended upon the individual. They established buddies, sometimes they met for the first time they met when they had services. They found out –

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

M: You asked me about the spiritual condition. It was neat, they found out that they had a connection, maybe they found out that they were related. They established a relationship like that which supported one another, it was very helpful. I thought basically the people that came to church—there were some Missouri Synod people that didn't—those that came to church were deep spiritually. That they knew they were in danger, but they knew this is what they were called to do, and they were going to do it. I suppose some even knew that you could be killed by an automobile when you're at home.

D: You never had to deal too much with the front lines, but you said some chaplains did have to serve closer to the front lines.

M: You see I was with the 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion, but then more chaplains were coming in. I was 33 or 34 during these times. There were some younger chaplains that came in, and they put them up in the front. They had the same Basic Training, but they didn't have as much experience in the ministry, but the same Basic Training as we did, but they were equipped to go there.

D: And you got to deal with a lot of men that were in hospitals, is that right?

M: We got to do a lot of hospital visiting, and of course there were some of them that passed away, and some were unconscious, and others that were ready to go back home, they couldn't serve anymore. Broken legs that couldn't be taken care of here. So we tried to comfort them in this particular status in which they were. This man here has a broken leg; we don't know what the Lord has in store for you, but we do know that because you are still here, you're going to go home and you have a mission. And the Lord will show that to you when you recover. You may even have a mission to tell other people that Jesus is their savior while you are recovering.

D: Did you also have to conduct funeral services as well?

M: I didn't do funeral services, but graves registration. *(pauses three seconds)* I did have one or two graveside funerals... cemeteries were just being established there. We have some cemeteries there. From World War I we had Flanders Field, but we have several in France. We had a couple cemeteries there at Normandy Beach, that's where we invaded. I cannot recall too many funerals that I had. Those I had would be graveside, graves registration would be right there, because we didn't even have any caskets. They were very often in wooden boxes, or sometimes even just in blankets or tarps. They were then exhumed, if they were buried there. I would like to not go into that too much because my mind is hazy on that.

D: I guess that covers most of the direct experiences I wanted to cover on the war. I want to talk a little bit about when you got home then. You saw your child for the first time, you'd been away from your family for quite some time, what was it like readjusting to being back with your family, to having a child that's two and a half years old, that you'd never met him before?

M: Well I can just tell you sketching it, this is a different experience. It wasn't certainly a vacation. *(pauses three seconds)* I had to realize that I was now a member of the family, instead of with the troops. As a chaplain I was pretty much isolated. I was with the doctor, but now, when I got up in the morning, my family was there. I had to adjust myself to a different type of social life. Living a year with other people going to church here. Actually I was on furlough because I was still in the service; I still stayed in the service for 23 years. That's interesting too, because I was not a chaplain during that time.

D: What were you?

M: I was an administrator and an ROTC instructor. I kept my clergy, because I was a clergyman. But I went, after I came home, in 1946, I went to Fort Leavenworth. Fort Leavenworth is where the troops came and were discharged. That's where the troops came in. They didn't want anything to do with the Army. They left everything there, underwear, everything, they didn't want anything. I had to give a speech, I'd give about three to ten speeches a day to the troops, trying to inform

them. They're going to go back to a different type of life, they're going to have to adjust themselves to living with the family, they're not with the troops anymore. It will mean a little more cordiality than the roughness which you had.

But then I'd go through the barracks and everybody moved out in the morning, they'd have these people in the barracks come out and I gave my speeches and then they left. I went through the barracks and all this stuff that was left there. Sometimes brand new shorts and blankets and field jackets, and everything was going to be burned. So what did I do? I had no authority. I picked up some of that stuff and I bundled it and I sent packages home to Frita. And she processed it and then we gave it away to people.

D: So these guys were just so eager to get away they'd just leave stuff?

M: You know how a kid maybe 18, 19, 20, up to 25, even older, when something has been distasteful, they want no part of any of it. But the field jacket was a nice jacket. I don't know if you've ever seen it, but it was, it wasn't the Eisenhower jacket, but it was nice.

So I went there to Fort Leavenworth, and then, what am I going to do? Go back to service, go back to ministry, remain in the chaplaincy, or become a Department of the Army civilian? My mind was, I want to go back to Germany and visit the place where my mother was born and my dad was born. So I got information. As a chaplain, I would not be able to go over there for quite some number of years. First I had to stay in the States two years, and then go to an undesirable area, like Japan was. And then come back and stay two more years here, and then I could go to Germany. That would be about ten years, and I didn't want that.

And the other, a Department of Army civilian, I think I would lose any seniority, it wouldn't be added to my retirement, in case I wanted to go. The third one was to become an enlisted man. And that's what I did. And that was a real shock, a change. People were in Washington, a guy comes out and he wants to become an enlisted man. As an enlisted man I could go to Germany. So I retired as a major and then became a master sergeant and took some training in administration, and they thought, boy, this guy is a chaplain, he should really know a lot. After a brief stop here in the States they sent me to Europe, and I was assigned to the headquarters of the European Command as the individual who was in charge – and I had some people who were under me – of the troops that were coming in and the troops that were going home.

All these troops are going home so we had a request from the States, corresponding with the same MOS as a military outfit, like an operational specialty, that sort of assignment. That was my job and I came home once or twice – I was supposed to come home in '49, but we had the Berlin Blockade and we were frozen there. Finally I did come home in '52, for good. Then I was given also the assignment of being in charge, the enlisted man in charge of the post exchanges, those were the stores. There were people there, too, there was another sergeant, one in Munich, and one in Paris, and one in Vienna, in London, and one in Switzerland. They had to come to meet with me once a month in Frankfurt.

And finally the officer over me says, why don't you go and visit some of the other places? So the next month we met in Vienna, then we met in Paris, then we met in Munich. By that time, they said, you're going around too much, you stay in Frankfurt. By the time I was supposed to go home, the man that had a similar position in the officer's rank, had a party. It was a Pepsi party. And he was going back to the United States to be the Adjunct General of the Army, in Washington. So he said, after he'd got a couple Pepsis, "When you get back to the States, and you want an assignment, get in touch with me." (*spoken with a slurred voice*) I'm sure after the Pepsis had drained out of him, he'd forgot all that. It was shortly after that I wrote to him. I said, "I enjoyed that party, if you recall you made this statement." Never heard from him.

But, I left Frankfurt and got into Massachusetts, and then to New Jersey, then to Fort Sheridan, and finally to St. Thomas Military Academy, in St. Paul.

(recounts postwar experiences at St. Thomas and after, unrelated to topic)

D: I just want to touch on a few things that cover the war again, that kind of span your experience there. Did you have leave or, "r-and-r," to visit any places while you were in Europe?

M: Yes, when I was in England, I went up to Edinburgh and I also attended a month's school at Oxford. So I traveled quite a bit in Europe, up to Scotland and back. Of course during the time of the war over there, we didn't have any liberty until the end of the war, and then I went to Cannes. We had no time off, when we had time off, it was more or less to make sure that our clothing was cleaned or we were getting new shoes or something.

D: Fred, while you were in the service, did you ever see people of different racial groups coming into contact, or were things pretty segregated where you were?

M: Well, I found no... the ones that came in were mostly blacks, and I had a marvelous relationship with them, there was, well, I saw no problem. I didn't see any prejudice. I think they were pretty much united, and of course, I think that's par for the course. Just like after September 11th [2001, referring to the attacks on US], when they invited people whether you were Catholic, Protestant, Episcopalian, or whether you were a black man or yellow. And it was pretty much in the battlefield, too.

D: And so you did see people of different racial groups, but it was just because the experience that it seemed to unite them?

M: I guess I didn't have many Orientals. There were blacks, but not too many of them. But I had a good relationship with them.

D: And all the troops seemed to get together relatively well?

M: Yeah, they would work together well. There was no “black fellow” or any of that stuff. I thought that was real wholesome at that time, which was fairly early when you think of we had during the latter years were, there was still some of that, although it has died out quite a bit. *(pauses three seconds)* But I didn’t see it.

D: Fred, you talked about a couple individuals that you met, friends like Chaplain Mac.

M: Chaplain Mac was a Catholic friend. He was a real neat guy.

D: He was in the same division as you?

M: We were in the same regiment. We had about 1200, but the total division was 13,000. We had 1200 in the 23rd Armored Engineers. And he was a Catholic chaplain and I was a Protestant and we had one Jewish chaplain that was assigned to headquarters, because there weren’t that many Jewish people, but they were all taken care of as far as their spiritual needs.

D: Did you have any other close friends during the war, that you really remember, or individuals that made an impact on you?

M: I would have to say not, because there were... Oh yes, wait, Captain Sconzo. He was a medical officer, and he and I went to the desert. After my service on Sunday morning, we’d go into LA and get themselves a hotel room, because as soon as we got into San Bernardino or Riverside [California], why we were, it was more comfortable. We’d get a hotel room, and read a newspaper or eat some of the food that you would find there. And then we would come back on Tuesday afternoon.

D: How did you stay in touch with family and loved ones?

M: We had what they called the V Mail. So I wrote about twice a week. Of course that was all checked out and they edited. And they sent me letters. I don’t recall so much about letters coming from them. Yes, I was always informed, how my daughter was developing, and also my son. I got a letter maybe once a week from them.

D: Did you ever get pictures out of curiosity or was it just strictly letters that they could send you?

(2, A, 290)

M: I wish I could tell you, but I can’t recall. I have some pictures here, if you want to look at them after a while.

D: Thanks. After the war, did you continue to stay in contact with any of the people that you met?

M: No. I did keep in contact with some of the people of the 3rd Armored Division, to the extent that we formed a 3rd Armored Division Association. That was spread out, really, people all over the United States, so chapters were formed. And we still have what we call the Midwest chapter. I'm the chaplain of that yet. And we have some individuals that were with me. I can't recall so much, but they said, we were in E company of 23rd Armored Engineers, and we can both recall similar experiences. But there is only one or two that I can remember that came back with me. Some said they'd been to services, but I can't recall them. So we meet theoretically, but it's starting to die out.

We had a national convention here in [Minneapolis] '75, that was quite a big to-do. About 1200 came up. Now we have a meeting, maybe we have 25 or 30, and we'll be meeting on the 3rd of December. We get together and, at this point, we'll decide that we're going to give \$250 in \$5 increments to the veterans in the veterans' home. So we meet and I don't know much else. I'm a tract man, I'm a big tract man, I give out tracts.

D: So you still do see some of the people at reunion type things.

M: Yes, we don't always go, because they are dying out fast.

D: What special about those reunions for you?

M: It's just social, just get together, we have a meal. We tend to meet in the Veteran of Foreign Wars down in St. Louis Park [Minnesota]. In summertime me and Frita only go to one of the places here in the cities. In the summertime we have a pot luck and we get together, and we drink some Pepsi. They give prizes, everybody's supposed to bring some gift, because we exchange gifts at Christmas.

D: So you don't stay in contact with Chaplain Mac anymore, or you didn't at all?

M: After the war I don't know what happened. I think he comes from New York.

D: On to a new theme: Do you remember the 12th of April '45, when President Roosevelt passed away?

M: I think we were informed... We were in a town by the name of Paderborn, Germany. I guess at that time we were going sometimes 50-60 miles a day, and the Germans were just begging for us to take them captive. Our mind was concentrated, the war's going to end pretty soon, the war's going to end. Maybe I'm underemphasizing this, but his death was just one of the incidents that happened along the way.

D: What about the 8th of May '45?

M: Well, that was the day that of course we all rejoiced. I was in Sachsenhausen, just ten miles from Eisleben. We were of course real happy. I think I had an experience

that same day. We went to a town, and here were the Russians. We met the Russians, and the Russians were down plundering. I had the gall to tell the Russians, you take that back, it doesn't belong to you. I don't know how I spoke to them, I spoke German or whatever it was. I can't speak Russian. And they did. I had fun with that, telling the Russians what to do.

D: Do you remember the reactions of the troops around you when they heard this news of the German surrender?

M: They were all rejoicing, I don't know whether we had a special meal. Their first thought was, of course, when do we go home? And of course you went home on the basis of points, partly on the length of time that you had been there. I went home comparatively early, because I'd been in since September of '41, but some didn't go home until '46. But it was just, when do we go home? Of course to salve that the Army gave them vacations, to keep them busy, make them feel as good as they could.

D; What about the 15th of August '45, V-J Day.

M: On the 15th of August, was I home? Let me see... *(pauses three seconds)* That was [the day the atomic bomb was dropped on] Nagasaki, wasn't it?

D: The 15th of August was actually V-J Day. That was a little bit after Nagasaki. Nagasaki was the 9th of August.

M: Yeah, I was a little confused in my thinking here, because we were going to go home, but I don't know how much thought I was giving that, since the war was over there, in the Pacific. Let's see, this is June, July, August, three months later. I am afraid that I cannot tell you, except that now it was all over, all over.

D: Fred, do you remember when the bombs were dropped? Do you remember the impressions that you had, or the soldiers around you, when the bombs were dropped?

M: I'm trying to visualize where I was. I think I was still in Europe, and we were getting ready to deploy home.

D: So there wasn't quite as much worry amongst the guys?

M: No, I think there was the joy that our particular phase of the war was over, and we were rejoicing in that. More or less, with respect of course for those troops that were still involved, and the danger for them.

D: When you came back home, did you notice any changes in where you had lived, from the time when you left to the time when you came back?

M: Well, see when I was overseas, Frita was still up North. When I went into the service. And then she moved to Minneapolis, and that area. So when I came home, I came into that area for the first time. So I think, basically, there was somewhat of a similar feeling as the troops, it's all over.

There were no cars manufactured, since '39. And the various restrictions that were placed upon us were lifted, but there wasn't too much commodities yet, you can't just stop things going this way and all of a sudden take it back. Such as tires and sugar and other commodities, those things were now available, but there was no restriction on them. So hard to find.

D: I guess the last questions really are just kind of ones looking back on the whole experience for yourself, bigger types of things.

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

D: What did the war mean to you as a person at the time, right after you got done or during it?

M: Well, I guess I was really somewhat self-centered [in 1945]. Now, I'm going to start a new chapter in my life. Even if I continue in the military, it's going to be a new chapter. How is my family going to be involved in this? I want to do what's best for my daughter and a son. Maybe I wasn't quite as much involved in their education because of their age, more as people are today. I think education today has a higher priority today than it did at that time. Everybody has some education. They were not that far along. The big question for me was just, what am I going to do? Am I going to Germany? I wouldn't be able to take them along with me, because that wasn't in the arrangement. But I guess I was thinking –my wife maybe too thought – as long as I'm in the military, I've got the advantage of getting free transportation over there, and staying over there. I never did get to either place that I wanted to go, however, because it was time to come back. I was there five years after the war, and that's quite a time staying away from a family.

D: Now that you can look back on it, a number of years after it, sixty years since your experiences there, what do you think about the war now? What sticks out in your memory about it, or what are your impressions of it now?

M: Well, I look from a different aspect. In the first place, I look at the equipment that we have today, it's so much more sophisticated. At that time it was more sophisticated than World War I, because tanks and airplanes were hardly anything at that time, tanks were not too much. They were very cumbersome, so from that standpoint it was different. I think the troops today are better taken care of than we were. They are able to better reach them with food and recreation.

Comparing to today, for example, and what is happening in Afghanistan [in 2001], I think we had a more cogent reason to fight [during World War II] than now. That's a bold statement, but I mean to say, we were being attacked at Pearl Harbor, I know we had the Twin Towers here [in New York City in 2001], but Pearl Harbor

was a continuation of Japan, and Japan was allied with Italy and Germany. Whereas right now, why, it's so far away. The threat at that time would have to be from Japan, with submarines and the like, and now our threat is invisible, the violence [a reference to the "terrorist" enemies of 2001]. We haven't been able to find a way to meet that. The only thing that we hear is that, any week, it could be another attack. That's what you hear. I heard the other day that they were going to call off the Rose Bowl [college football game, in January]. If anything they should have called off the game yesterday, 107,000 at the Michigan game with Ohio State. There's a different type of attack. It's gone away from the traditional attack to this type, with which we really haven't had any training, so to speak.

D: Fred, how did the war change you personally? In your time overseas, ministering to these people in these crisis situations, how did it change you?

M: Well, I think in the pastoral ministry, I was dealing with different people, I was dealing most of the time with my own parish. We did go out and talk to others, but most of the time I was with my own parish. In the service, there were people that were not Christians, there were individuals that you met that didn't care about the Lord Jesus. And there were others there that, well, they were so far away from home they had those concerns about ever getting back again. I think that maybe the chaplaincy broadened my area of interest. I met different types of people in different types of situations, which I did not have. So it assisted me also when I came to some of the situations in my pastoral ministry again. I was able to meet them with the appropriate way.

D: In addition to how it changed your pastoral ministry, how do you think it changed you in general as a person?

M: I think my mind, my concept of things was somewhat less provincial. I see how other people live. Very often we get the idea that we're the standard from which everything else deviates. This is it. Why are you so peculiar this way? Why are you peculiar that way? We should think of these people looking at us as being peculiar. I think I have a little bit more of a cosmopolitan view, that there are other people too, people that have something too, besides us.

I think it's because my dad was born in Germany, my mother born in Germany, that I looked upon Germany as the top deviation from the United States. Even when I read the German now, I'm preaching German in a service. I have a high regard for the German language. The people that were in Germany seemed to be more of a person than others. I guess that's my prejudice. I think if I go over there now, I maybe wouldn't feel quite the same, I can't tell you why, maybe because you've heard so much about the Germans, but the Germans are sinners, too.

D: I guess that covers the questions I had directly for you. At this point, I don't know if there's anything you want to add, but I just want to open it up. The idea that if there's any stories that you have that are significant, or just any concepts that you

want to bring out from your time, feel welcome to tell me anything that I missed or that I didn't get to.

M: Well, I enjoyed also doing what I would call work of mercy. When I was in Germany, after I returned, a year after the end of World War II, I worked for the Synod, and they sent care packages over. I distributed them through a pastor in Frankfurt. I enjoyed doing that. When I was in Germany, Trinity First sent 250 boxes about the size of a cigar box, filled with dishcloths, and pencils, and toothpaste and all that, which I distributed. I had a chance to do that as an expression of my faith. I'm thankful to the Lord that he permitted me to be engaged in those activities at that time. It was simply a broadening, and because of it I have a better understanding of people, a step away from isolationism.

D: Thank you very much, I appreciate your time and formally will stop the interview here.

END OF INTERVIEW