

**Oral History Interview of
Ted Hartman**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
December 6, 2017
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*World War II Veteran Interviews***

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Ted Hartman as he discusses his life. In this interview, Ted describes his involvement with World War II, freeing the Mauthausen concentration camp, and his involvement with the Texas Tech University Medical School.

Length of Interview: 01:53:11

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Biographical information	05	00:00:00
Moving to Ames; his father	10	00:09:51
France during World War I; summer camps in Iowa; Ted's interest in the medical profession	15	00:19:30
Ted's army enlistment; preparing to enter WWII	20	00:28:45
His thoughts on if his training prepared him for combat	25	00:40:24
Departing for Bastogne and going into combat	33	00:53:23
Arriving in Bastogne; driving a tank through snow	37	01:03:06
Sleeping in the tanks	40	01:11:05
Crossing a tank on Pontoon bridges	44	01:19:44
Freeing captives from the Mauthausen concentration camp	47	01:28:42
Ted's involvement with Texas Tech's Med school	52	01:39:39

Keywords

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David Marshall (DM):

The date is December 6th of 2017. This is David Marshall interviewing Ted Hartman at the Pointe Plaza in Lubbock, Texas. I should also mention that your wife, Jean, is here, and your daughter, Martha, is here as well. Martha, I'm having trouble with names this morning, also. [Laughter]

Martha Hartman (MH):

No worries.

DM:

Let's begin with a little bit of biographical information so that the catalogers can process this oral history properly. Can you give me your full name?

Ted Hartman (TH):

James Theodore Hartman.

DM:

Okay. And your date and place of birth.

TH:

Place of birth was DeRidder. That's D-e-R-i-d-d-e-r, Louisiana.

DM:

Okay. And what date?

TH:

June 13, 1925.

DM:

Okay. I looked up DeRidder. I wasn't familiar with it. I noticed that you were almost a Texan.

TH:

Right.

DM:

It's only about ten miles from the border it looks like. Okay. But anyway, you ended up here eventually.

TH:

Yes. Right.

DM:

Okay. Do you remember much about DeRidder, growing up there?

TH:

Yeah, quite. My mother was a school teacher first. So she made sure we knew anything that had to do with history in DeRidder. DeRidder furnished all kinds of little places where you could gather information. The Long-Bell Lumber Company, which was out of Kansas City, had a lot of its works there in DeRidder: had an oak flooring plant, a furniture plant, just a lot of things that would go along that line.

DM:

So these are forestry products?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Your dad was a forester.

TH:

He was a forester. He was—well, [pause] probably enough. But he was from Iowa, in Eddyville, which was a small town in Iowa. Dad owned a mixed furniture and cemetery, as they used to do at that time. He and one of his cousins started writing about these things. It's small talk.

DM:

Was your—your dad was from there. Where was your mother from?

TH:

Pardon?

DM:

Where was your mother from? Gertrude was her name. Is that right?

TH:

Gertrude. Mary Gertrude.

DM:

He was George?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

The father was George?

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

And your mother was Gertrude?

TH:

Right.

DM:

And what was her maiden name?

TH:

Maiden name as Moore.

DM:

Okay. Gertrude Moore.

Jean Hartman (JH):

She was Mary Gertrude.

MH:

Mary Gertrude Moore.

TH:

Mary Gertrude Moore, right.

DM:

Where was she from?

TH:

She was from Many, M-a-n-y.

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DM:

Many, Louisiana?

TH:

Yeah. She had gone to a university at the school in Natchitoches.

DM:

Oh yeah.

TH:

I guess just living with it, you knew some of it.

DM:

Natchitoches, pretty little town up there in northwestern—pretty little town up there in northwestern Louisiana.

TH:

Oh yeah it is. It is quite historic.

DM:

Now how did they meet?

MH:

Church.

TH:

While he worked there in Many, his job was based there. He found her, an attractive girlfriend who was teaching. That kind of brought up, eventually, the wedding in Many. Her father was a local writer of things that happened in DeRidder. So it was kind of a natural consummation.

MH:

I would love to add one thing about grandmother that I think is interesting. She actually went to graduate school, which was pretty much unheard of in those days. I think it was one semester or one year, something like that. It was a year and that was at Peabody College, right, which then became part of Vanderbilt. But in those days, women didn't do that. I just thought that was an interesting—

DM:

Was she working on a graduate degree in education?

TH:

Well she must've been because she went to the Peabody in Memphis for that segment of her knowledge. She had three brothers; the only girl in the family. Her father was one of the few people in town that had a car and a telephone. So he did all sorts of things for the Sabine—S-a-b-i-n-e—Sabine—

JH:

Parish. Parish?

TH:

For the—

JH:

Parish?

TH:

Yeah. It was really, pretty much, a local barber [0:08:12] that tried to bring some sort of a electric—electronic—material. One of her father's friends—I guess I'll say—was Huey Long.

DM:

Is that right?

TH:

Papa was very fond of him. Papa—anytime Huey ran for office, Papa was in charge of that—

DM:

Of that area.

TH:

That area, right. And because he had a car, he was able to get in touch with people, all types, in that area.

DM:

That's interesting.

TH:

When I was five years old, my father accepted a position on the faculty at Iowa State.

DM:

Did he already have advanced degrees at that time?

TH:
Yes.

DM:
Okay. Where did he receive those?

TH:
Pardon?

DM:
Where had he received those degrees?

TH:
Iowa State.

DM:
At Iowa State?

TH:
Yeah. He did get a master's, which was unusual at that time too.

DM:
In forestry?

TH:
In forestry, right.

DM:
So you moved to Ames.

TH:
Moved to Ames. Mother loved it because it was already built in with the things that she liked.

DM:
By the way, did your father—he was a professor of forestry. Did he also work for the U.S. Forest Service?

TH:
He did at one time, yeah.

DM:

Is that what he was doing down in Louisiana?

TH:

Yes. Long Bell. The Long Bell-man to begin with was—well, I guess that pretty much tells it. It had that. It also had a huge block of land in the state of Washington. He never got there in later years. But because it was in the company, it was discussed so much. That was a fairly common subject, somehow.

DM:

Okay. Did your father ever talk about the Yellow Pine Forest of eastern Texas, Louisiana?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

It's gone now, pretty much, because it was used so heavily in construction, but it was a good, hard pine. Did he—he talked about the Yellow Pine bid?

TH:

He did, and mother knew what he was talking about.

DM:

How I wish could talk to him.

MH:

And his—at Long Bell, in that plant, didn't he work—it was a creosote. They were soaking the wood in creosote, correct?

TH:

Yeah.

MH:

And that was part of what they did. They were treating it. They were treating the wood, right? And ultimately made him sick.

TH:

He got a pretty significant illness from the loblolly pine.

MH:

Multiple myeloma, right, Dad?

TH:

What?

MH:

Multiple myeloma?

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

And he got it from loblolly pine?

TH:

Pardon?

DM:

He got it from loblolly pine?

TH:

Yes. And that's—that—he ended up getting a common illness, which took his life eventually. It wasn't—they weren't so—didn't so recognize all of that at that point, but it was—began to be noted that it was a common illness. So he took a part of Long Bell as the leader in these—this—in Many and through those areas, sites. And mother stopped teaching, which you almost had to do if you're female back then. But he—and he loved sports, so he coached the baseball team for DeRidder for several seasons. Must've taught something.

DM:

Okay. He was an active fellow.

TH:

Oh yeah.

DM:

Sounds like somebody else. [Laughs] Well tell me about the move to Ames and how that affected you. You were, what, about ten years old or so?

TH:

Yes I was. He—since he had graduated there, he already knew a lot of the faculty and they depended on him for helping them in these other activities. There was—that was an early time for treated pine trees, for example. Very, just very busy.

DM:

Treating pine trees to prevent infestations?

TH:

Right.

DM:

I want to ask you another question along those lines. Did he ever talk about the great chestnut blight?

TH:

The what?

DM:

The chestnut blight. They were up in that part of the country. I think there's still a remnant forest in Illinois.

TH:

He did talk about it some, although it was not as active a part of his attention. He accepted the job from Iowa State University and taught in the high school, and also was extremely active as a baseball coach.

DM:

Okay. He was at Iowa State but he also taught high school?

TH:

Yeah. But mostly he was connected with Iowa State having graduated there.

DM:

I see. Okay, okay. And again he taught—he coached baseball. He must've really loved baseball. He must've really loved baseball.

TH:

Oh yeah.

DM:

Now what about you? What were you doing at age ten, besides going to school? What does a boy in Ames do?

TH:

Went to school there in Ames. It was—all the time we were there. It was a very significant part of that area, electronically.

DM:

This was Depression era.

TH:

Yes, very much.

DM:

Well, how did that affect Ames? It sounds like there was economic activity there.

TH:

There was.

DM:

Okay. Was it doing better than most of the country?

TH:

Right. He did. He had been in World War I in France. His interest in all of the things in the central boot of France sort of led him to see a lot of the things that he was interested in.

DM:

I'll bet the—I'll bet your paths crossed in Europe. Was he in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign?

TH:

I'm quite sure—

DM:

Like most American soldiers were. I'm sure your paths crossed.

TH:

Yeah. When the war ended over there, he came back to the United States and his closest friend in the Army was Long Bell Lumber Company, which is in Kansas City. He lived there.

DM:

Did he ever talk about his war experiences?

TH:

Huh?

DM:

Did he talk about his war experiences?

TH:

Rarely. But there was a big—there was a large doing with—for the Army when he was there. He later—well, he worked. That's when he worked—he got a master's degree so that it was more effective in a—

DM:

University.

TH:

Unit like that.

DM:

Oh I see. Okay. Did he ever talk about—you mentioned that he rarely—you said that he rarely mentioned his war experiences. Did he talk about the French countryside? Did he talk about the forests, the Argonne or the Ardennes Forest?

TH:

Oh yeah.

DM:

Did he? Okay.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Do you remember anything specific that he said?

TH:

I don't recall, except when we caught tail end stories and played as the Army.

DM:

When you played Army.

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

Boys do that, don't they?

TH:

Yeah.

MH:

Dad. Another interesting thing as a child were the camps, the summer camps, through Iowa State that you went with your family on. I think David might be interested in that.

DM:

Sure. Absolutely.

TH:

All forestry graduates had to spend a summer working in the forests anywhere in the United States. So he did that as well as becoming interested in the creosote idea.

DM:

Treating pines.

TH:

Right.

DM:

Okay. But now—so these camps. These were camps for his students?

TH:

No. Well, some were. A couple of them were in Minnesota. They tried to go to a different camp every year.

DM:

I see. Did you go on any of these?

TH:

And our family tagged along and lived in a tent all summer. Mother was a southern girl so she didn't—she didn't delve into the woodworking stuff at all.

DM:

Did she like the camping?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Okay. That sounds like good preparation for you for what you were about to go through.

TH:

Well, it was. I never realized what an influence this was till I got in the teens.

DM:

You were too young to be in Civilian Conservation Corps and anything like that, weren't you?

TH:

That's true.

DM:

But you got an opportunity—

TH:

Yes.

DM:

—to camp. How wonderful.

MH:

There are some wonderful scrapbooks with pictures at the Iowa State Forestry Department. I've been there and looked through them.

DM:

They're archived?

MH:

They're archived. It's really amazing, all the places you went. And your mother was always in a dress, right? Southern lady.

DM:

Did you have responsibilities there or were you just there to camp?

TH:

I was just there because my dad was there.

DM:

Okay. Now during this time, did you have any inclination toward the medical profession? Were you interested in that at a young age?

TH:

I did.

DM:

Oh. How did that come about?

TH:

Our family doctor and his brother were named Love, L-o-v-e. His brother was a dentist and those two boys had gone to Tulane in order to get the education for that.

DM:

And that was inspiring to you?

TH:

Yes it was. We were—my brother and I were very fortunate because whenever there was a holiday, the only person that the manager of Long Bell used to cover that special holiday was my dad. He looked after—be sure nobody was stealing the wood and this type of unit. He later, in the Depression, Long Bell asked him to take the road—that whole area is pretty woodsy. So daddy took a position with Long Bell in purchasing various types of wood products.

DM:

But you weren't—you were really exposed to this, his profession, well-exposed to it, but you were already thinking in terms of another career path? Were you already thinking in terms of going medical?

TH:

[Laughs] That's true.

DM:

Well what about orthopedics? Were you—you mentioned that these guys were dentists. Did you have a specific field in mind?

TH:

It was more—when we lived in Ames, I did a lot of working in the basement as a child. That took a lot of certain types of creosoted wood. But his former teacher at Iowa State sent him an offer in 1935 to come work with them back in DeRidder. So, we moved back. Mother was sure it was going to be a fatal move. But she was so pleased with the people that they were dealing with, just socially, that she never wanted to go back to the South.

DM:

All right. So you ended up finishing your education there in Ames?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Got you—you graduated in '43, is that right? Is that about right?

TH:

Yes. That's roughly right.

DM:

Your parents were both college-educated.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

I guess there was no doubt that you would go to college. Was that the case?

TH:

That's true, yeah.

DM:

And where were you planning to go to, Iowa State?

TH:

Forever. As a week—every week there'd be some come up about Long Bell, which included a—
included Jean and me after we had married. We went all over and lived in England.

DM:

Oh you were at Oxford?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Pretty good.

TH:

Yes we were. Of course, a lot of people in education were involved with some sort of wood
project.

DM:

Is that right? Golly. Okay. You started your—I'm trying to remember for sure. You graduated in
'43 and you enlisted in the Army somewhere along the way, but it seems like you also went to
Iowa State for a semester or so.

TH:

I did. When it was—when things were kind of shoring up for World War II, it was expected that
most men would get a—get a period where they would go in the Army. When I was a senior in
high school, the—[phone rings]

DM:

I can pause it. I'll pause this. [Pause in recording]

DM:

So boys were expected. They knew they were going to be going into the Army.

TH:

Right. As a high school student, they gave tests to boys to see how much they knew about
various subjects. I developed a very deep knowledge in that whole area where we were. But they
also gave this test and if we passed a certain grade, we were—we would be automatically put in
as an officer as a high school senior.

DM:

Did they have an ROTC [**Reserve Officers' Training Corps**] program in school?

TH:

A very good one. And you had to take it if you were a male in the first couple of years there at Iowa State.

DM:

So you knew this was coming.

TH:

Yes, pretty well. Yeah. I guess we were pretty knowledgeable in that.

DM:

Did you know what was going on in Europe?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Did you talk about this in school?

TH:

Very much.

DM:

And you knew what was going on in the Pacific, in the Pacific as well?

TH:

It was a little later for the Pacific.

DM:

The focus was on Europe, is that what you're saying?

TH:

It was definitely Europe.

DM:

But you knew what you guys were getting into?

TH:

Yes. That offer from the Army to be an officer pretty much followed because of the other things that he had been involved in.

DM:

Can you tell me about your entry into the military? Can you tell me about your entry into the military, when you went to basics?

TH:

Well, I was placed in that group as a high school senior but so much was happening, and the use of creosoted things in World War I.

DM:

What about when—what about when they took you to California? You had basic training in California. Do you remember?

TH:

Oh. That's it.

DM:

Were you—yeah, go ahead.

TH:

They did that and put me in a group of—I enlisted in Des Moines, Iowa, who represented all Army things. Quite a few of them had learning in that direction.

DM:

Well, how about that the—how about the basic training camps in California. Can you tell me about some of those, where you were there?

TH:

We were taught pretty basic things. Most of my basic training was received when I was in the Army on the Pacific coast.

DM:

Was this extensive? How many weeks were you in basic training?

TH:

Sixteen.

DM:
Sixteen?

TH:
Uh-huh.

DM:
Wow, that's quite a bit of training.

TH:
Yeah.

DM:
Was this—were you ready for this?

TH:
Well, I geared emotionally ready because what we were going to do, as it turns out, was being on the battlefield. We trained there for basic science. We trained in a unit that kept records for the Army. We did a pretty fair amount of dipping our toes on trying to get ready for the things to come.

DM:
Was there any fear, any concern, about this? You were about to be sent over to Europe into who knows what. Did y'all talk about this or did you try to just try to hide it?

TH:
We talked about it. When they put me—when we arrived in California after going through basic training, I was already ready to be in a forest or in a unit that was fairly tough, and it was. We learned a great deal how to man the tanks.

DM:
I read something that said you had your weeks of basic training but then you had five more weeks just tanks, just tank training.

TH:
Right.

DM:
Is that when you learned to be a driver?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Okay. What were you learning? Were you learning maneuvers or mechanics of the tank or all of it?

TH:

Yes. All of it. I was specifically trained in the mechanics of the tank. It burned a lot of fuel. And it also taught us how to shift smoothly, even though it was about pretty much a thousand weeks where we were identified, eligible for some of it. Real mechanical thing.

DM:

Oh you were? Okay. You had to be able to fix this in the field.

TH:

Right. Yes.

DM:

That makes sense.

TH:

I thought they were wrong when they started but they put me into that. The tank that we drove was—had a huge engine in the rear, which drew its cool from the front, so it pulled cold air through, all the way through. I'd say we were declared ready for Europe after doing the basic on tanks about a year.

DM:

And then you were off to overseas, huh?

TH:

I think.

DM:

In the training, in the tank training, did they put your through some various weather conditions or any—

TH:

Oh yeah.

DM:

—because I know you had that problem in Europe where you were in snow, you were in rain, all kinds of—I just wondered if you'd ever seen any, at least, rain in California, and mud.

TH:

It was an area right on the Pacific. It would do all kinds of moisture.

DM:

Was this Northern California, by the way?

TH:

Right.

DM:

So you knew mud?

TH:

Yes. We definitely knew mud.

DM:

Maybe not snow so much.

TH:

No, not too much snow.

DM:

Well, all in all, when you look back at your basic training and your tank training, was it good training? Did it prepare you for this thing?

TH:

It did.

DM:

As good as can be?

TH:

Right, even though it was—covered a lot of that area.

DM:

What about the process of shipping you overseas? Did that—did you go straight from California

across the country and on?

TH:

Our Division, the Eleventh Army Division, we were assigned to General Patton from the very first, to be able to man all the weapons and try and correct the tank for whatever went wrong. Actually, it was quite good.

DM:

You know, Patton was, from what I understand, a stickler for everything being just right.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

I think you even mentioned you had to wear neckties in combat.

TH:

Yes he did. He announced to us—we were outside Paris and he announced to us the night we were—before we were going into battle that we were going into battle, we would be wearing ties. If we weren't, we'd be court-martialed.

DM:

Well, I wonder if he had that kind of influence over the training as well, if he was sending word that, "These guys better know how to do so-and-so."

TH:

Oh I think so.

DM:

So you showed up prepared.

TH:

Right.

DM:

But you came over in transport ships?

TH:

Yes. They were mostly—well, and going over to Europe, we were taking two—we were taking

lessons all the way over. It took us, I think it was seventeen days to get across, and a lot of teaching going on with things that you were going to be using.

DM:

What kind of teaching? What were they covering?

TH:

The type of guns you would want to use. We were pretty intense in the amount of that sort of training.

DM:

Where did you depart from the U.S.? What port did you leave out of in the U.S.?

TH:

We went straight from—when we went over from Europe, we would have lessons on what to expect and how to deal with them.

DM:

Here you were a young guy, eighteen or nineteen years old, I think, about nineteen.

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

You'd been in the forest but you'd never been out on the ocean, I'll bet.

TH:

That's right.

DM:

How was that?

TH:

It was—and there are all kinds of troops on the ships—ships. That was—up through that time, that was the largest group of ships that was teaching—being taught what they were expecting of us.

DM:

Do you know how many ships were in that convoy?

TH:

They told us after we were halfway across. They told us what was—where we were going, where we—and we'd take guard duty and the varying things that you had to be trained in.

DM:

They kept you sharp.

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

How was seasickness? Did you have seasick—problems with seasickness?

TH:

Not too much.

DM:

Oh good for you.

TH:

Some got it.

DM:

Now, 1943 [phone rings] was the peak of German submarine activity.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Did you hear talk about that?

TH:

Oh we could—as far as you could look, you would see ships.

DM:

Golly. Big convoy.

TH:

Yeah. We were—and everything was kind of made to. We were placed for eating and sleeping

down in the Army diner. All of that had to be taken out and replaced so they could put more soldiers in it.

DM:

Did you ever hear how many were on your ship?

TH:

Yes. When we got toward England, they told us where we were and we would be landing in this short port in England.

DM:

I think you mentioned in your book you weren't in England very long, though.

TH:

Right.

DM:

The beachfront was already open and they just sent you right over.

TH:

That's exactly what happened.

DM:

Where did you land in France?

TH:

We first landed in England, trained for several months, I think. We had—we could check on various vessels in our—where we were going. But they left us during the day pretty well.

DM:

Did you have your tanks already or did you get those in France?

TH:

No, we had them.

DM:

You had the tanks with you in England?

TH:

Yeah. They were in other types of ships, which could be seaborne.

DM:

Right. Okay. So did you train in your tanks in England?

TH:

Oh yes.

DM:

Oh did you? Okay.

TH:

We had—the English had a bunch of tank units which we could practice on deck. We did that regularly.

DM:

Were these tanks that you—these are the same tanks that you would use on your forced march of 450 miles to—

TH:

Yes. We were taking our own weapons.

DM:

These were—these Sherman, Sherman tanks?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Seventy-fours, seventy-four millimeter guns.

TH:

All of those M2 were taken apart sort of while we were sailing, getting new parts or a newer vessel. All sorts of things.

DM:

Where did you arrive in France, after you left England and arrived in France?

TH:
On Pearl Harbor.

DM:
No, on—was it a port on the French coast? When you left England and you arrived in France, was that—was it Cherbourg or where did—

TH:
Yes. We were near Cherbourg.

DM:
And then you—where did you go from there? It doesn't seem like you started that forced march at first. Did you go south?

TH:
Well, we did—

DM:
Oh did you?

TH:
—because our tanks hadn't yet arrived. It was the tanks we had in the Pacific when we got on that convoy.

DM:
These were well-used. [laughs]

TH:
Oh boy, I'll say.

DM:
But they had been reconditioned for you? Were they in good shape?

TH:
There were certain parts of it that were reconditioned.

DM:
Did you have trouble with old parts?

TH:

Yes we did. But the minute we hit battle, there were old troubles because they'd been used so much.

DM:

Who would've imagined that on top of everything else?

MH:

I think one interesting thing about the tanks as well, when you got to Europe, parts of the tank were in—

JH:

Cosmoline.

MH:

—Cosmoline.

TH:

Oh yeah.

MH:

So you had to—that was part of your duty, right?

TH:

We had to understand how to get rid of some of the type of grease and all on all of them, and how the weapon worked, and worked on all kinds of different weapons just in case.

DM:

On this—when you started the forced march, when you started the first 450 miles toward Bastogne, were there problems along the way with any of these tanks? Did they break down before they got into combat?

TH:

Some of them did because all of ours were old tanks, but they held up, by and large, pretty well.

DM:

Did they—were they good about getting new parts to you when these tanks broke down?

TH:

Yes they were.

DM:

Was there a unit designated for that?

TH:

Well, there was a need for it because we did—we were going to take over old tanks, even though we may have driven them before.

DM:

Well, let's talk about when you departed. Now let's talk about where you're heading for, for Bastogne. You're on this march, this 450-mile march. Can you tell me about that trip and what you were thinking? What goes through your mind when you're going steadily, steadily, steadily toward might—what will probably be a mess?

TH:

Well, [clears throat] we were—even though I mentioned that we got old tanks back, we did, but some of them really needed to be reconditioned pretty deeply.

DM:

How was yours? How did yours perform on this trip toward Bastogne?

TH:

They made it pretty simple of certain things that we would devise to get our way off the beach, to start with, be sure we understood how the tank would be on quite an ancient type tank. But pretty well, kind of, set up to make changes. It was like there were several blocks of what you had to do.

DM:

Well let's talk about as you're approaching—as you're approaching the German line. Let's get to that point and maybe you can tell me what was going on, what kind of talk was going on among the guys. Was there a—surely there was a great amount of concern about this and talk about what was going to happen.

TH:

Right.

DM:

Can you remember any specifics about that, how you felt at the time? Were you worried that you might never come home? Did you think about things like that?

TH:

We talked pretty much locally. I don't—we knew what they were doing when they were reconverting. We also knew that we had to assume the role of a tank mechanic.

DM:

Right. That was just part of the survival, wasn't it?

TH:

Right.

DM:

Because if you stall out in one of those things, it seems like you would be a sitting duck out there.

TH:

And were a number of ships that sunk on that huge time. I think I remember a thousand ships on that—

DM:

On that convoy.

TH:

—convoy. Because as far as you'd look in any direction, there was another tank.

DM:

When you were on your way to Bastogne, where—did you hear on the way that this big German counteroffensive had begun, what later they called the Battle of the Bulge? Did you know that this was happening as you were approaching?

TH:

We could recognize some of that but it had to have a familiarity that was going to work.

DM:

Let's talk about when you first got into combat. Do you remember the first day when you first saw German soldiers, or you first saw German tanks and artillery? Can you remember that?

TH:

I do because it was a—their tanks were wicked-looking, had all sorts of little deals on them.

DM:

Did they paint them up to look—did they paint them that way on purpose, to make them look frightening?

TH:

I think so. We had to know how those various weapons worked as long as we're going to be facing them.

DM:

Were these Tiger tanks? Were they Tiger tanks that you were facing, German Tiger tanks?

TH:

Some, although it was—they had a lot more types of tanks than I realized they had before we saw them.

DM:

Was the Tiger one of the larger ones? I know it had an 88.

TH:

Yes. It was one of the larger. And they—the Tigers pretty much all had a safety approach to everything that we were going to be seeing in battle. They gave us movies of tank battles so we'd see what we were going to face.

DM:

That's good preparation.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Well, how did—what was the consensus on the matchup of tanks? I've heard people say that the Sherman was too small to go against the Tigers and some of the larger German tanks. Was that something y'all talked about?

TH:

We didn't understand, although we were being the target of these that they were giving us.

DM:

In the thick of battle, did you even notice what kinds of tanks were being used or were they too far away? Were they in close quarters? How did that happen?

TH:

Well, they were taking—they were pulling the tanks and mechanics were working on them while we're still finding our way across the English Channel.

DM:

Even in battle, when a tank was damaged, did people come up and repair the tank on the spot, after a battle, for example?

TH:

Oh yes.

DM:

They were right there on the front then?

TH

Right.

DM:

And these were trained mechanics or was it you guys?

TH:

It was most our guys. Whether be some mechanic that would recognize what he was doing, but mostly it was to be recognized.

DM:

Do you remember coming into Bastogne? Do you remember when you arrived in Bastogne?

They were some—there were some airborne troops there, 101st Airborne.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

You remember that?

TH:

I do.

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DM:

Can you describe that day?

TH:

They were mean-looking things. And we also got a chance to see what happened to this vessel when it got into battle for us. They were mean-looking.

DM:

The airborne troops?

TH:

Airborne, yes.

DM:

What was—what did Bastogne look like when you arrived there, the town of Bastogne?

TH:

Well, it was still pretty much intact at the beginning. We were driving our original vehicles so we knew what they were for. We knew what kind of vessels we would shoot at.

DM:

Let's talk a little bit about your maneuvers in that country. Here you were in a tank in a—there were a lot of tanks up there on the American front.

TH:

Oh yes.

DM:

How were you maneuvering? I mean, this is—were there thick forests? Were you working your way through thick forests in the Ardennes or were there—did you mostly stay to well-established roads?

TH:

They were pretty—you could see that any one of those weapons of theirs had a better gun than we had.

DM:

Okay. Was that intimidating?

TH:

Oh yes, because we knew—we began to see that there were—they were not just small tanks. They had weapons that were very tough.

DM:

Was their range greater than your range? Could they fire from a greater distance than you?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

You had to get up closer to hit them?

TH:

Quite often.

DM:

Now, how about maneuvering? Were they better at maneuvering through that country than Sherman tanks?

TH:

No they weren't. We were afraid they would be but their weapons were old and useful for them.

DM:

They had—their weapons had really seen a lot of combat, hadn't they?

TH:

Oh yes they did.

DM:

Probably even more than your weapons. I don't know, but they've been out there fighting in those tanks for some time.

TH:

Well, our weapons survived intact, mostly.

DM:

How about—remember yourself as a driver. Imagine yourself driving—imagine yourself driving that tank. This is—you have the problems of mud, you have the problems of ice, snow, and rain. Can you describe some of that?

TH:

Yes, they did. [clears throat] Excuse me.

DM:

Do you remember slipping around or having trouble getting through snowbanks?

TH:

One day outside Bastogne we were assigned about a twenty-mile space that was so slick with ice that we couldn't—took us about twelve hours to go three miles. It was just very vicarious [1:07:35].

DM:

What would you do if you couldn't get your tracks to travel on ice? Could you make a road?

TH:

We were able to do that, to some extent.

DM:

How did you do it?

TH:

We took each one of the people that was going to be driver, so he had the sense of what was going to be our time because of the road, the ice.

DM:

Was there something you could do to the surface of the road to help get across it?

TH:

There was some of that, but it wasn't as good as they hoped.

DM:

Well that must've really slowed down the progress.

TH:

Oh yeah.

DM:

What about being—I know that during the Battle of the Bulge there were a lot of problems with frostbite. The cold was unbearable. Did you almost—did you have any trouble with use of hands because of the cold?

TH:

Oh yes. In Bastogne and around, we had wool gloves made of good leather that would be managing for us. We were able to see some tanks that did not occupy the sort of thing that we thought we were going to beat.

MH:

Dad, tell—you had frozen feet during that time because of the way the tanks were pulled. Tell David what—how you managed that.

TH:

I mentioned earlier I had my feet because the air was pulled in the front and the driver was responsible for it.

DM:

It passed under your feet?

TH:

Through it, totally through it, because it was cold.

DM:

Well, did you have any trouble with frostbite?

TH:

What?

DM:

Did you have any trouble with frostbite, or did any of the tank crews?

TH:

Oh, we had a lot of trouble with frostbite.

DM:

You talked in your book about sleeping in these tanks.

TH:

We did.

DM:

Is that—was that typical that you would stay in your tanks even at night?

TH:

Oh yeah, all night. Each one of the group would work for about four hours on guard, so that if anything was taking place, he would be loose.

DM:

So you had somebody outside the tank on guard and everybody else was inside trying to sleep?

TH:

The assistant driver took the heat in that, because his position was only available with certain kinds of items. If we didn't play those just right, it would be pretty lost. We knew, also, after a few days, that we would find—tanks, as a group, used more gas. We filled our tanks every evening after we had battled for the day. It was the tank crew. And the gas was kept in the back by the engines. We had to learn, as a group, what we could do or not.

DM:

Was there ever a problem of supply of gasoline? Did you have to ever stop because there was not any gas?

TH:

Yes. We would temporarily run into a too small of a supply and we'd be—our plans for fighting tomorrow, for example, the tanks, we had to fill them before we went to bed.

DM:

That makes sense.

TH:

And had to—and we had to select our objective for the following day so that it had a loose sort of connection to the space we were going to cover, and had to get those cleared.

DM:

You studied the maps?

TH:

Pardon?

DM:

You studied your maps?

TH:

Oh yes we did.

DM:

“We’re going to be at this town.”

TH:

We did.

DM:

Speaking of the gasoline situation, did you come across German tanks that were abandoned because of lack of gas? Did they run out of gas?

TH:

Yes they did.

DM:

That’s the end of the tank deal right there.

TH:

Right.

DM:

Okay. Now after Bastogne, were you—I remember you writing about suddenly you were making progress and you weren’t seeing any Germans. Did you have any idea what was going on?

TH:

No. We weren’t very isolated to the point that we would see much of what was going on. But the Germans came in on us, but they had a lot more free tanks than we expected.

DM:

Oh really?

TH:

Yeah. And at night, we filled the tank every night. We had to stand on the rear deck outside pouring cold—hot—cold gasoline.

MH:

Was it you or one of your tank members that was pouring gasoline when some shells came in? I recall that story. Somebody was filling the tank.

TH:

It was one of our men.

JH:

And what happened?

TH:

The tank—our gas never froze, for some reason. I think it was because the choice of what you were going after was—you could hide in certain areas on the tank or in the tank.

MH:

So did he drop the gas and jump in? I would. [Laughter]

TH:

We just put it—it was another duty. Because it was our life, that's a fact.

DM:

That just sounds like such a dangerous situation when there's a firefight going on and you're filling a tank with gasoline. Just the idea of gasoline and a bunch of soldiers is worrisome enough, but then having some artillery fire, maybe, going on at that time. I don't know. The level of danger that you guys lived at was amazing for those of us who haven't faced it.

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

But how do you go on like that? Do you just say, "Ah," and push forward to your objective? Do you just keep your focus or how does that work? You don't get bogged down in fear?

TH:

No.

DM:

Okay. Did you see any guys that did?

TH:

Did I see—

DM:

Did you see any guys that just couldn't handle that kind of pressure?

TH:

If we did, we didn't recognize it.

DM:

You just keep going, going, going.

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay. That's a very common story among combat veterans. You just, "I got to do it. Got to do it. Got to do it."

JH:

You can't think about it.

DM:

So then all of a sudden it seems like the resistance has lessened and you mentioned that later you found out they had fallen back to the Siegfried Line, so they were in retreat, basically, but I guess you weren't aware of it at that time.

TH:

No we weren't.

DM:

Didn't know when they might come out of the woods?

TH:

No.

DM:

Well, then you started this eastward push, I mean, across the Rhine. You talked about crossing on pontoon boats. Can you talk about that a little bit, crossing a tank on pontoons? What does that feel like when you're driving a tank across? Did you feel like you were going to sink?

TH:

You get a harder ride in the ice. It'd absorb a certain amount of it. What we did was—it just sort of went with the road.

DM:

Did you slip around at all?

TH:

Oh yes we did.

DM:

Slip off the road?

TH:

And you knew—thirty-three tons you were trying to guide.

DM:

Now what is that like on a pontoon bridge? It seems like—did it shake around?

TH:

Oh yes. It did big shakes.

DM:

Was it one tank at a time crossing these pontoon bridges?

TH:

Probably, although we had lots of tanks.

DM:

Were you ever under fire while crossing a bridge?

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

That would make you not want to go one tank at a time.

TH:

Yes. This German tank was—it seemed like the Sherman had a certain acceptance to some of the **shambles** [?] [1:21:48] that happened to it, even though it was still pretty—not very pleasant.

DM:

Well, I can just imagine, because if you dropped a tank—if you went with a tank off of a bridge, that would be it, it seems like. Would there be any way to get out and get to the surface of the river?

TH:

Well, [clears throat] Patton was very good of crossing a little—a field of any type of weapon. And they did keep their tanks pretty well stored during off days so that it would serve them.

DM:

When you were—you crossed the Rhine.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

The Rhine's a big river.

TH:

It sure is.

DM:

When you crossed the Rhine, were you crossing pontoons or were you—did you find a bridge to come across?

TH:

We had—we built a bridge. One group of tanks were reversed—were reserved for the ability to get around certain troubles. You've probably heard the—one tank, a German tank, could, kind of, make us not functional if it got too much of this. In fact, Patton stood in the middle of our tanks out on the water because he knew the gun was good. The Rhine was about a quarter of a mile width, not just a little bit.

DM:

Right. Major undertaking.

TH:

But he stood on the deck and urinated as crossing the Rhine. [Laughter]

DM:

That sounds like Patton, too, from what we read. So did you ever see him? Did you see him?

TH:

Every day.

DM:

Really? You mentioned that he was in the middle of things.

TH:

Well, he was, but there was a lot going on at any one of the points of meeting the Germans. We really regarded him highly. You know, a lot of people made fun of him, but we did not. He simply knew how to do what's coming next, just somehow.

DM:

Was he always up at the front?

TH:

Pretty much, yeah.

MH:

Tell them about the Jeep, the handle that he had put in the Jeeps.

TH:

His Jeep had the top welded. In the weld, it was—the tank could use enough of the gasoline to drive it away. It wasn't our tank, it was theirs, too.

MH:

And Patton had a handle in his Jeep, right, so he could stand up?

TH:

Oh yes. He had a rearview handle on the frame of the mirror and he stood out in the middle of the Rhine and emptied himself.

DM:

I remember you writing about that and saying he was saluting troops all over the place. Well, you know, he wasn't too concerned about sniper fire, was he?

TH:

No.

DM:

Well, was he doing this for inspiration? "Hey guys, I'm here," this kind of thing?

TH:

Oh absolutely. Yeah.

DM:

I'm glad he survived.

TH:

We knew something was going if he was there. He directed traffic in the middle of all these fighting. He was very good to get them off and keep operations going.

DM:

Now how about you? When you saw Patton out there doing something like this, did you go, "Hey, yeah, let's go?" Was it inspiring to you?

TH:

Yeah, it was, mainly because we knew that he knew what to do next, and automatically it was going to be dealt with that way.

DM:

Well that's an ingredient of success in this campaign, for sure. Let's jump forward to your coming up to the concentration camp. I think it was at Mauthausen.

TH:

Yes. We freed up Mauthausen. Almost happenstance. But when we got there—and all this rugged stuff was going on, you knew that he would have us where we needed to be.

DM:

What was it like when you saw—can you describe when you saw the concentration camp prisoners coming toward you down the road?

TH:

They kept getting in our way. We knew that's what it was, but they had—they were—they were just so clever. The British were very clever, too, at finding your next point where you could battle or get out of the way. And they shared all of it by radio.

DM:

Now tell me about the SS [Schutzstaffel] troops there at Mauthausen and how they sent those prisoners out on the road.

TH:

Right.

DM:

Can you talk about that a little bit?

TH:

We had—Germans came out at us, but we also were very pleased to have the British soldiers because they were—somehow they were—sensed what kind of fighting was going to be happened—to happen when their vessels got out in front of us.

DM:

Can you remember walking into that concentration camp and what you saw? What did you see there?

TH:

Well, the first thing was they had—it pretty much showed **in the day time** [?] [1:31:59]. But half of them were pretty sick. I mean, just vomiting. And they were pretty bold, as a matter of fact. I watched all that because the driver had to be in a position where he could make a move and see quickly.

DM:

So you could see them coming down the road?

TH:

Oh yeah.

DM:

I think you mentioned that—

TH:

We could. Well, what happened, particularly, we had to fill—we couldn't—were not allowed to fill the gas tank because we were—we had trouble trying to guess what was happening. I remember Christmas Eve, I stood out on the back of the tank pouring gallons of gas. Each tank held about twenty gallons in a tank.

DM:

That's all, just twenty gallons?

TH:

And you could see the shadow with space between the knees up ahead.

MH:

Dad, when the Mauthausen prisoners were coming out through the—as you were going down the road and you saw the people in their striped—

TH:

Oh yeah.

MH:

—uniforms, right?

TH:

Yeah.

MH:

And what did they do as you saw—you saw swarms of these prisoners coming out towards the tanks, right?

TH:

Yeah.

MH:

What do you remember about that? What did they do as they were coming towards the tanks, the prisoners?

TH:

Well, they kept coming, but it was difficult to keep them in view with where they were and what was going on. Some of them were making big weapons of themselves to be in a position to fire. And when we—sometimes they would kind of block the vision to be able to see what they were—what was going on ahead.

DM:

Do you remember any of those prisoners? You wrote about this, the prisoners, some of them saluted you.

TH:

Yeah. Right.

DM:

These were the concentration—

TH:

They wouldn't get out of the way of our tank. They were absolute—they had to work. If you didn't stay ahead of the pack—I remember at one point they wouldn't get out of the way of the tank. Finally they got out of the way so they wouldn't bother us. But they would kiss—kneel and kiss the front of the tank.

DM:

Saying thank you.

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

That's amazing. There must've been some gratification then.

TH:

Very much.

DM:

"This is what it's about."

MH:

There's a ceremony at Mauthausen every May on the anniversary—it's right around the anniversary of the gates opening. They start with the gates closed and they have prisoners, former prisoners, and some family members, and they have liberators on the other side of the gates. A lot of the prisoners will have this striped scarf or parts of the uniform that they wore at that time. Some of the liberators will have, you know, an Army cap or whatever, and they open the gates and kind of commingle. It's incredibly moving. Mom's—you've been there for it. I've been there for it. Dad's been there for it several times. I remember there was a picture in the paper in Belgium about this celebration and it was one of those prisoners hugging you, and you could see the striped scarf as he was hugging you. It was incredibly moving. It's an amazing celebration. I don't know if you call it a celebration.

DM:

It seems like a celebration, a celebration of survival.

MH:

Exactly. People come from all over for that day. It's pretty incredible.

TH:

All over Europe they came from.

DM:

I'm so glad. I'm so glad that people do that and people remember that. I'm really appreciative of you for—and you, Jean—for writing these things up, putting them into book form where people can access them. It's information we have to have. If you hadn't done it, that would just be a big loss.

TH:

Right.

DM:

For the additional notes that you provided on World War II today, really do appreciate that. I want to talk, also today, about some of your med school. We're running a little late. You may be getting hungry, but if I could get some of your stories about Tech med school today, I would appreciate that as well, when you were here. Is that okay with y'all?

JH:

Sure.

MH:

Yeah. We just have to leave by about twelve thirty-five for—they have a one o'clock doctor's appointment.

DM:

Sure. If I miss that, tell me when it's about 12:25 or so. Is that going to give you enough time, 12:20 or so?

MH:

Yeah, that should be great. Perfect.

DM:

We're going to jump around a little. We actually have—since y'all left this record of World War II, we have a lot of that information. We also have information on your career, which was buried. I mean, you were at different universities, different hospitals. It's an amazing career before you even got to Texas Tech.

TH:

Yes.

DM:

One thing I don't think we have is a copy of your curriculum vitae. Do you know if y'all have one that we can put in the archive?

JH:

Do you have one?

DM:

Or Martha?

MH:

[in other room] Pardon me?

DM:

Do you have his CV [curriculum vitae] by any chance?

MH:

Do I have the what?

DM:

His curriculum vitae so we could put that that—if you come across something like that where—because he had such an extensive career in the medical field before he got to Tech.

MH:

We have that somewhere. It may be in the files. I'll look for that.

DM:

We'd like to add it to the oral history, and books, and things like that.

MH:

That's right. You mentioned that to me. I know you've—it's somewhere, Dad. I know we have it somewhere.

DM:

But with that we can kind of jump over that and talk about some med school stories. You had some stories about the Texas Tech med school, when you were a doctor, a professor, a dean of the medical school. Can you tell me some of those stories? Any that come to mind.

TH:

It hadn't been on my mind recently, but—it was, [clears throat] at one point—Martha?

MH:

[in other room] Yes? Sorry, I was just trying to pack my suitcase. I'm going to the—

TH:

I was wondering if you got a piece of candy for my tongue.

MH:

Oh sure. What do he want, cough drop or a piece of candy, Mom? Can you handle that?

JH:

Cough drop?

MH:

Something to wet his whistle a little bit.

DM:

I'm sorry, I don't have anything like that with me. [laughter]

MH:

I think there's some on his desk.

DM:

Well, I know you were here in the early days, you came in a consultant, right?

TH:

That's right.

DM:

Before it even began?

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

What did you think? What did you advise at that time?

TH:

I kept—

JH:

Would you like a cough drop?

DM:

Oh no, I'm fine. Thank you. [Speaking to TH] Do you remember seeing Texas Tech and them asking you questions and then maybe making some suggestions?

TH:

Um-hm.

DM:

Did you suggest that they start a med school?

TH:

Right. I just saw, on a loose view, so many people and so few doctors available for them. I thought it was what I was made for, and we need to get them the best. And I think we did, were able, because—you know, there are—the original building, Dr. Buesseler, B-u-e-s-s-e-l-e-r, was very careful for them to recognize that this was a unique opportunity. That building right now has—which was built for a thousand—that building sees—during a normal day, sees around two-thousand students, but it was built for one-thousand.

DM:

Wow. That's success.

TH:

That is. But the teachers were so careful with them. They were—very much recognized this is the stance that you didn't take. They were not going to get it.

DM:

That was the opportunity, wasn't it?

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

I just love what you just said about you came here, you saw that there weren't enough doctors for the people here. Now look at it. Lubbock is a center, a medical center, in this entire region of the country.

TH:

And it's—it may not be the most well set up right now, but it's going to be really nice when they get more things done. They had—we were able—the state legislature gave us enough money to pay for teachers. It wasn't enough for just routine work. The teachers would recognize. I've been very impressed because I've had various medical things that needed to get fixed. It amazed me that these have the quality of education. I can show it to anybody, any doctor, and he'd recognize that is a real success.

DM:

Oh good. Now, later on, did people come from elsewhere to see Texas Tech med school and say, "We can develop a similar program?"

TH:

Yeah.

DM:

You can't ask for more than that. That's very good.

TH:

The therapist—I've had physical therapy from men and women. They are just the smoothest operators. It's almost like they were seen to be the people that this would help, even the school nurses. The nurses get an excellent education. I've seen several nurses that have been trained here.

DM:

In the process of building this med school—and it's really, really grown—were there any problems with getting the proper funding. Was there plenty of funding, plenty of support, from the university? Was there good support?

TH:

Yes.

DM:

Or were there problems? Was it mostly good?

TH:

Good.

DM:

Apparently it's grown. It's doing well.

TH:

And they're—they have had—I really think—some of the best medical teachers that I've been around. In a way it just happened, and yet I see how they've found a good way to teach certain things that nobody uses, but they do now. It's the envy of the other schools in Texas. And I'm glad.

DM:

Tell me about the TeleMed, TeleMedical.

TH:

Okay. I'd love to. We thought that there needed to be some system that we could provide to the local doctors that could teach someone. Well, I've often thought it would be nice if the patient or doctor could get some help, even with—

DM:

Even from a distance. Was that what it was about?

TH:

Yeah. That's what made it so good. The old method of recognizing has been so well-placed that we have excellent vision and hearing of what these are doing, these people, these doctors.

DM:

From all over the country?

TH:

All over.

DM:

How about outside the country? Was this ever directed overseas?

TH:

We're still trying to get the people from out of the country. I suspect are not getting as much of that as we would like, but we did. And talking with the potential students, we were able to get a sense of what they thought would be helpful in a situation where you could do a teaching session. And they would talk about Mednet.

DM:

I'm going to have to see if we have anything on that in the archives. I really don't know, but we should. I can probably approach somebody with some records over there. If y'all have any records or come across any that you want to archive, contact me.

MH:

I know I have an article. I know I have some stuff. I have various things. But there was an article written up about Mednet. I forgot where it was written, but it kind of gave the history of it. I'll look for some stuff.

DM:

You've been involved in so much and I could just talk to you for weeks at a time. I'm sorry but I'm going to shut this off because I know that y'all are getting to—need to get to some doctor's appointments. But sure do appreciate your time, and you, too, Martha.

TH:

They are.

MH:

You're welcome to come back.

TH:

They're really grateful.

DM:

Well, thank you. I'll turn this off.

End of Recording

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