

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
PAUL E. GRINDROD.  
Anti-Aircraft, Army, World War II.

1999

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**Grindrod, Paul E.**, (1925- ). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 63 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 63 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 63 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Paul E. Grindrod, an Oconomowoc, Wisconsin native, discusses his experiences in the 423<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, Company I during World War II, including being taken prisoner during the Battle of the Bulge. Grindrod talks about being drafted directly out of high school in 1943, anti-aircraft training at Camp Hahn (California), infantry training with the 106<sup>th</sup> Division in Colorado Springs, and being shipped to England. Sent to the Siegfried Line in France, he portrays the bunkers, stealing cheese from his captain, and observing Germans from an artillery observation post. Grindrod mentions he was busted to private in the States because he lost his clothing in a train crash and upset his superiors by wearing the wrong uniform. He reflects on the chaos and lack of information during his time on the Siegfried Line and questions why the 106<sup>th</sup> did not send out frequent patrols. Grindrod details the German attack during the Battle of the Bulge, including having his unit's artillery destroyed, three days of chaos and movement without engaging the enemy, being ordered to destroy his weapons and surrender, and stocking up on K-rations and a sleeping bag. He speaks of the Germans confiscating watches and boots, prisoners' having problems with diarrhea and dysentery while on the march, and receiving bread from a couple of German civilians. Grindrod states he weighed 170 pounds when he was captured and weighed only 80 when he was freed. He describes occasionally being moved by trains that were strafed by Allied planes and, after arriving in Koblenz, listening to nearby buildings get destroyed during Allied air raids. Registered as a prisoner at Stalag 4B near Mühlberg, he talks about being allowed to write home and getting moved to Stalag 4F in Zeitz. Grindrod relates being put to work in a synthetic gasoline plant, taking cover during air raids, living conditions in an unheated dance hall, food rations, and sharing a kitchen with British prisoners. He describes the other slave laborers and conversations he had with a Dutch Jew and a Russian. Grindrod talks about living in debilitating cold, receiving few Red Cross parcels, and trading Red Cross items like soap to civilians for food. He discusses having hot coffee spilled on his foot, which swelled up after a day of work. He explains a British medic, who looked at his foot, fed him something that turned his urine green so that Grindrod was sent to a prisoner of war hospital. He recalls receiving medical treatment and fearing his leg would have to be amputated. Grindrod mentions not having toilet paper and saving crusts of bread in a little box for emergencies. He tells of being liberated from a prisoner of war recuperation center, eating so much he got sick, and his impressions after being airlifted to a hospital in Paris. He states, "It was as if the world was black and white; from that point, Paris, all of a sudden, everything erupted in color." Eventually flown to New York, he talks about

going to a party hosted by wealthy civilians. Sent to Gardiner General Hospital in Chicago, he details being treated with penicillin, eating high-fat foods, plastic surgery at O'Reilly General Hospital (Missouri), and getting married while on leave. After being discharged, Grindrod talks about attending college on the GI Bill and receiving ten-percent disability compensation.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999  
Transcribed by John Danish, 2008  
Checked and corrected by Joan Bruggink, 2011  
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

**Transcribed Interview:**

- Paul: They busted up that anti-aircraft outfit and sent it to the infantry.
- James: Yeah. When did you enter the service?
- Paul: It was, I think, about July of '43, right out of high school; step out of high school and step in the Army. [laughs]
- James: You were born in '25?
- Paul: '25, yeah.
- James: Because I'm born in '23 [unintelligible]. Where were you born?
- Paul: Oconomowoc. Wisconsin. I see you're Dr. McIntosh. Are you an MD?
- James: Yeah.
- Paul: You are. Well, I'm a PhD, so. [both laugh]
- James: Oh, well, we're both doctors. [both laugh] Alright. And you were drafted?
- Paul: Drafted? Yeah, right out of high school, you bet.
- James: And where did they send you when you were first drafted?
- Paul: Well, I can remember, um, let's see, I think I went to a center in Milwaukee and was inducted there, and then I must have gone down to Chicago, I think.
- James: Fort Sheridan [Illinois]?
- Paul: I bet, yeah.
- James: Yeah, that's where most of the folks from Wisconsin went.
- Paul: And then from Fort Sheridan, I think right out to California, to Camp Hahn.
- James: To train in anti-aircraft?
- Paul: Yeah.
- James: Okay.
- Paul: At Riverside, California.

- James: And then where did the world take you from there?
- Paul: Well, we trained, then, also, at Camp Irwin [California] in the Mojave Desert, until about—I went in approximately in July and I think the following June, or so. Well, I was all set to go into ASTP, too, and had my bags packed. About that time the service decided they didn't want any more ASTP'ers, but they wanted those infantrymen. [laugh]
- James: The Army ran short; they misjudged the number.
- Paul: Yeah.
- James: That's why the ASTP got taken in quickly.
- Paul: Yeah, ASTP'ers and, ah, we got just a whole host of people, Air Corps cadets, and I can't remember what all.
- James: Pulled out of civilian programs?
- Paul: For infantry. Yeah.
- James: They were thrilled, I'm sure?
- Paul: [laughs] Yes, that's right.
- James: So then the training was quite different?
- Paul: Ah, yeah. We went to Colorado and trained in the infantry.
- James: Um hmm.
- Paul: Now, let's see, where was I stationed? Ah, down there, south of Denver.
- James: Um hmm. Colorado Springs?
- Paul: At Colorado Springs. I can't think of the name it was called; Camp or Fort something or other. No, I think it's an official military installation.
- Jim: Um hmm.
- Paul: So for three months we trained there and then we're, or I was assigned to the 106<sup>th</sup> Division.
- James: 106<sup>th</sup>—Wow, the famous 106<sup>th</sup> Division.
- Paul: Yeah. And that was near Indianapolis, as I recall.

James: 'Til?

Paul: And did a little bit of training there, but let's see, what time was that? Now that was probably in September, maybe, of '44, about then. And then we went out to Camp Miles Standish [Massachusetts] on the East Coast and were shipped across to England.

James: Um hmm.

Paul: And ended up in England, in Cheltenham, which is not too terribly far from London, I guess. Well, I guess it's off to the kinda southwest of London, and we were housed in a stable [laughs]; nice stable, though. And then we went across to France. And I remember the mud of France. By that time we had air superiority, so we could build a big fire.

James: Where was this?

Paul: Oh, it was in probably western France. I can't remember the names of any cities there. But from there then we proceeded to the border of Belgium and Germany, and I guess it was the Siegfried Line, approximately. I remember the concrete bunkers and so forth, which were part of the Siegfried Line.

James: Yes, that's okay, go ahead now; the Siegfried Line.

Paul: Yeah.

James: You didn't cross it; you went up to it?

Paul: Well, we were in it. The reason I knew we were in it was because they had these concrete bunkers which were very impressive. Yeah. And I remember our captain had a big supply of food that he kept in a little concrete bunker, and every time that I went back to get our food from—I was in actually an artillery observation post, which was on a little mountain really, looking right down in the throats of the Germans, in a forest, and we even had logs over our head and we could look right out and see everything. But we had to go and get our breakfast and our dinner, as I recall. So every time I would pass by the captain's bunker with all the food, why I'd swipe about a ten-pound tin of processed cheese. [laughs] So then I'd take that back to the boys.

James: What was your rank then?

Paul: I was—I'd been busted to private at that time. [laughs]

James: Oh my, for nipping cheese?

- Paul: No, no, [laughs] it was a series of misadventures. When I went into the 106<sup>th</sup> Division, coming across on a troop train, we had had a head-on crash with another train in Kansas and I lost all of my baggage and all of my clothing, so I arrived dressed with the wrong uniform, and everybody got very upset by the fact that I was wearing the wrong clothing.
- James: You pointed out to them how that happened?
- Paul: Yeah, that—deaf. [laughs] But anyway, I was a private; I was a B.A.R. [Browning Automatic Rifle] man.
- James: Yeah.
- Paul: And so I would swipe this cheese from the captain. Well, that went on for quite a while and finally, I think, he noted that his supply was diminishing, so then he stationed a guard by this concrete bunker. So then I would take somebody with me, and the guy would engage the guard in conversation. Well, I still snuck in and swiped some food [laughs], so we were well fed there. But I think we were in the line maybe only a week or ten days, or maybe it was two weeks. And, ah, at night I would keep hearing what I thought were tanks and trucks across the way, and I would phone in about how we thought the Germans were building up out there, and, of course, the people of super-intelligence would say, “No, no, no, they’re just trying to fool ya.” Well, they sure did a good job of fooling us. [laugh]
- James: How far away were you from them, the Germans?
- Paul: Ah, you could hear quite well, particularly on a clear morning.
- James: A mile away? A mile?
- Paul: I would say about a mile, yeah.
- James: And what was between the two of you, a forest or—
- Paul: Just ah—the forest broke there and you could look down on this long expanse, down to where the Germans were in the next forest, edge of the next forest.
- James: But you couldn’t see really see ‘em?
- Paul: Yeah, once in a while I could see somebody over there, yeah; not well.
- James: The front wasn’t active at all at that moment?

- Paul: Ah, no, and I never could understand why we weren't sending out more patrols. We just didn't know what was going on. I have many reservations about the management of the 106<sup>th</sup> Division. [both laugh]
- James: Everyone does. [both laughing] Because of that one record they achieved that nobody really wanted.
- Paul: [laughs] That's right.
- James: Yeah, that was a bad mark that you didn't deserve.
- Paul: Yeah, yeah, I have conflicting emotions, I think, that, ah, the organization just came apart. And you didn't see, after a day or two, you didn't see a non-com and you saw no officers and nobody knew what was going on.
- James: They weren't around?
- Paul: They just weren't there, no. I don't know where they were.
- James: So you and your platoon were sort of isolated from the world?
- Paul: Well, actually, yeah; people got lost and wandered around trying to find where their unit was, and it was a mess.
- James: This is the middle-level of the organization that was lacking, is this what you're saying? I mean, the lieutenants and sergeants, and that level?
- Paul: Well, I don't know. I think it was just the mass chaos that overcame everybody from the top down.
- James: I see.
- Paul: That shouldn't happen in an organization like that, and it was really a pathetic situation. But on the morning of December 16<sup>th</sup>, of course, I was in this lookout, artillery lookout, and, ah, I would say, it was very early in the morning, it was still dark. Exact time, seems like it was 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, but of course the days are short there in the winter, so it could have been 7 or 8 o'clock, I don't know. But the Germans then let loose with their artillery barrage, and I swear every shell that they had came right over my head. [both laugh]
- James: And landed how far back?
- Paul: They were shooting out our artillery, behind us. And in a matter of three to four hours they eliminated all of our artillery, so we were crippled already. Now how did they do that? They did that because they knew the positions of



our artillery exactly. When we moved in with our artillery we moved into the exact same spot as the outfit we replaced, which to me is extremely stupid. [laughs]

James: Yeah, right, very iffy thinking.

Paul: And, ah, it is said they had spies behind the lines, even directing the artillery fire. Whether that's true, I don't know. They did have spies, but whether or not they directed the artillery fire—I'm sure the Germans with their precision had those artillery positions down to five or ten feet, plus or minus. But they absolutely eliminated the artillery. Well then, of course, we were very vulnerable, and, ah—

James: That was the time to move?

Paul: [laughs] Yeah, so we, ah—just seemed like chaos. We moved from one position to another, back and forth, and never did engage, at least my outfit never did engage the enemy, although we got close.

James: Your battalion was what?

Paul: 423<sup>rd</sup> Company I. And it seemed most of the activity there from December 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup>, was just, ah, chaos. Nobody knew what was going on and—

James: So this was three days of it now, you're enduring?

Paul: Yeah, the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup>. Then, um, we finally got hooked up with an organization—it wasn't our outfit, but was part, of course, of the 106<sup>th</sup>; it was right on the edge of the woods. And, ah, about, I would say 10 o'clock to 12 o'clock we got the order to destroy arms, throw away your ammunition if you had any left. Most people didn't have any, and, um—

James: That came from where? That order?

Paul: Came down from the colonel. Ah, I understand that—see, there were two regiments in the line and one back behind in reserve, and the two regiments that were in the line, I think, were the 423<sup>rd</sup> and 422<sup>nd</sup>. Now each had somehow been herded off, very methodically, by the Germans, so that they had no contact with each other. And then each were told that the other regiment was gone and that they were sitting there all by themselves in the woods and would be subjected to artillery fire and annihilated if they didn't, ah, give up.

James: Who told you that?

- Paul: Ah, that came down through—I can't give you names of people; but that was the general understanding.
- James: Your captain or your lieutenant come up with it?
- Paul: When we were captured there were no captains nor lieutenants, nor any non-commissioned officers; don't ask me why. [laughs]
- James: Okay. The word came to you that you were in trouble there by radio?
- Paul: I, I don't know how the message came.
- James: Well how big was your group that was isolated here, or apparently isolated?
- Paul: Ah, well, it was a regiment.
- James: A whole regiment?
- Paul: Yeah, a whole regiment. Yeah. Less those that had been killed in action, which was a fairly small percentage, I think. But, um, the order came down and it was real, and so we destroyed everything we had. And I remember, at the time, that we hadn't had any food in that four day period other than, ah, K-rations and we were running—and very little water. And I remember thinking that, ah, gee, we'd better stock up. And we saw a Jeep up on the edge of the woods there that had been hit and so we went out to the Jeep, and I remember we got a five-gallon can of water and they had a whole box of K-rations, so I filled up my sack with K-rations and I filled up my canteen with water. And then I recall, also, going over, and I'm still wondering how I could do this, but I did it, [James chuckles] to a dead GI and taking his sleeping bag off him and another canteen, and filling that up with water. So when I left, I had a sleeping bag and I had a backpack full of K-rations and so I was pretty well set. And, a, oh, I guess that was it, and water. And then when we went through the line, of course, the Germans were not particularly interested in anything but watches.
- James: You had—wait a minute, don't jump into this.
- Paul: Oh.
- James: When did you see your first German? How did you know you were captured?
- Paul: Oh, well, we were given orders to, ah, destroy everything, and then as we—
- James: Because you were being captured? They told you that?

- Paul: Yeah. My understanding was it came from the colonel; the colonel had given up under pressure from the Germans, because we really had no ammunition left and we had no artillery, of course, so we were done, and no communication.
- James: But you still hadn't seen a German?
- Paul: Ah, yeah, if you'd walk out of the edge of the woods far enough, you could see the Germans.
- James: Yeah, okay.
- Paul: So then we walked out *en masse* from the woods there and formed into long columns. And the Germans, of course, searched us. The only thing in that particular area that they were interested in was watches. I always laughed that they wouldn't touch our K-rations with a ten-foot pole. [laughs]
- James: Really?
- Paul: Yeah.
- James: Do you know specifically what they didn't like?
- Paul: Well, they had different food than we did, and very frequently it was hot. It would involve sausage and bread and soup and, ah, I think that satisfied the German palate far better than our *Cracker Jack* K-rations. So it was nice that they didn't steal my K-rations, and I don't know if I had a watch at the time, but they—in some sectors they'd steal your boots, because some of them didn't have boots, of course, and of course that was, ah, absolute disaster for the guy that got his boots stolen in that cold, snowy weather. So I really left in pretty good shape with all this paraphernalia and then began the long, long march back into Germany. And I think we were formed into groups of about a thousand with guards around. And it wasn't bad except until the fellas began to get diarrhea and dysentery and so forth, and then they would squat by the side of the road, but of course when the guard came up to them, why, he'd jab 'em with a bayonet and keep 'em running. I never saw any, um, killing or anything by the guards, but they were very emphatic: you had to keep going. And so eventually I got the diarrhea or dysentery, but I would then run up to front of the column, go off in the ditch; by the time the column got caught up with me, why I'd just zip over. But I think one of the reasons that I survived better, much better, than most people was that I seemed to be much less plagued by diarrhea and dysentery, which, of course, I'd seen it where it would kill a man in two or three days.
- James: What did you attribute that problem to?

Paul: Oh, I don't know. The fellas might have gotten bad water, they might have picked up crap along the way to eat; I don't really know. But it always seems that many military operation people always end up getting diarrhea and dysentery, and I don't really know why. But we then marched. We'd make about ten miles a day, I think. And, of course, at the tender age of nineteen, I had no difficulty in walking; some of the people who were hurt had difficulty. And I never did find out what ever happened to those that could not keep up. I never heard of anybody being shot or, ah, I rather think maybe they took 'em off into the towns and I don't know what happened to 'em. But, um, the chief difficulty as we went along was we did not get any food, and this march—I, in my own memory, I'm not sure how long it went on because it was interspersed with getting on trains and boxcars that wouldn't move for days, but at some of my POW meetings, some of the people said that we marched for sixteen days, about a hundred and fifty miles back into Germany, and literally without food. I remember getting at one time a little can of mush, I think it was. And I remember also getting a piece of bread from a German civilian. A very odd thing, a man and a woman standing on the doorstep with a loaf of bread, cutting off slices of bread for the Americans, which just caused a riot, of course. [laughs] Naturally the guards had to break it up. But I remember getting that one piece of bread; I got it. [laughs]

James: This is a civilian lady?

Paul: Civilian, yeah.

James: Took pity on the prisoners?

Paul: Yeah, very, ah, very mixed feelings among the Germans, and I'm really surprised, in a way, that they treated us as well as they did because certainly they had lost their loved ones in air raids. They, I—I had heard that they were really, ah, took—oftentimes the civilian population took vicious measures with airmen. If the civilian population got to an airman downed first, he would probably be dead. But, um, in general, from what I saw, the military, the German military, tended to follow procedure pretty well. But during that period, the one fella I talked to at a POW meeting said that he thought that we lost most of our weight during that long trip back into Germany. And, ah, I know that I weighed a hundred and seventy pounds going in, and when I came out, I weighed eighty pounds. Now whether or not it was there that, ah, in that long journey back that we lost weight—

James: Yeah.

Paul: —or whether it was in the slave labor camp later, I'm not certain. But, um, we did hop onto and off of trains, and the trains were erratic because every

time they'd start the train up some American or Allied airman would shoot the hell out of it. [laughs]

James: That was a danger you hadn't planned on?

Paul: Yeah, that's right. We were strafed, and they would occasionally hit the engine and blow that up, and I remember the train would come to a stop, we'd all run off the train and boxcar and spell "PW" out in the field, but by the time that happened they were gone, naturally. So our train experience was not good, and one time I remember we were locked in a boxcar for five days without water. And it's surprising how long you can go without water if it's, say, thirty-two degrees; it really is.

James: I'm sure if the temperature had been high—

Paul: We'd be dead.

James: You'd be dead.

Paul: Yeah, yeah, that's right, yeah. But, eventually, we finally, um, let's see, we ended up, oh, I remember, we got to Koblenz, I think it was. I think it was Koblenz, and we were housed in a German youth barracks and there were three buildings; we were right in the middle. And the first day we were there, an Allied plane came over and started bombing everything around us and everybody got very nervous, including the German guards. But then this happened two or three days in a row, and by the time the third day came—by that time they'd hit the barracks on both sides of us, they hit a furniture, a warehouse across the street, and, ah, that was, I guess, the time in my life when I was most scared. [laughs]

James: Right.

Paul: And I can remember, you'd hear the shrapnel whining around, ya know, and the bombs. And I remember, I wrapped up in a—there was a mattress on the floor and I wrapped up in that. And I remember wondering what it was gonna be like when the bomb hit and I went up in the air and came down. But that was a scary thing and it scared the guards, too, so they decided they were not going to stay there anymore, so we got up and walked then for a day and a night and a day, continuously to a, ah, stalag, and that was Stalag 12A in Limburg, I think. And, ah, there, I think, we got a bite to eat, and, um, then I can't really remember whether we walked or whether we went by train to Stalag 4B; I think that was near a town called Mühlberg. And there is where we were registered. And, ah, they took our name and gave us dog tags; I still have mine. Say, do you think they'd like the dog tags?

James: Oh, they'd love it; they would love it!

- Paul: Okay. I'll bring the dog tags then.
- James: Along with that diary?
- Paul: Yeah, sure. No problem.
- James: Ah, well, they'd be so excited! Those are really unusual!
- Paul: Yeah, they are, yeah. Um, it's better, I think, to give these things to some—
- James: And hundreds of people can enjoy them.
- Paul: Yeah, right, rather than letting them get lost, you know, from succeeding generations. [laughs]
- James: Who care less, and less, and less, down the line. But here it will be preserved forever.
- Paul: Um hmm. But, um, we finally became a *bona fide* prisoner of war. But the time between being captured and being registered, ah, there's no way of knowing what happened to those men, during that period of time, how many died *en route*, or what happened. But once we were registered, why the Germans were very careful about their records and—
- James: Oh, sure.
- Paul: *Vee vill not make any mistakes*, you know. [laughs]
- James: And, of course, then they allowed your name to be sent home, so they'd know that you were safe.
- Paul: Yeah. In fact, they gave us a letter, um, to write home. In fact, I have a couple of those letters that I wrote home.
- James: Wonderful. We'd love those.
- Paul: I'll give those to ya, too. Um, so—
- James: It was an official letter saying I am a prisoner and—
- Paul: This was a regular form for a prisoner of war to write on.
- James: And being treated wonderfully here in Germany [both laugh] and wish you were here.

- Paul: Yeah, I wrote back always telling them I was in good shape, don't worry about it. And send as much food and cigarettes—of course, cigarettes were the dollars of Europe at that time.
- James: That's right; that was money.
- Paul: And I never got a thing, never got a thing.
- James: Well, somebody intercepted that.
- Paul: You bet. Oh, yeah, you bet, yeah.
- James: I'm sure your folks sent lots of stuff, never came even close to you.
- Paul: No. But, ah, from Stalag 4B we then went to Stalag 4F. And I always joke that if you weren't 4-F [laughs] when you got there, you soon would be. [laughs] But that was a work party, split into little parties, and we were located, about one hundred-twenty of us, um, what was the name of that place? Maybe I can tell from here [looking at some papers]. Um, Zeitz, Germany, Stalag 4F in Zeitz, which is about fifty kilometers south of Leipzig. And Leipzig, I would say, is maybe a hundred, two hundred kilometers south of Berlin, so it was pretty far east. But then they put us to work in a "non-war" industry called the synthetic gasoline plant, and that thing was bombed continually. Every time, I swear, that somehow information would filter back to the Allies that maybe they were getting a trickle of gasoline out of there and all hell would break loose! You know, the British would hit it at night and the Americans in the daytime.
- James: And what would you do?
- Paul: Well, ah, they were reasonable, if we were there working in the—[**End of Side One 1- Tape One**]-day and there was an air raid, we'd go in the air raid shelter with everybody else.
- James: Bunkers underground there?
- Paul: Yeah. Of course; we were of value to the Germans because we were working people.
- James: They needed you. How were your quarters there?
- Paul: Well, we stayed in a very peculiar little place. It was probably a mile or two from the plant. Every day we had to walk back and forth. And it was, I think, a German farmer that combined his farm with a tavern, a dance hall, and a little courtyard. And I remember we'd walk into that courtyard and

walk up wooden stairs to the dance hall up there, and we were in the dance hall. The dance hall had bunks in it, of course, and a stage at one end.

James: Um hmm.

Paul: And that's where we stayed. Now, we didn't get much of any heat, but at least it was fairly good.

James: And how big was this group of workmen?

Paul: About a hundred and twenty, I think. And at the same time right near us was a group of about a hundred and twenty British. Of course the British had been there a lot longer than we had and they were old hands at this, and really did a lot more sophisticated job of handling the stress and so forth than we did. But we had a common kitchen and our food was one bowl of turnip soup per day, and to start out a fifth of a loaf of black bread that ended up an eighth of a loaf, and that is about what we got. And I would say that probably we were getting maybe a thousand—oh, eight to twelve hundred calories a day, and we were out in the cold working all day, probably thumping out two or three thousand, so I'm sure our weight went down there.

James: You went down to what, eighty pounds, you said?

Paul: Eighty pounds, yeah.

James: So you lost half your weight?

Paul: Yeah [laughs], that's right.

James: And a little more.

Paul: Yeah. But in this synthetic gasoline plant that we worked we were with tens of thousands of slave laborers. If you were a non-commissioned officer or an officer you didn't have to work, so in that respect they were better off. But if you were a private or a first class private you worked.

James: What was your specific job?

Paul: Mostly it was picking up junk and moving bricks, and as fast as they'd get the bricks up, why they'd come over with bombers and knock 'em back down. But there was a great assemblage of people from all over the world there, and the greatest contingent there were the Jews. They took all of the healthy Jews that could provide work and they worked them before they put 'em in the ovens.



James: Um hmm.

Paul: And, of course, when they'd get so weak they were no longer able to work, why then, off they'd go to these death camps. And I remember working near groups of Jews. In general we were not permitted to associate with the British, nor with the—they kept us isolated—nor with the Jews, but you could still get together with some of the Jews and talk to them. And I remember I met one very nice young Dutch Jew and we had great conversations about the Andrews Sisters. [laughs] He liked the Andrews Sisters.

James: He spoke good English?

Paul: He spoke fine English, yeah. And I asked him what had happened to the rest of his family and he said, "Well, they've all been killed." And I said, "Well, what's gonna to happen to you?" And he says, "Oh, I'll be killed, too," [chuckle] not even batting an eyelash. And I remember talking with one Russian worker; they used the Russian workers if they were skilled, otherwise they treated the Russians just like dirt. They would—maltreatment there was just awful. But I talked, I remember, with a bricklayer, a Russian bricklayer. The common language was German, of course, and I asked him what will happen to him when the war ends. Of course, we were all confident that the Allies were gonna win. He says, "Oh, I'll be killed." Life and death doesn't mean a thing, I guess.

James: You knew German before you went in the service?

Paul: Oh, I had German in high school, I think a year of it, just enough to barely get along. [laughs] But working in this synthetic gasoline plant was really debilitating because of the fact that it was cold. I remember they gave me a Russian overcoat. They gave all of us, I think, coats that they'd gotten off of people who had died. And I remember this Russian overcoat; I swear a bird could have flown through it. [laughs] So I remember I had to keep it up like this and I developed a permanent hunch to keep out the cold, and you just got used to the cold and lived with it. But—

James: Did you have trouble with frostbite?

Paul: Ah, I was extraordinarily lucky. I had my boots.

James: That's what saved ya.

Paul: And I think, even at the beginning, I think we had overshoes, and I think we got rid of the overshoes because they were so cumbersome. But I never had a problem there and I always could walk endlessly. But Providence was on my side, I guess.

- James: I guess so. Now, any talk of escape while you were there?
- Paul: Um, well, by the time we would get back from work, we were so weak that we could not think about anything except that bowl of soup.
- James: So you were really no problem for the Germans?
- Paul: You wouldn't know what to do, yeah. And if you can't speak German, you're lost, of course.
- James: And you were so deep into Germany, where would you go?
- Paul: That's right, yeah, yeah. And we felt that if we missed one meal, why we were gonna be dead in a couple of days, ya know.
- James: How about the Red Cross? Did you see any of them?
- Paul: Oh, we were supposed to get a Red Cross parcel once a week. But, ah, we would get a Red Cross parcel maybe once in—to begin with, once in two or three weeks and split it between two or three people, and finally we just didn't get any at all. And I don't think the reason was that the Germans didn't want to give us any, it was that there was no transportation left; they could not move it. Now those Stalags that were closer to a seaport, particularly the Luft Stalags—
- James: They were better off?
- Paul: Yeah, they did much better, yeah. They would get their package per week. But we did get some, and I would usually take the soap and the cigarettes and the coffee out and try to trade it. I got caught trying to trade a cake of soap for a loaf of bread with a civilian by the German guard and he was furious. And I remember he took a swing at me with his rifle butt and I ducked, fortunately, but then he went after the civilian. Well first of all, I gave the soap to the civilian; I never got the bread. And he wanted to know what I'd given the civilian and I refused to tell him that I gave him this cake of soap because he would just take it then, of course, and so he got really very angry and I left and went back to work. This was off of the work line. But with soap and coffee and cigarettes, why you could buy almost anything. But I remember relishing some of the things in the Red Cross package. I remember the—we'd get, I think it was canned butter, which was absolutely delicious. The one thing you never got was fats; in fact, none of the Germans got enough fats, and they would just go wild over fats. In fact, after the war I had a friend who went to Germany in '45, '46. He said the hamburger that they did sell, the more fat it had in it, the more valuable it was. If you could get quarter-inch cubes of fat in the hamburger the

Germans just go wild over it. So you did have this terrible urge for fat, almost insatiable.

James: Hmm.

Paul: But then in the morning we would get a cup of boiling ersatz coffee to start us off on the day. And this was made with, I don't know what; I think browned, oh, maybe grain of some kind or something, just to turn the water kinda brownish. And [laughs] in the morning I would walk around with my combat boots open at the top and I ran into somebody with a cup of this coffee and he spilled it down my boot top and it was extremely hot, you know, and I jumped around, you know, and took the boot off. I could see that there was a burn and I tried to get the guards to note the burn and not go to work that day, but no, you go to work. So I went to work with this burn, and the next day I couldn't get my foot back in my boot because it just swelled way up. Well then I didn't have to go to work; it's impossible for me to go to work unless I go barefoot. And from that time on I was disabled and I was cared for, to some extent, by a British medic, who pulled a fast one on—we were examined, I think, every week or every couple of weeks by a German pharmacist, who'd come out and look at people, and when he figured somebody was about ready to die, why he'd ship 'em off to a PW hospital, so on the Red Cross record it would show that he was not in the camp when he died, although we had many that died with us. Um, but, ah, the British medic, I remember his name was Sonny. I probably owe a lot to him! He decided he was gonna fool the German pharmacist. So the night before the German pharmacist was—I think he visited on Saturday. Incidentally, we worked seven days a week. We were supposed to get every seventh Sunday off, but when that Sunday would come, there was some reason that we never got it off. I remember we did get a couple of days off in my whole period there, but it was strictly work. But, um, this British medic somehow got some type of drug that would turn your urine green, and so he gave that to me the night before. [both laugh] And then the pharmacist came and examined me, and of course, by that time—

James: Methylene blue he gave you.

Paul: [laughs] I don't know what it was.

James: That's what it was.

Paul: Really? [more laughter] But, ah, the pharmacist came and examined me, and by that time I was really in bad shape; my left leg was ah—

James: Swollen?

Paul: The left leg diminished almost like a broomstick but the foot kept swelled up. And, um, then when I urinated for him, why he saw that discolored urine, *Ach Himmel!* [hearty laughter] We got to go to the PW camp, or to a PW hospital, so they decided to ship me, then, up to Leipzig to a PW hospital, and that was fifty kilometers on a train. And I went up there and they had—I gotta think what the hell it's like; they had a regular hospital, but they didn't have any supplies. All bandages were paper.

James: Huh?

Paul: They had, ah, they did dress my foot and they did put it in a kind of a brace that kept the toes from drooping. And it was *extremely* painful and just almost—I would just go into fits of pain when I had to stand up in the old boys' room down—

James: Oh yeah.

Paul: But I remember they dressed my foot and in a semi-operating room, whatever it was. Alongside of me was a fella who'd lost his leg, and they were dressing the stump of his leg, and I thought to myself, "Is that gonna be me?" [laughs] Because, of course, they would have removed that if they thought it was gonna kill me, I think.

James: Oh, I'm sure they would have.

Paul: And probably rightly so. But that was my great fear then, that I was gonna lose that leg, um, or the foot. But, ah, I then was sent from the PW hospital to a PW recuperation center.

James: The leg was okay then?

Paul: No, it wasn't. No, it was still very bad.

James: Still swollen?

Paul: Oh, yeah, it was really nip and tuck, I think. And I remember in this recuperation center, I was in a room and there were beds all around the whole room. I swear there were people from all over the world there. I remember Frenchmen, and Indians from India, and South Africans, and, ah, everything, really amazing. But, ah, it was there, I think, about two weeks before we were liberated, suddenly two GIs appeared in our midst. Now where they came from, how they got there, past the Germans, I will never know; but they were there and they talked to us. And then—they appeared magically and they disappeared magically. So at that time, we were pretty sure that it wouldn't be long. [laughs] But it was about two weeks.

- James: Before the end?
- Paul: Before our troops entered Leipzig, yeah. And then, of course, I was liberated, and I remember we were taken off and I got my first substantial food; it was in kind of like a mess hall, GI mess hall. And I remember we all dived into that food and every one of us got violently sick then. [laughs] Usually it was diarrhea or— [laughs]
- James: Everyone I've talked had the exact same thing.
- Paul: Is that right? [laughing]
- James: Exactly. There's just one thing you haven't mentioned yet, that they always say, but we'll get to that.
- Paul: So we immediately went back to the very thin fare, German fare. But the Germans, in response to being invaded by the Americans, suddenly, for the first time that we were there, we had toilet paper. Suddenly the soup began to improve.
- James: More turnips? [both laugh]
- Paul: Well, it was pretty substantial soup after—
- James: What'd they use for toilet paper?
- Paul: You'd use anything you'd get your hand on.
- James: Newspapers and magazines, pages of magazines?
- Paul: Yeah, anything you could use, yup. And I remember, I used up my—in California I had developed quite an address book of young ladies that I had met, and I remember having to use that address book, [laughs] which I thought was real irony.
- James: Yeah, right. This lovely thing is now doing yeoman's work here.
- Paul: Right. But, ah—
- James: That's fascinating.
- Paul: We, some of the boys were really quite ill from eating, and I had heard that in one case a couple of Canadians died.
- James: Yeah.

Paul: From eating too much.

James: How was your foot by this time?

Paul: It was still terrible.

James: Still swollen?

Paul: Yeah, oh, yeah

James: Okay.

Paul: Well, then I think the next step was I went to a, some sort of a field hospital, I think. And I remember being examined by a nurse and a surgeon, or a doctor, and I could tell from the way that they looked at me, that they were sure I was gonna die. Am I going too long?

James: No, no, not a bit; No, I just wanted to make sure everything is working.

Paul: Oh.

James: It is.

Paul: Ah. Now, never had it occurred to me—well, you know how young men are, in their teens, the whole world can fall down, they can never die, you know. And I was just as bad as the rest of them. In fact, I developed, many years later, the concept of *there's nothing in God's creation as stupid as an 18- or 19-year old male*. But from the examination there, we went to an air evacuation center and I remember, ah, lying close to the ground on one of these things they carry and it's got legs; they're about so far above the ground.

James: A cot?

Paul: Kind of like a cot, yeah. And I remember that I had carried this little box—I had a little box and my goodies in that box, and in my box I'd collected little bits of German bread, you know?

James: Um hmm.

Paul: In case we lose, you know. [James chuckles] And, ah, I still had that and I still was not sure that the Germans weren't gonna just bust through, ya know, and I'd be right back where I'd started. And I remember finally, at that point, when I saw we were going to be airlifted out of there, I got rid of that box and all those little crusts of bread that I had saved for a rainy day, you know. [laughs] But then I think I was lifted to Paris, and I went into a

Paris hospital, and that was the most elegant thing I think I've ever seen in my life. It was clean. For the first time I was in a bed, you know, with clean sheets. And everybody looked fat to me and— [both chuckle] And I got food, and I could stretch out on that bed for the first time, instead of being on a lumpy mattress filled with, I think it was paper, confetti. And suddenly, the world took on color. Ah, it was as if the world was black and white; from that point, Paris, all of a sudden, everything erupted in color. And there was color. And I remember they sent some entertainers around the wards in this Paris hospital, and one of them sang *On The Sunny Side Of The Street*. And that thing was indelibly stamped into my memory. [laughs]

James: Is that the only USO people you saw? You didn't see any earlier?

Paul: No, no.

James: That was the only experience you had?

Paul: Well, I remember on our march back into Germany, the Germans would all, or somebody would start the rumor that at the next town, ten kilometers away, there would be Red Cross, coffee, and donuts. And we would believe this, because it was the only way we could walk another ten kilometers, you know. And that went on and on and on.

James: That was the carrot?

Paul: Yeah. People will believe anything if there's hope connected with it.

James: [unintelligible]

Paul: But then from Paris, I got out of the Paris hospital and then I was flown, I think, ah, I don't believe we stopped in England. I think we flew to Iceland, and then to Newfoundland, and then to New York. And I remember getting into the New York hospital and one of the fellas was walking around, one of the attendants, trying to collect GIs to go off on a, kind of like a party; the very wealthy people of New York, I think, had gross guilt complexes and they wanted to entertain the GIs coming back. And, so, um, even though I was afraid I would suddenly erupt with diarrhea, I went. And, I remember, we went to a very wealthy person's home and here were all these elegant people sitting around asking questions about—and, of course, I looked like the *kiss of death*. [both laugh]

James: You weren't much fun at the party?

Paul: Yeah. But I made it through, and I got back, by golly.

James: How was the foot by then?

- Paul: It was still lousy. Ah, now, let's see. I've got to stop and think of when did they start—oh, I didn't start getting penicillin until I hit Chicago. Anyway, from New York I was flown to Chicago, and in Chicago I went to the Gardiner General Hospital, which was a hotel refurbished for a military hospital. And I got in there, and, um, they immediately started sticking me with, every three hours, with penicillin; I was like a pincushion. [laughs] But then I remember, interestingly enough, that all of the doctors and so forth looked at my foot. And they decided, one of them decided that I should have a wet dressing on it, so I had this wet dressing and a bag over it. Well, then I recall, somebody else came in and said, "No, that shouldn't be a wet dressing, that should be a dry dressing." And each person that came in had a different idea, so they went through three or four different routines there. But I was starting to improve then. Although my family came down and saw me just a day or two after I got there, and I never knew about it, but on the way home my Dad told the rest of the family that it didn't appear that I was gonna live, I was that bad looking, [laughs] and, um, so he was trying to warn them. But it never occurred to me that I wasn't gonna live. [laughs]
- James: I'm sure that you weren't gonna die, but you might have lost your foot, that's the thing.
- Paul: That's right, yeah. But I did begin to improve in that hospital there and I ate everything I could get my hands on. I remember the nurses would bring in a pint of cream; down the hatch she'd go. They'd bring in a stick of butter, down the hatch it'd go. And then I'd want somebody to go down and get me a malted milk, down the hatch. And I did nothing but eat high-fat foods. And I remember a friend of mine who was in the Navy at the time, a Navy peer, came in to see me, and he said many, many years later that he gained something like ten or fifteen pounds just coming to visit me, because all I ever did was eat and he ate, too. But I did improve and I did begin to gain weight, and then they looked at the burns that I had on my foot and decided I should go down to O'Reilly General Hospital in Missouri for a skin graft.
- James: I knew this was comin'. I used to do plastic surgery. [unintelligible]
- Paul: You did! Wow! Fantastic!
- James: That's why I've been waiting for this scenario.
- Paul: Oh, yeah. [laughs] Well, I got down there and my foot was beginning to heal fairly well, and I remember I was at the point where I'd get into the shower and wash it with soap and water. And there—
- James: How big an area did you have of burn? Can you describe that?



- Paul: You want to see it?
- James: No, not for the moment. [unintelligible] That's a third-degree burn you had there?
- Paul: Yeah.
- James: Okay.
- Paul: Um, so then came the decision—of course, down there, and you were very familiar with this, the horrible cases of burns, ya know, that you see from the war. I saw people with, ah, their arm stuck to their head and their legs crossed, getting, ah, graft or whatever it was.
- James: Right, a full [unintelligible]
- Paul: And I—
- James: I did that [unintelligible]
- Paul: No kidding? That's interesting. I'll be darned. Um, but I could just see myself with one foot stuck on a leg somewhere. And the wound was healing, but it was healing naturally with scar tissue, and it was just about healed completely over. And so I took the position that I didn't want to bother with any skin graft.
- James: Um hmm.
- Paul: I could still walk. Although, I did—when I walked, my left foot would slap; well, I think, it was because of lack of muscular development. But they did give me a thirty-day leave, during which time I got married. [laughs] And my wife and I were married; I was twenty and she was nineteen. And I remember, we went on a honeymoon up in—ah, what was the name of the place up there in northern Wisconsin? And at the beginning of the honeymoon, I could not catch her; she could still outrun me. By the end of the honeymoon I could catch her. Now whether or not that was me improving or whether it was her psychology on me, I'll never know. [laughs] But I did improve a lot. And, then, of course, I went back to O'Reilly and they decided it would be alright to give me a discharge, a medical discharge.
- James: They pronounced your foot well?
- Paul: Yeah, um hmm.
- James: It was all skin covered by this time?

- Paul: Yup, scar tissue, yup.
- James: Okay.
- Paul: And so I got out, I think it was about October of '45. And, then, of course, I wanted to start college, but it was right in the middle of the semester, so I had to wait until January to start college. So then I started in January and stayed in college for eight years. [laughs]
- James: Yeah. Okay, now, we'll stop there and pick up a few [unintelligible]. When you're at camp, prison camp, did you think about food?
- Paul: Well, that's all you thought about was food, you know, yeah.
- James: Did you ever sit down and with that little diary and write out menus?
- Paul: Ah, I think I mentioned food, and we would talk with the German guards about *Schokoladenkuchen*, chocolate cake. Of course, they were hungry for different things.
- James: Of the many other people I've talked to, they used to sit around and make up menus, when I get home, you know.
- Paul: Oh yeah, yeah.
- James: Sometimes they would write out whole menus. And did you keep in contact with any of your mates?
- Paul: Well, by the time I got into prisoner of war camp, we were so disorganized, there was nobody there that had been with the original outfit.
- James: When you were working in Leipzig at the factory, there was nobody there who was in the 106<sup>th</sup>?
- Paul: No, I don't remember anybody.
- James: You were completely separated?
- Paul: Yup, yup.
- James: On the march you got separated, because you started out on the march together? How did you get separated?

- Paul: Um, I think filing out, naturally, there's a lot of separation, and then the Germans would place you in groups and you had no control over where you went.
- James: Of course not.
- Paul: And, ah, no, I really didn't have any close friends at all. But, oddly enough, it never bothered me. Now I know it would bother some people, but I guess I'm a loner.
- James: So you didn't keep in contact with any—you presently have no contact with any buddies?
- Paul: No. Of course, I go to the POW meetings occasionally.
- James: Yeah, a group of strangers.
- Paul: A lot of them are from the 106<sup>th</sup> Division.
- James: But, right, you didn't know them then.
- Paul: Yeah, yeah.
- James: Okay. Now, you took advantage of the GI Bill, of course?
- Paul: Yeah, actually, it was Public Law 16, I think, rather than the GI Bill, which paid a little more if you were injured.
- James: Oh, yeah, that's right; you were on a disability.
- Paul: Yeah.
- James: How much did that pay you?
- Paul: Well, I started out at fifty percent disability; but then after about a year I went back to the VA and they examined me, and of course by that time I was up to a reasonable weight.
- James: Um hmm.
- Paul: And so I ended up with ten percent, which persists to this day.
- James: I was going to say, that's permanent, I'm sure, isn't it?

- Paul: Well, I think so. I think they'd rather let ya go along with the ten percent than have you come in and find twenty other things wrong with ya. [both laugh] I have never used the VA medical facilities.
- James: Oh, you haven't?
- Paul: No, and I don't know why, really. I guess because I've always been amply endowed with good insurance and so forth.
- James: Certainly, certainly. So, the government did pay your way through college, your eight years of college. They paid all that?
- Paul: No, they'll just go four years.
- James: Yeah. They didn't pay for graduate?
- Paul: No, they can't pay for graduate work.
- James: They paid mine, they sent me to medical school.
- Paul: They did?
- James: Right.
- Paul: They did?
- James: [unintelligible]
- Paul: Is that right? Well, now, then, you took the first four years, too? **[End of Tape One – Side Two]**
- James: No, I did my undergraduate on my father. [laugh]
- Paul: Oh, well, that's the reason you got your graduate work paid for then.
- James: Oh, yeah. It was a matter of years. Wherever you plugged in, then it was set; wherever you start at, whatever level you got. Oh, yeah, if I'd a been an undergraduate, then I'd a had problems.
- Paul: Oh, yeah. I see. Yeah, yeah.
- James: But, yeah, that's where I spent most of World War II, was in medical school.
- Paul: Really?

James: Yeah.

Paul: Uh huh.

James: Of course, that cost me. When the Korean War started, I was then on my way to Korea within a month.

Paul: That was one of the ugliest wars, I think, we ever had, is the Korean one.

James: I thought I paid 'em back, with two more years of service.

Paul: I had a friend that was in the Navy in World War II, and he got out—he was on an aircraft carrier. He got out, and for some reason he owed the Navy some money, ninety dollars. He didn't have ninety dollars, and they said, "Well, we'll forget about it, if you'll enlist in the reserve." So he enlisted in the reserve. Along came the Korean War and he was right back in on that aircraft carrier. [laugh, then both laugh]

James: Bad news! Bad news! [both still laughing]

Paul: And I kid him about that incessantly. And then, he's a very conservative Norwegian, actually born in Norway.

James: So he had to go back into—

Paul: He was in two wars, yeah.

James: For the United States Navy?

Paul: United States Navy, aircraft carrier.

James: Where was he?

Paul: Well, he, ah—

James: We're getting off here.

**[End of Interview]**