

Ray T. Stapley
Veteran History Project
Interviewer: Stan Shakespeare
February 2009

INT: Okay, Ray. Go ahead.

VET: My name is Ray T. Stapley. That is R A Y T. S T A P L E Y. I was born and raised in Cedar City, Iron County, State of Utah. I am the fourth generation of Stapley's in the Cedar City Valley. My great-grandfather came here as one of the old pioneers and he planted the first alfalfa seed and wheat seed in Cedar Valley. My grandfather lived his life here with his wife, Sarah Adams, who was a daughter of John V. Adams and they had a huge family and my father was one of those boys. He was the third boy down the row in that family. My grandfather was a brother to Delbert L. Stapley, who was the Apostle of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and my grandfather was the Marshal in Cedar City, Utah, for a short period of time. My father and mother... my mother was born in Pinto, Utah – Lula Tullis. She is the daughter of David Wilson Tullis and their... he had a son that he named David Wilson Tullis. And my mother was raised in New Castle, Utah. She met my father and they came to Cedar City. They a... in my family with my mother and father, they was... I am the oldest child in that family, a boy. Then they had a girl, Carma Stapley Cross. Then they had a boy, William Stapley, who passed away when he was about fourteen months old. Then they had four other girls in the family, and I was born and raised here during the depression. ... Was real hard on my family of... providing for family needs, was a big task for my father and me. I done many, many thing to help out with the family.

When I became about seventeen-years-old, I was born on the 22nd of June, 1925, that makes me the age of about 83 ½ years old at this recording. When I was seventeen-years-old all of my friends were being drafted and everybody was going into the military because of World War II. I knew that they was a war going on in Europe and so all... they had the draft system going, and I was just about the only one left. So I talked to my mother about being able to go into the military. ... Took her a while but she signed the papers and I volunteered to go into the military. It was a... early in August at 1942 and I went to Fort Douglas, Utah. I was shipped from Fort Douglas, Utah to Camp Callan, California. That is between La Jolla and Del Mar, California, on the southern beaches and I took basic training there. Part way through I put a lieutenant, that was a commanding officer over me, I put him in the hospital for ten or twelve days, maybe more than that. But the Captain was real concerned about my health and welfare when the lieutenant got out of the service... or got out of the hospital and so he called me in, told me that he could not transfer me out of the company, but he knew that the lieutenant would be a big threat to my life if I was to stay in that company. That even he may challenge me while I was asleep. So he made the arrangements.

He promoted me to a corporal so he could transfer me. I left on the train and went to... I didn't know where we were going until I opened up the packet that he gave to me, and it said that I was going to El Paso, Texas, to Fort Bliss, at a place called Logan Heights. I arrived there and, with a lot of other non-commissioned officers waiting for assignments to take people through for training. A lot of activity was going on in that

base at that particular time and I was assigned to a company down at the cavalry horse stables. They had taken all the horses and cleaned out the stables and made them as barrack facilities for the people that were coming in for their training.

All the people that was in the outfit that I was assigned to was from the East Coast, New York, Pennsylvania, all down through the Carolinas, Georgia and myself and the first sergeant was the only one from west of the Mississippi River in my outfit. I was from “dog town” Cedar City, Utah, and I had not been out of the country, only maybe down to Vegas a couple of times, so I wasn’t well acquainted with the other parts of the world, where I was or what I was doing – I just went about the job that was assigned to me. I was helping to take care of the basic training for those people that had just came into the service. Some of them was having a hard struggle with the military being just out of the army. Us guys that was brand new to the military, they called us “citizen soldiers” and a...because we had to be trained in everything, and I had to learn fast of what I was told to do...the things that I had to do. But I got along just fine. I had a first class outfit. By the time I was finished I had several comments on...from superior officers, of how well the men was trained in what we were doing. We were trained...I was in the anti-aircraft. I was on the 90 mm. We had within our...I’ve forgotten...I can’t remember what outfit I was...what the number...what my numbers was when I was in the company that I was assigned to...I can’t remember the number or anything about that, but, anyway, when the basic training was finished we were put on a train and we went to the East Coast, Baltimore, Maryland, and we were there for a while – Fort Meade, Maryland. And then we boarded another train and we went to New York, New York and we were put on a ship, the Queen Elizabeth, that belonged to England, and I was to the understand...was told that that was the largest ship afloat at that particular time.

It took several days to load that ship, twenty-four hours a day, and finally the ship was pulled out of the dock area by a lot of tugs, and we sailed past the Statue of Liberty, and was on our way to Europe. We were on the water for about seven days and we was to the understand that we were going to England. But when we got close into England and they changed their mind and they, because of all the buzz bombs and the B2s, would be a big threat to that big ship, so we went up to Scotland. They docked it in Scotland and we got off the ship, got onto a train, went to Wales, England.

And we was training there, instructed about what we was supposed to be doing as far as our outfit was concerned in being involved into this war. We was ordered to get back on another train. We went from Wales, England down to Plymouth, England. And after a couple of days we loaded onto a ship. Instead of them having a ramp up to the ship we had to climb up a rope ladder that was thrown over the side of the ship and maybe a half-a-dozen men could climb up that rope ladder at a time. And we had all of our equipment, our backpacks, and our rifles, and everybody had a steel helmet on and we were ordered to fasten the steel helmet so it wouldn’t get lost. And in the process of climbing up that rope ladder one of our men, by the name of Thomas, missed his footing and fell into the water between the dock and the ship and the strap from his helmet broke his neck, when the concussion hit the water. So that was our first loss.

As we was preparing to get on the ship to go across the English Channel, they told us that we would be going to Normandy, France, which is the providence of that area, and that we would be going to Utah Beach. We got there and the ship stopped and they was so much activity going on at that particular time, it was raining a little bit, it was a

little bit overcast, but I had never seen so much activity on the water as there was that day. I landed on the beach of Utah Beach about five hours, six hours, after zero hour, so it was almost mid-day when I got onto the beach. And there was a shocking situation for me as a person, a soldier, a kid from Cedar City, Utah, to see what I saw. The things was really disturbing for me. I stepped off of the landing barge that had taken us from the ship to the shore and one of my friends that was right to the side of me took a direct hit from a heavy piece of gunfire right in the face and was killed immediately. And it was such a shock to me that I hit the ground about the same time he did. I passed out in a cold sweat. I...I live with that hard memory all the days of my life. Not only was he a good friend, but he was the first man that I ever seen killed. I'd seen animals killed before but I never in my life thought that I would be involved in a thing that I was involved in and called up to do that day, the 6th day of June, 1944. Just a kid. My class that I went to high school with graduated on the 27th of May, 1944. Ten days later on June the 6th, 1944, I hit the beach of Southern France, Utah Beach.

I would pass out and I would come to, and I would up-chuck and a tremendous amount of activity that was going around me. So many dead and wounded. People praying for God. People crying for their mothers. [Emotional]. People calling for the medics. And all the gunfire that was going on, the incoming fire, is gunfire from the enemy, I call incoming, incoming fire. The big, huge battleships that was sitting out in the bay area of that Utah Beach was firing their guns. And those projectiles that was coming over the top of our heads, from those big guns, the concussion of those heavy projectiles, I have never felt nor seen anything so tremendous as some of them large projectiles that was coming over our heads – maybe 100 feet over my head, I have no idea. But, I've talked to a lot of Navy men about those big guns, firing those big guns, and they told me that they were behind those guns and had never experienced the volume of those things when they went off out in front of them, and with the explosion to get that thick piece of metal out of those barrels, the concussion in the air, and it was terrific. For several times made the hair on the back of my neck stand up, I know.

But then the Air Force was coming in with their strafing and their bombing and I was told that they was about 4,000 watercraft involved in that invasion, that day. And with everything that was going on they wasn't any time, not one split-second, that there wasn't an explosion of some kind taking place around me. A couple of times I came to and thought I was going to be alright, but I was in kind of a cold sweat. I was so sick and so weak that I couldn't get on my feet. We were told that we were going to be "drafted," so to speak, into an infantry company, because the 29th Division, 3rd Army, which was under Patton, so many of them people had lost their lives there on the beach that they were taking everybody that was available and putting them into take that company or that army back to full strength or as strong as it could get. And so, my company and me was put into the 3rd Army, 29th Division. We found this out several days later, of what outfit we were with. It was my misfortune, when I got onto my feet, I was so dehydrated, so sick, so weak from passing out, it's a wonder I didn't die right there in the shocking...shock that I was in. My system was really overwhelmed with what I was going through. The shock of seeing and being involved with many, many lives taken.

And it was my misfortune, when I got on my feet, I hung my gas mask on a pole or a timber that was there on the beach and I walked off and left it. I was threatened to leave other things but I knew that I had to have stuff that I had to protect myself. I had a

cartridge belt full of ammunition. I had two cloth straps around my neck and shoulder and they had pouches in and they was full of M-1 ammunition, 30 caliber. And with all that weight that I was carrying... But I was a good sized kid at that time. I weighted about 192 pounds when I left England. I went through the war and when I got home and was discharged I weighed 141 pounds. I lost 50 pounds of body weight in what I went through in World War II.

Like I say it was my misfortune when I got on my feet, I came up onto the rise, off from the beach, and was face-to-face with a cement bunker. And that personnel from the German Army that was manning that bunker was responsible for taking many, many, many lives of American soldiers. They had a lot of heavy firepower. And they slaughtered and wounded thousands of soldiers on the beach at Normandy. And it took us a long time, they was about, close to 300 of us, I would estimate, that advanced into that bunker area. And it just happened to be that a couple of those guys had bazookas. And that firepower out of those bazookas could stop a tank. And they were lucky enough to get a couple of shots into that bunker through the narrow, slit windows where the German guns were pointing back at us. They was machine guns of all sizes – some 20 millimeters and a lot of small arm fire. They had trenches dug in the back of those places where they had plenty of ammunition and supplies for...to supply that bunker. We finally overcome that bunker. We lost a lot of people, but we overcome that bunker and we went inland into...the upper part off the beach was farmland, hedgerows, and what have you. And as we started out of that area, the Germans had left or was killed, we was ordered not to be on the roadways because of possibility of land mines. And so we stayed out into the fields and out into the hedgerows and worked our way into the little villages and farm homes and farmlands.

As we got a...they had several people there that had the metal detectors that was working the roads over and they were clearing to see that they was no obstacles in the way as far as land mines and stuff was concerned and cleared the roads so that the vehicles would be able to go over those roadways.

While we were in the pasture lands and the farmlands and stuff like this, if we seen a heard of livestock, whether it be sheep or cattle, we'd get them and we'd drive them in front of us to make sure that there was no landmines. We became combat wise. Right there on the beach of France, when we found out we were going to be infantry and that was going to be our job as defending the United States of America as a bunch of rooky infantryman, I was so dearly proud of those people that I had taken through basic training, back in California, that they had adapted to what was called upon them to do in such a short period of time.

As we went inland a ways, I had to take care of myself. I had to dump by bladder and dump by bowel. And being a bashful Utah Cedar City "Dog Town" kid, I didn't take pride in letting people see what I had to do in private. So I walked off about twenty-five or thirty yards from a group that I was with, and I came over a little rise and I thought that would be a good place. So I started...just got up to the top of the rise and a German soldier jumped up and he pointed his rifle right at my heart and he pulled the trigger on an empty barrel. I was so frightened, so afraid that I thought I was going to pass out again like I was on the beach. When I heard that empty gun, I pulled my gun up in a hurry and he threwed his gun on the ground and put his hands behind his head. I called for the group of guys and about four or six of them came over to where I was. We made

the man lay down and we frisked him because we didn't know whether they was other people around or if he had other means to protect himself. And it turned out to be that he didn't. Come to find out, in the process, he was wounded real heavy in one leg and, I guess his...he couldn't keep up with his outfit and they just went off and left him but he was bleeding quite heavily. He'd tied a tourniquet around his leg to stop the bleeding, because it was still there when we made him lay down. I never examined him to see how badly wounded he was. But he became my first prisoner of war among many, many, many others that I was involved with, to take prisoner of the enemy> He was the first.

I still have haunting moments about that, because God was there. He intervened in what happened right there. That man was taken prisoner. I'm sure that they took care of his wounds. And he probably made it through the war as a German prisoner of war. God saved him. First, God saved me. Because of misfire or empty barrel, out of ammunition, I don't know what it was. And God saved him, because I never killed him. He went as a prisoner of war.

I came real aware, from that day on, all through the war, what I was up against; what I was doing; and the people that were around me. Whether it be friends or enemies. I was well aware of what was going on around me and it saved me in many, many aspects of that war.

As we went on out through a couple of little villages there, I did not know, from one minute to the next, where I was or where I was going to go. We had a few of good sized streams of water to cross. And we made our way up into some of the little villages. And the civilians had taken some of the women civilians that was associated with the Germans, prior to us getting there, they knew them – they knew their activity with the German soldiers. So they would take them and shave their heads bare – cut all their hair off so they could be identified. And the children would poke sticks at them.

But then, some of the other times with the women – seeing as I'm talking about the French women – the Germans had been there a long time and a lot of the French women had been friends with these German soldiers. Some, I understand had even married some of the soldiers, had children by them. And we encountered, on a couple of occasions, where those women were either with their boy friends or with the husband, whatever it may be, and some of them women could pick up arms against us. And some of those women were vicious – they were vicious. The first woman I had to eliminate [emotional] because she was a threat to me, she was threatening my life, it was really difficult for me to take a life of a woman. That is the troubles with war. War has no sympathy on anybody.

We...I don't know how far it is from the Utah Beach to Saint-Lo, France, but Saint-Lo was a pretty good sized city. And it was, they told me, that it was the German headquarters for the southern part of France – for that area. And as we got there we had very, very strong resistance from the enemy. And they would pull us back, sometimes even up to a half a mile and our air force would come in and bomb and strafe that city. I am going to give a guess-estimate of about what size a city that was when I saw it. I would say it was about the size of Provo, Utah.

When we finally got up and started through the city, they was only maybe ten or twelve buildings that was standing, that was mostly in tact, ready to fall down. But, it was there. As we went the city, on the upper side and down through the west end, I think it is, of the city, there is a river that goes down a river valley. And the banks from the

city down to the river was quite high. And as we went around that area to make sure that the enemy was out of that part of the world, the people had dug caves back into that...in the river bank and some of those caves had been there for a long time, I could tell, and some of them were pretty good sized. Some of them were just freshly dug because I could tell by the soil. But a large majority of the civilian population, from that city, was in those caves, down along that river bank.

As we went northbound from there up through France, we had the Germans on the run and us being infantrymen we could not keep up with the retreat of those Germans. They was several days that I never saw the enemy – but the threat was always there. The threat never went away. I saw a lot of dead. I saw a lot of wounded German soldiers.

So, in the process, of going up through France, we rode on anything that was available that we could ride on – weapon carriers, half-tracks, jeeps. They had a few trucks that they used as supply trucks that we rode on at times, and tanks. I rode on a lot of tanks up through that part of the world and I did not get in to Paris, France. I was on the outskirts of Paris, France. We went up through that part of the country and we were instructed by the commanders out of the 3rd Army that we wasn't to molest the churches and the sacred places and the statues and things that the people had build for their pleasure. We was instructed that we wasn't to harm those, just to be harming them. So when we went past Paris, France we went through a city that was maybe almost as big as Saint-Lo, maybe not quite that big, but it was in tact. It was almost a door to door thing as we went through that city, and we had a lot of resistance from the enemy. And we lost quite a few people.

We were with another outfit that had a different kind of insignia on their shoulder patch and I was told that it was the 101 combat engineers and so that's what I thought – that we were intermingled with those people – and they were, they were better equipped than we were and they was a good bunch of guys. But it's only been just lately that I found out that, by looking by a couple of history books and what have you, and recognizing that insignia, I found out what that soldier patch was. We were with the 101 airborne. Them guys jumped out of the airplanes on parachutes in the invasion. And I didn't know this all the time that I was involved with these people. They were army; we were army.

As we got past Reims, France and started up through Belgium the remaining part of my original company became very, very close. We were like brothers. We watched over one another. We took care of one another and I have some very, very dear friends that we'd be protectors for one another. They watched my back and I watched them.

One of those guys that became my dearest friend was from Erie, Pennsylvania. His name was David Wenzel. As we was going up through that part of the county, we crossed the Reine River and at a distance of maybe 100, 150 yards I saw general Patton. He came there and the pontoon bridge that they had build or was building, him and a group of officers went out on to that, walked out on it and they inspected that pontoon bridge on the Reine River. And that was the first and only time I ever saw George Patton.

We crossed the Reine River and that river is good sized river. It flows northbound through that part of the country and dumps into the ocean in the Netherlands someplace. But we got into there and we went through several towns that was a lot of resistance. It was like door to door. It was a lot of firepower. And we came into a little

town, they said we were in Germany or next to it, but the name of the town was Wenzel. My friend, David Wenzel, he wanted to call his mother – tell his mother he was in Wenzel. Right there on those river areas was tremendous activity from the enemy where they was having problems retreating. They would stop and it was, a lot of places was fierce battles. A lot of lives taken.

As we went up through the [interrupted, female voice, “Ray, tell them about...”]...as we went up through the area in one place, in one town...like I say, I never knew where I was...but we came into really heavy, heavy resistance from the enemy. And it took us several days in order to advance but the...they would take the civilians and push the civilians out into the street to draw firepower while they were doing something else, to save themselves.

In some of the cities, like in Reins, France...I want to go back to Reins for just a little bit and tell you of a thing that I saw that has haunted me. The Germans would do anything to slow us down. They was places where they was out of their territory, if they had the means they would blow up buildings to be obstacles for us to bring the equipment through and these type things. They would be signs painted on the walls of some of the buildings that if you pass here you’ll die. All the way up through that area was, they must have had people that could speak and write the English language so they would threaten us with big signs painted with black paint on the walls of the buildings, “you pass here an you’re going to die.”

I’ve seen civilians with ropes tied around their neck, their hands tied behind their back, and the Germans would hang them people in the streets, over street signs or any place that they could put them. I saw they had through a couple of old gentlemen out of the window on a second story building [emotional] and when their bodies hit the end of that rope, their heads were laying in one place and their bodies were laying in another, because the ropes would cut there heads off. And big signs: “You pass here and this is what’s going to happen to you.” They used all kinds of means to slow us down.

I want to get back up to that place where the Germans gave us such a bad time and I didn’t know why for about two or three days, why their resistance was so great. Come to find out, part of our outfit was on the north side of the city and they had gotten to the river...I don’t know what river it is or what river it was... but the river run down to the edge of the city where we was and I did not know the river was there. It was beyond my viewpoint, but those Germans had got backed up to that river and they couldn’t cross the river because all the bridges had been blown up and they were trapped in that area between the group of our men that was to the north of the city up against the river and that 101 bunch of guys were there with us when we hit that stronghold where them Germans were backed up against the building. My good friend, David Wenzel, was across the street from me and he had a viewpoint from where he was that he could see the next street over. And he yelled at me to come over where he was. He was a Pennsylvania boy. He was a Jewish boy and he had a language of his own: “Hey, Stapley, you’ns come on over here. Hey, Stapley, you’ns come on over here!” So I went over there where he was and looked down on the street on beyond there, and there the German soldier were walking down that street about four or five abreast. They had thrown down their weapons and their hands were behind their heads and they were walking four and five abreast down that street and became prisoners of war. They had run out of supplies, any means of livable things that they could, their food. So I walked

down there, a bunch of us, to see where they had been and they had slaughtered a lot of civilian people and quite a few German soldiers were dead there. And as we went around the corner and down another little street, there was the river. That was why resistance was so heavy. We had them trapped in that part of the city and they couldn't get out and they became, a lot of them, I would say close to 300, in that particular place became prisoners of war.

When we would advance up to the Germans, we could see that they were in dire need of supplies and stuff that they was in a hurry to get out of there and a lot of their equipment was pulled by horses, cows, whatever they would get to pull their equipment. I've seen tanks and half-tracks, weapon carriers, that was destroyed by the Germans because they run out of fuel and they didn't want us to pour gas into them and use them, so they would destroy them themselves, and a lot of the dead horses, great big beautiful horses. Here I am a farm boy from Dry Gulch, Cedar City, Utah and when I saw some of those great big, beautiful Belgian horses I was impressed of those animals. They was the most biggest and beautiful animals and a lot of them lay dead. And them horses, some of them had been together, I guess, since they were colts because I saw a team of horses go down the road that wasn't even hooked to nothing and they was still in the harness and they was still in together, running side by side, down the road, in [unison], it was breathtaking to me. I was glad those horses was getting out of there – the big horses and animals that I saw dead along side of the roads, along with some of the civilians, a lot a German soldiers, was laying amongst the horses, cattle.

I'm going to stop right now for a few minutes....

Ok...we're going to continue on with military experience. A few things I want to tell you about.

The United States of America made invasion money for the military as we went over seas, and someway, somehow, this got home with me. This here [holding a document] is invasion money. This is a two Franc note. It is made by the United States of America and we call it "invasion money" and it comes in different denominations. This one here happens to be a two Franc note and this is what we were paid in, in France.

I want to go back a little bit more. I want to tell you a little bit about my, my experiences in basic training. We'll forget about the European war for just a little bit. And when I got into the army and I was going through basic training, I had quite a bit of trouble because I was left-handed in a lot of things, right handed in a lot of things. I done many things with my left hand. So when I got into the military and I was having to do [canes?] workout on the parade ground and stuff, I couldn't remember my left hand. So this one day I picked up a rock and I held it my left hand so that I could remember that that was in my left hand so I could do the military maneuvers without the problem of having to look down to see which was left and right.

Anyway, while we were in training, we done the majority of our training down on the beach, sandy beach, next to the ocean. I could tell you this here was between Del Mar and La Jolla, California. It was all open ground and they would double time us, which is running, trotting, from our barracks all the way down to the beach area. And we would have to go through all kinds of combat instructions: man-to-man, bayonet practice, and all this stuff that they was teaching us. We had a lieutenant in the company that, he was a vicious man at times, especially with the bigger men that was there, that

had just been off from office work right into the military. They... some of them was fat and sloppy and not used to work and some of them would even pass out as we was jogging down the road, they would get fatigued and they would just collapse off to the side. And he would make great fun of them, calling them civilian soldiers and all this stuff. And when we got down to the beach area for hand-to-hand, he would maul the big guys. He had done this for a couple of years, I guess, and he was good at what he did but everybody that I talked to hated his guts. He would, he would maul the big guys, bigger than him, because he had the knowledge to do so. He was good at hand-to-hand and he hurt several of them real bad. And he would, he had a pick-up, or not a pick-up but a Jeep, loaded with boxing gloves and all of them was for the right hand. And he would have us get a boxing glove on, and take us out, and everybody would be in a group and we would all put our hands up to one another like this and he would blow his whistle and everybody started to pounding on everybody else. And I pounded on a few and got a couple of good licks myself one day. So from that day on, when that whistle blew, I just hit the dirt. I just jumped onto the sand and I just laid there. I got stepped on several on several times but it was better than being hit in the face.

I didn't like the way the man was instructing us. And when it came to bayonet practice to defend our self with rifles, they have a bunch of wooden rifles that had little dummy bayonets on the end about like this that was bumped off on the ends so they wouldn't penetrate the skin. And he would teach us bayonet practice, and he would call on a man and he would give him one of those dummy rifles, wooden rifles, and he take one and he would maul the heck out of those guys.

I watched him for a long time – every move that he made, everything, and how he acted because he done the same thing over and over everyday, day in and day out, and I got to notice his maneuvering. So this one particular day, we were down there, and he let us take our shirts off. And we was sitting on the sandy beach watching these demonstrations a couple of times with the guys with these rifles. And so he yelled for a volunteer. I jumped up. I had my shirt off and I had my big, heavy army boots on and I faced off with this man and he made a couple of passes at me. I made a couple at him. Then I made the maneuver that I knew where he was he was going to be at the exact movement that I made this maneuver. I made this maneuver and when he made his maneuver, my foot came right up in his crotch. My heavy boot caught him right in his testicles and he went down screaming. I mean, he was moaning and screaming his head off, laying there in the sand. In about ten minutes they brought a vehicle over and loaded him in the vehicle and took him to the hospital. One of the sergeants run us back up to the barracks and I was at the barracks for a couple of days and somebody told me that they had heard that they was going to have to castrate this lieutenant because of the injuries that he received from my boot.

The next day the company commander called me into his office, told me that this lieutenant, he was sure, was going to get even with me one way or another, even maybe when I was asleep, when he got out of the hospital. And he says, “And I don't want this great big trouble on my hands, seeing I'm in charge of every personnel in this company.” He says, “I don't know what I'm going to do about it but I'm going to talk to my superiors and we're going to come up with something.” So a day or so later, he called me in. He dismissed everybody out of the office and him and I was the only one in the office. And he says, “I'm going to tell you something and if you tell anybody that I said

this, I'll deny it." But he says, "I personally, right now, want to thank you for what you did to that lieutenant." He says, "I've have disliked the man since he came here and he said...."

[Interview tape ends.]

[Some chatter accompanying the changing of the tape]

INT: Okay. Go a head.

VET: Okay. This is tape number two of Ray T. Stapley, Cedar City, Utah, experience in World War II, and we'll continue on from tape one.

I was telling you about my experiences in basic training in California, about the lieutenant that I kicked in the crotch. The captain had called me in and told me that he was having to ship me out of the company but he couldn't ship me out as a private. That he had to make me a noncommissioned officer in order to be transferred. So he made all the arrangement, made all the paperwork, and instructed one of the orderlies to help me. We got all of my equipment and my clothing, and loaded it into the duffle bag and that orderly drove the jeep and took me to the railroad station. I boarded the train, and with his instructions, that he told me, I wasn't to open it 'til I had been on the way on the train at least ten minutes. Well, I opened the instructions and it told me that I was going to El Paso, Texas, which was Fort Bliss, Texas. I was going to be stationed in a place called Logan Heights. I arrived there. I found where I was supposed to be housed and got my stuff organized and then I found out, the next day, that that was a holding place for noncommissioned officers so that they could be assigned to different places to take the draftees and volunteers through the military – giving them basic training.

And after I had been there for ten days to two weeks, I was shipped into an area of Fort Bliss where the cavalry was at one time, maybe during the Civil War, or whatever. But it was 'dobe brick stables where they stabled their horses for the cavalry. They had cleaned it all out, sanitized it, and made it livable for personnel. And they had it all ready and we moved in, as far as noncommissioned officers were concerned. And then as a few days passed by, we had personnel come from different parts of the county, from the East Coast, and we started organizing the company and make it a place where these people would be trained in a military manner.

When I started out as a platoon leader in charge of men, I had the same problem as I always did because I was left handed, right handed. And so I instructed them to over to a flower bed, around the barrack, and they picked themselves out a rock. We fell back in, and I instructed them in a military manner that this was to be placed in their left hand, that they would be able to tell their left from their right. And with the efforts of that, we became a good organization. I took the project on as a drill master and I instructed them in the maneuvers of military on the parade ground. And we got along really well. I trained them well. I got a couple of good compliments from a couple a commissioned officers. Captains stopped me, told me that I had a sharp looking outfit. And I was proud of that I, I adapted to the military in that exercise of drilling men, instructing men, and we became a good outfit.

We went maneuvers with 90mm guns out into the white sands of New Mexico, and we were out there for maybe three weeks or better, and we trained on those 90mm

guns. A 90mm is a anti-tank and anti-aircraft, and it would shoot a projectile which was about nine- to ten pounds and some of them had explosives inside to where, if they were shoot at aircraft, it would be timed and when the fuse ignited the inside of the powder on the projectile, it would blow it to pieces and that shrapnel would sail in all directions. And this is what I was trained on.

When we came back off of maneuvers, it wasn't too much longer after that, that we was instructed: Get ready to move away from this camp. We went down, boarded the train and we went to Baltimore, Maryland – Ford Meade Maryland. And we was there for a while, got new clothing, got fully equipped. But we didn't have our guns with us. We didn't have the big 90mm's. I thought maybe they was going to be shipped in another way.

So anyway, we was transported from Baltimore, Maryland to New York City by train. We got off the train. We boarded the ship, *Queen Elizabeth*, and they was many, many personnel on that ship. It took days, day and night for personnel, supplies, fuel, all the material that it took to run that ship and the main deck of that ship was reserved for women. The women of the military occupied the main [thinks for word] place on that ship – the main deck.

As we crossed the ocean and got a little bit of movement on the ship many, many, many people was deathly sick on that ship because it would roll to one side, it would come back up and right itself, then it would roll the other way, stay there for a while then roll back to the center. And that motion of that ship had many, many sick people. A lot of them feeding the fish over the side. I seen people that was so deathly sick that they strapped them on a stretcher and had a place for their feet so when they stood up they would be standing on a platform on these stretchers. And they blindfolded these people and they hung them on the open deck, off from the main deck was an open deck, and the hung them by the ceiling, standing up, where they could feel no motion, and they could see no motion. And that's the way that the biggest part of those really, really sick people was transported across the waters.

We was told we were going to England. When we got almost to England they told us that they was two much threat on the ship to go into England because of the buzz bombs, and the B-2's, and the bombings of the Germans and so we were going to go to Scotland. We went to Scotland and we got off the ship, got onto a train and was transported to Wales, England. We stayed in Wales, England for some time and about the time we got ready to leave, we was headed on the train to Plymouth, England. As we got to...

Did I tell about this before?

FEMALE VOICE: You've told this.

INT: This part you've told.

FEMALE VOICE: Yeah, you've told us about this.

VET: I didn't know whether I'd told you about this or not but I...

Anyway, we got to the invasion part of Normandy, France, Utah Beach, and...

INT: I think you were going to tell now about the Polish women. That they had in those concentration camps.

FEMALE VOICE: You were going to tell about being wounded.

VET: I told you about my experience on the beach and about the invasion, about my first prisoner, and now I want to go back up into...the war where we were. As we advanced into one area of a city, I, like I say, I did not know where I was of any given time...what the cities were. But we came into a place where women were held prisoners of war. I was told that they was roughly 2,000 women that was prisoners of war, that was under the command of the German army. That they were in a factory, run by these women, assembling ammunition, assembling all kinds of rifles and machine guns and they had been there for a long time in this factory guarded by the German soldiers, doing that work. When we got there and I liberated those women they were so thankful, so grateful, for to be free that they were hugging and kissing and showing their gratitude to us American soldiers.

FEMALE VOICE: They were starved.

VET: I felt so sorry for those women that I could not allow one them to touch me. They was so filthy dirty. They had neglected themselves, their bodies and everything. They lived outside. They were living mostly outside when I was there in the fall of the year. They cooked outside. They done their laundry outside. They were an awful looking bunch of people.

FEMALE VOICE: Stop.

VET: Some of them were pregnant. Some of them had two or three children and they had been the victims of the Germans for a long time. The Germans had occupied Poland several years before we got there and they had mistreated these Polish women to no end. I was deeply, deeply sorry for these women.

We moved on from there and caught a lot of resistance from the enemy in different places. They would fortify bridges and had them so that they could blow up the bridges when Americans started across or whatever, but in places where they thought that they had the advantage over us they would fortify these particular areas and we had difficulty in many, many occasions where, if it hadn't a been for help from that 101 Army, it would have been very difficult for us.

As we advanced on up it became winter-time. Bitter, bitter cold and we had a struggle with the enemy and the cold. And I don't know, after we was there for quite some time and the bitter winter set in, with a lot of snow, we were issued rubber boots with the metal clamps on them to go over our shoes, and heavy overcoats. And it got bitter cold and more cold. I suffered about as much from the cold as I did from the enemy. We would have to dig-in, in places, to protect ourselves from the enemy when they held up next to their homeland. And we would have to huddle together in these holes and put a shelter half over us to shelter us from the snow. And we found that if there was two or three or four or five of us in there then the body heat from one another

helped keep us a little bit warm. They was many, many places where, if we was to build a fire, it drew fire and the smoke and stuff would lay in a haze type situation because it was hazy and cloudy and the smoke would linger and as soon as they saw the smoke, they hit us, smoke would draw fire and the same way with us. We could tell where the Germans were if they built a fire. When we were in, more or less, open country or wooded, timber country, it didn't make any difference.

When the war was almost over, the Germans turned around and came back, full force. And our company was just about in the middle of their great thrust southbound, to get back into, I don't know where their intentions were or where their goal was. I know that they were coming with everything that they had. They were in full force and it took us quite some time, with the body of the 101s and our companies, it took a long time for that, us to stop that military thrust of enemies coming towards us. I never knew for a long, long time afterwards that the name of that thrust that came down upon us from the enemy was called the Belgian Bulge. We cut them off. Cut their supply line. Stopped their thrust from going any deeper into the territory that we had just captured and conquered. They was taking over that part of the county and they were using all kinds of means that was possible to do that.

Like I said, I don't know what was the biggest threat: The cold or the enemy. They came and issued us...we was able to get some new coats. And the new coats were waterproof on the outside. They had the fur lining on the inside like a...I don't know what you would call it, looked like dog hair, whatever, animal hair, maybe a inch, half inch...so thick and they were so warm. So wonderful.

In about two- to three weeks time, the medical corps come and took them away from us. It was a great loss to get rid of those warm coats. But the reason for it was is, when people would get hit through those coats and it would penetrate the body, it would cause an infection because it would pack that fur stuff inside the body and they could not get rid of the infection.

The only thing that we had, at that particular time, was sulfur. That old sulfur packs...they gave us a lot of sulfur packs that was about two inches square, a quarter of an inch thick, with the sulfur powder inside and you would tear that open and smear it on the open wounds. And I can look back now and see the great advancement that has been made in taking care of these kind of wounds and things, but back then, all we had was sulfur packs.

I have had the sulfur packs used on me. When we were in a situation where it was real tight, the enemy had established a advantage over us because they had gotten into higher ground and higher buildings, two stories up. And someone from somewhere, maybe the 101 boys who was better equipped than us, came up with a flame thrower and he, they was enemy up on the second floor of this big build and they was giving us a real bad time. And that guy burst a flame of that material up into that part of the building and it wiped all them guys out that was on the inside, the enemy. And through a great burst of gunfire, this guy was killed. And I could see the great good that that piece of equipment was doing. I had never seen one before in my life – wasn't experienced with it. I run over and I took it from that particular spot to another spot where the resistance was about as bad and I gave it a big burst into that building and it stopped all the incoming fire from the enemy. And I moved a little bit, I gave it another...was going to give it another burst, and I had the thing between my legs and the cotton picker blew up.

And it threw me about twenty- or thirty feet and caused all kinds of problems with me. I wound up in a tent hospital somewhere, I don't know where. And they had some square tents that they were using for hospital areas. And I was there for about eight or ten days and this is what they was using on me, was this sulfur out of the sulfur packs. And some of those sulfur packs were pretty big incase somebody had a real severe body injury they could stuff these big sulfur packs and temporarily stop the bleeding until they could get into a better position to take care of the wounded.

When we got up to...they said we were in Germany, we had gone northbound up along a river and we had got the Germans stopped from this big force and effort that they put on. We had stopped them and we had taken care of the people that was cut off and the rest of the people that went southbound. I imagine that they would go until they run out of supply and ammuniton because they did not have a supply line beyond us. And we held that line and eventually pushed the Germans back and they retreated back into their own territory, like I say with all kinds of animals pulling their guns and equipment.

When we got to...into Germany they had big iron rods that was crossed like this stuck up in the grounds, on all the roadways, and had big, high net fences. And that was their effort to stop our course. They had a name for that place where we met the Russians. And the Germans was surrendering to us because they did not want to surrender to the Russians, so they surrendered by the hundreds to us. And they had, back of us they had companies that was taking care of the prisoners and supposedly they were supposed to be furnishing us in our needs as a supply line. And some of those people that was bringing the supplies in would get up next to where they was a threat of gunfire from the enemy, they would just drop the tailgates on their trucks and they would put them in reverse and get up a high speed, slam on the breaks, and the material would just spill out on the ground and we would have to go pick this up and spread it out amongst our people. And we were, we were out of supplies quite a bit at that particular time when we was having so much trouble with the enemy.

Went into one little village and a civilian woman, I imagine she was about middle aged, came out onto the street and faced me and handed me three chicken eggs. I took those eggs from her and that afternoon or the next day, or something, I found enough water and I put it in my helmet and I boiled those three eggs. And I sat there eating those eggs, I thought about that dear woman. I'll bet that woman handed me all she had. They were so destitute. They had nothing. The Germans had taken everything that they could possibly take from the civilians. They took their animals, they done everything that they could so that they could supply themselves and left the civilians without anything.

As I ate those three eggs I was sorry I was eating them. I knew for a fact that that woman gave me all she had. And that's the way they showed their gratitude, was some of them would hand the soldiers a bouquet of flowers. Hugs and kisses.

Some places in those cities it was difficult to bypass because the civilian population was around us so much. But they was a big help. Some of them civilians was a great help because they would tell us where the enemy was, approximately how many there was. We had two men in our outfit that could speak perfect French, and they would tell us where the Germans was, which direction they was headed in, and about how many and what they had in the line armor. Whether they was manned with machine guns or 88s, whatever. So some of them was a big help to us.

One place that we went into, a dozen of us was walking up the street, and about eight old gentlemen was sitting on the sidewalk, around a table, playing cards. I thought that was really something. A couple of them jumped up and run out to us; told us that the German's had left about two hours ago. They had gone on their way. And there these old gentlemen was out there on the sidewalk table playing cards. I guess they done this every day and that war never broke up their routine of what their, they were getting happiness from.

So it all depends on where you was. Some of the European countries was, had coal mines and they would go straight down to dig out the coal and bring the material up on elevators. And they would bring up the waste along with the coal because I was told, by one guy, that the material that they left down in those mines was a threat to gather up gasses and explode underground. So they brought out everything. The people, the civilians would go around these stockpiles. Some of them was like forty and fifty feet high, where they dumped great, big piles of that waste overburden on top of the ground. And the civilians would go around these big stockpiles and get up all the kinds of rocks that would burn and they would use them for fuel. They were desperate for, to keep warm, find something to eat. Some of the civilians that was rich, that still had automobiles, but they had no fuel. So they would convert these automobiles over to be able to run by steam. I don't know how they did this, but standing on the rear bumper on platforms may be a 20- or 30 gallon water container would be standing straight up in the air above the car on the back bumper and I've seen a couple of them where the guy would jump out and shake the cinders and stuff from the fire that was underneath the tank to heat the water to make steam and they would put a few pieces of fuel in those burners and when the water got hot and turned to steam, down the road they'd go. It was, it was funny to see that.

They was a horse drawn carriage came down the road towards us and a lot people were walking in back of them and a deceased person was in that four-wheeled ambulance pulled by four horses going down the road and as they passed me I stopped and stood at attention and I saluted that carriage until it passed by. And an older gentleman came out of that line and run across the street, took a hold of hand, bent down on one knee and kissed my hand. [Emotional].

We were treated well by some, angered by others because of the destruction of their homes and their villages. But it became necessary, at times, to do these things to liberate the enemy of out some of those communities that they was using these homes and buildings for their strongholds. And some of the civilians would be bitter because you had destroyed their business or you had destroyed their home. But the other people, on the other, hand would turn around and kiss your feet or your hands, to be thankful for being liberated out of the Germans.

After we...Maginot line, that is where the fence was and the barricades and this stuff was called the Maginot line if is remember it, but I didn't know it at the time...some of the Russians were really, really bad off. You could tell that they had starved. That they had about froze to death and they was, were a lot worse off than we were. But they were happy to see us after they had identified us as comrades in arms.

We were eating rations out of cardboard boxes, K-rations and C-rations, out of cardboard boxes and it...they had several things in them that I liked, somethings that I didn't like and I would trade my ration of cigarettes off to different people but when we

got into the cold, bitter cold I found out by lighting one of those cigarettes and inhaling that smoke that it warmed my body up a little bit. You could tell how cold it was if one lousy cigarette was helping out by warming my body, and I got hooked on them. So I done about as much smoking as anybody else. But then when I got home I gave up the habit by force, by force. That beautiful young girl told me she would have none to do with me if I smoked cigarettes.

So after a while, the war was about over and Roosevelt had died. They moved us back to a city in Belgium called, Chalois. Chalois, Belgium. And down the road a ways out of that big city was a little village called Tamines. And outside of this Tamines village is a huge military cemetery – American. And a lot of soldiers is buried there. They told me they was a big cemetery in Luxemburg, a military. So when I, when we was in Chalois, the company took over an area where the Catholic priests was going to school and it was a real nice place. It had running water. It had outside toilets and the type that you would straddle to relieve yourself. It wasn't a commode like we have today, just a place to put your feet and squat over the hold and that was the toilet facility but it was paradise to me.

They sent me on dispatch service to a town called Mons, Belgium, which was about fifty- sixty miles away from my company and they was having problems over there. The Blacks were selling all the stuff that was in the stockpiles to the civilians so they sent us over there to stop that black market, whatever you want to call it. And we had some pretty heavy conflict with the Blacks before they stopped their trade program going on.

And I was told that my very, very best friend had been shot. So I jumped into a Jeep and I came back into the company and I found out what had happened and where he was. He came out of a building in that Catholic school pavilion and he had found out that the war ended that day and he was happy and celebrating and he came out of the door and let out a great big scream and threw his helmet in the air and one of the guys that was standing a ways away whirled around and shot him in the stomach – one of our own. I don't know who it was that shot him. I don't care. I suffered for this guy. It took him three days to die. They couldn't save his life and he died. His name was Tony [maybe Tommy] Buck and it was a big loss to me because at one time we were side-by-side when he came all the way through the war with me. We watched over one another and I was deeply saddened by his loss, the day the war ended, by one of our own.

A day or two later they came and told me that the lieutenant wanted to see me. I went into the office and the sergeant jumped up. I told him that I was there to report to the company commander and he threw his hat on the desk or on the table where he was and he says, "Where in the name of Hell in this war have you been?"

I said, "You know damn well where I've been."

He says, "Yea, but not really."

I says, "What's going on?"

And he says, "The old man will tell you."

So I walked in where the lieutenant was. I saluted him. He told me to stand at ease and he told me I was going home. He says me and two other guys out of the outfit was going home. I was thrilled. I wanted to get away from that flipping war as far as I could possibly get. He said he was going to call an assembly and he would make the final announcement. So the next day he called everybody together out on this little

opening that was outside of the school and he started his spiel about him not getting a field commission. He was still a lieutenant and he was bitter about this, that he run a company and they never promoted him and he went on and on about the accomplishments that we had did as a company. But I don't think that while he was standing there jabbering his head off about the things that we had done and the greatness that we had become as a company, I don't think that he was talking to one-third of the people that left El Paso, Texas, as a full company of men. I don't thing there was a third of the originals that that company commander was talking to that day.

He called the three of us to the head of the unit, handed us, each one, some papers, and said that we would get instructions from our first sergeant where we was to go and what we was to do. So the first, when he dismissed us, thanked us, first sergeant got the three of us, took us across the road into another building and they signed the papers and got everything all straightened out, ready to go, and a truck pulled up and the sergeant says, "Get on the truck."

I was, "Wait a minute. I've got all my gear, all my stuff, at the office, at the headquarters. I need to get that stuff."

He knew exactly what I had. I had German pistols. I had a few gold chains. I had a lot of good souvenirs that I wanted to bring home and that son of a gun knew that, and he says, "Listen soldier, you either get on the truck and go or you stay here with the company and you will be a member of the company. Make up your mind. The truck is leaving." He got away with all my good stuff. I got on the truck and I left.

When I got onto the ship and we started home, I got to thinking about where I had been in that war, what I had done. In your wildest dream, you would not know what my eyes have seen, what my ears have heard, where my feet stood, and what my hands have touched, in the efforts to free our great county. [Indeterminable] Hitler, Nazi Germany's dream of conquering the world. My hands have held the dying, had a couple of good friends die in my arms. I saw this. I done this. I was there. And I would tell you of the love that I have for these great United States. I would do it again. I would do it again. God bless America.

I came home, I landed in New York on the 12th day of August of 1945. Came on the train to Salt Lake City, Utah and I marveled at the people in United States, how they had come together as a nation, what they had done, what they had accomplished, in a year or two years, to build a great Army and a great Navy and a great Air Force that could down that Hitler's dream.

Hitler wasn't alone. Hitler wasn't alone in his dream and his effort. He had a good companion that was right there with him. I call him Satan. I call him Satan. He was the big helper of Adolph Hitler.

I never did see Hitler. I don't even think I was even close. But I saw his effect on those people, especially the Nazi SS troopers that was dedicated to Hitler's cause. That they was as much involved as he was and I've seen them threaten and kill the common, ordinary soldier because he wasn't doing what that Nazi German wanted him to do, because there was two difference classes of solders. They was the common, ordinary civilian solder and then they was the Nazi SS which was another breed of the German Army that dressed well and they meant what they said and they did what they wanted to do with the common soldier and I have seen them take the life of a brother solder, German, with their hands and their means, because they was a mean and wicked breed of

people. They became that. They became that in the efforts to satisfy that Hitler and do his will because he had them convinced that they were the people that was going to rule the world. And I would do that again, what I did before, to save this great nation so you and me are not speaking Japanese or German together this day – made us a free country.

When I crossed the country on that train and saw what the efforts of the people have done, I was thrilled. The women was running the railroads. They were out there in their dirty coveralls, oily coveralls, and they were running the railroads because all the guys were gone overseas. I marveled at their efforts. I came home to Fort Douglas, well that wasn't home but it was home to me – anywhere in the Unites States is home to me.

But when I got to Fort Douglas I was so bad off because we did not have the means of medication and stuff, and I was still suffering a great deal from that explosion and from having to walk and not being able to take a bath. I suffered so greatly because I was so galded in my crotch area. I was in big sores, I had boils on my rectum. And I was so bad off when I got to Salt Lake, it was on a Sunday that I did this, I went to the hospital and because I had the day off, I had a day pass, so I went to the hospital and I asked to see the doctor and they said the doctor was unavailable right now. And an orderly was there and he asked me what my problem was. I told him that my crotch and leg areas and everything was so bad off that I needed some help. He says, "You take your clothes off and stack them right down there, I want to take a look at you." So I took my clothes off and when he saw me, he made me pick up my own clothes and put them in a bag, because he would wouldn't touch nothing, he wouldn't touch me. He says, "I know what's wrong with you. That the galded area in your rectum and everything has caused an infection on your skin, all over your body." I had big sores on me. I had big blisters on my top of my feet from being in the dampness and the, not able to bathe my feet because of the frozen situation that was there all winter long and my skin and my body was all broke out with sores and he handed me a bar of soap type stuff and a scrubbing brush. And he says, "I want you to go into the shower and I want you to scrub yourself down and scrub all those..."

FEMALE VOICE: Scabs.

VET: "...scabs off." And he says, "And when you get done, you call me, holler at me." So I did, I went into the shower and it felt so good to be into that shower that I took the advantage and the advice from this man and I scrubbed me down real good. I got all the scabs off and it was painful, really painful for me to do these things. But I got all the scabs off and I came out and I hollered at him and he came. He says, "I want you go get up on that bed." So I crawled up on the bed and he pulled a sheet over me and then he strapped me into this...

Well now I got to back up. Before he done this he handed me a jar, about a three-inch in diameter jar, and three inches tall and he says, "I want you to put all this salve all over your body." So I smeared myself all over with that, I used that whole jar of stuff and it felt like it was a little bit sandy. It felt like it had sand in it. It wasn't smooth like I expected it to be. It had these little fine debris in it. I don't know what it was. But then he told me to get up on the bed. I got up on the bed and he had a pair of rubber gloves on and he put his stuff on the bottom of my feet and around my feet where I hadn't been able

to touch and then he covered me over with a sheet and then he had some wide black straps that he strapped me into this bed.

I ask him why he was tying me into bed and he says, "Because I don't want you to go to sleep and fall off this bed because you're going to be here for a couple of hours." He strapped me down, had the thing so he could strap one leg, the other leg, then the two legs together. He strapped my arms down, put my wrists in straps. Strapped my forehead down. And he says, "I'll wake you up in a couple of hours," and walked out the door, shut the door.

I can tell you that it was just a damn good thing that he had me strapped in that bed as tight as he did. It wasn't about two minutes later and that flippin' stuff started taking a hold of me, that slave. And it was burning my skin so bad that I couldn't stand it. I was screaming to the top of my voice to get that guy to get in there and get me out of the situation that I as in. I was literally on fire. I was there for at least three hours that I know of and I suffered every split second of that three hours. I was ringing wet with sweat. I was...my skin and every place, especially where I was really bad off, in my crotch area and all there...I thought that I was going to die.

He came in and he says, "I can't apologize to you for leaving you like this because," he said, "this is the only thing that you're going to be able to cure yourself to have this...get rid of this." And he told me what it was, but I can't remember now what he said I had, but something that it came onto me because I was so galded, that my skin had been dirty and sweaty for so many days at a time before I could get clean and washed.

So they gave me a pass and I same home on leave for about eight or ten days. Saw my family. And I saw this, I walked into a little bit of a hamburger joint where they was service station on the corner of Main Street and Center Street on the northwest corner of that intersection, was a service station with two great big, old pine trees in the back and the called it the Twin Pine Service Station. And next to that service station, a little bit north, was a, like a railroad car, a lean-to against the building. It's a little hamburger joint. I walked into that hamburger joint...

[Interview tape ends.]

[Some chatter accompanying the changing of the tape]

VET: This is tape number three of Ray T. Stapley, Cedar City, Utah, about my experiences in World War II.

When I came home on furlough from Salt Lake City, to Cedar City, Utah, I walked into this little hamburger joint and the girl that was there waiting on the customers was an angel that I didn't think existed on this plant – the most beautiful girl that I had ever seen. I had been a lot of places and I've seen a lot of women, but when I walked into that place I thought that was the most beautiful thing that I had ever seen. Not "thing." I'm sorry. I apologize. She is a woman. She is a mother. She is the glory of my life.

And I got acquainted with her a little bit while I was here on furlough for them short days and then I went back to Salt Lake City and they told me I was going to go on a train to Cheyenne, Wyoming. I got up to Cheyenne, Wyoming and I didn't know why I

was there because I had sealed paperwork with me that had been give to me in Fort Douglas. And when I got up there, I was assigned to a bunk and I put what little stuff I had, I put that by the bunk and then I delivered the papers where they was supposed to be, and then I went back up on the bunk and there was nobody there. I wondered where everybody had gone. Pretty soon I heard some, a drum roll out on the parade field. I looked out the window and everybody was assembled out on the parade ground. And so I went over and laid on the cot and the Officer of the Day came through and he wanted to know why I was there. I told him I did not know. He says, "Well, you should be out on the parade ground."

And I says, "Why."

And he says, "Because everybody's out there."

I says, "What are they doing out there?"

And he says, "Some general is getting a purple heart."

"How come he's getting a purple heart? Was he in the war?"

"Yea. He was getting out of the way of enemy fire and he fell over and broke his arm... caused by the enemy. They're giving him a purple heart."

I says, "If that guy had been where I had been, done what I have done, seen what I have seen, he deserves the purple heart. But, I'm going to go out on no parade ground just because a general's getting a purple heart, that has not been where I've been, seen what my eyes have seen."

Anyway come to find out, he took me down to the orderly room to find out why I was there. I was there to get a tooth filled. They took me over to the clinic, filled my tooth. Next day I got on the train and came back to Fort Douglas. My blood pressure was a little bit high and had a skip in my heart. So they held me for another day or so and give me some medication. Took my blood pressure again and said, "Oh. That's close enough," give me my discharge papers and sent me home.

I loaded onto the train and came down to Lund, Utah. I got off the train and I got onto a little self-propelled train that traveled between Cedar City and Lund, at that particular time. And I got on that little train and I came to Cedar City. I got off of the railroad depot in Cedar City, downtown, Main Street. And I had my duffle bag. I was in full uniform, and I walked up Main Street. Not one person came out to say, "Welcome home" or "Thank you." Got a little ways beyond there and one man, that I knew all my childhood, who he was, his name was Vince Maulner, and he lived up on 5th East, Dogtown, Cedar City, and he was an alcoholic and he came out onto the street and shook my hand and walking me home. I walked the rest of the distance of Main Street. Walked all the way up to 1st East, 200 South, to where my parents lived, and he was the only one that shook my hand and said, "Welcome home."

I had a nice reunion with my family, my parents and my sisters. We had a nice dinner and I spent the rest of the afternoon visiting with them. We talked about the hardship of the war. I never told them about my experiences in the war. I was unable to talk about it. I, we talked about the family life and things that they had struggled through.

And I went back down to the little hamburger joint and there sat the beauty of my life. I ask her if she would go out with me on a date. And she says, "I've got a date." I was heartsick. I was heartsick to think that she would have a date but I knew why. I ask her who the date was and she says, "His name is, Bud Bowman."

FEMALE VOICE: No. Was not.

VET: Who was it?

FEMALE VOICE: It was Carlett.

VET: Anyway, I thought it was Bud Bowman. And I think it was.

FEMALE VOICE: No it wasn't.

VET: Anyway, I walked down the street, walked back up the other side to see if I could see somebody that I knew that I could talk to for a little while. I didn't see many or wasn't encouraged to do anything with anybody, so I walked back up passed this hamburger joint and she stepped out and she says, "I have a date but he's ten minutes late. If you want to go I'm ready."

So we went to the picture show. We went to the movie, at the movie house. I don't know what movie it was. I couldn't even watch the screen. I couldn't keep my eyes off of her. When the movie was over and we walked outside and as we came out the door, she reached over and got a hold of my hand. I had to look down to see if my feet was still on the ground. I could hoop and holler about that and I was so thrilled to think that she would touch my hand.

I walked her home to her apartment. We made arrangements to see again the next day. And I courted that woman, that girl. She looked to me like Shirley Temple. And I was anxious to get better acquainted with her. And so from the time, the day that I was discharged on the 28th of November of 1945, somewhere along that line, I asked her to marry me because I was in a big hurry to get closely and have her as my very own. As beautiful as she was and all the guys coming home from war, I was in a hurry because I thought somebody'd beat my time. She said "yes" in a marriage proposal. We went over to the telephone and she called her mother.

FEMALE VOICE: Ray, this is... don't need to put this on this tape.

INT: This is good for your grandkids. I would, I would leave this because your great-grandkids are going to love this part.

VET: Ok when we... we got on the telephone and she called her mother. Her mother lived in La Verkin. She was born and raised in La Verkin, this pretty little girl, born and raised in La Verkin. She came to Cedar City and she was going to go to college, get her education. She called her mother and says, "Mother are you sitting down?" And her mother says, "No and you better not tell me anything that I need to be sitting for."

"Well, I'm going to get married."

"No you're not! It better not be."

So she hung up on the phone and we went down the street and we got on board the Greyhound bus and we went to La Verkin. It was cold. Just starting winter time and we walked from where the bus stopped in La Verkin, we walked up to her parent's house, walked in the front door, and they was a big oil burner stove just inside of the door. I

stepped up to the stove, put my hand out over the top of it, to get my hands warm and she called to her parents. And her dad was setting in a rocking chair over the side and her mother came in and she says, "I want you to meet Ray Stapley. I'm going to marry this man."

He father slapped his hands on his knees and he says, "I'll be a son of a bitch" and out the back door he went. That's what you call about protective parents.

Her mother hassled her into the back room and they left me and that oil stove by ourself out there and I don't know who was the warmest that stove or me. Finally, her mother came out. Her mother walked over and shook my hand and said, "Your name was who?"

"My name is Ray Stapley, from Cedar City, Utah."

She says, "Well, were going to have to get a little better acquainted."

We got acquainted. I adored that woman and her father. They were great parents. They was protective of their daughter, and I couldn't blame them a bit. I had to hurry and get a proposal from her and get an answer so the guys wouldn't get her when they came home from the service.

From the time that I was discharged until I married that beautiful girl was 44 days, 28th of November until the 11th of January, 1946. We were married at her parent's house. Her uncle, Allen Stout, was the Bishop and he made arrangements and we was married, we... back in them days it used the great big thrill of La Verkin and Hurricane people that they chivareed the new married couple and she didn't want to be chivareed in the cold of winter and so we made arrangements with her uncle, which was her mothers brother, to marry us at midnight. So he came over from Hurricane and he performed the marriage ceremony at about two minutes after 12:00 which made it the 11th of January, 1946. That's been... today is, what, the 1st or 2nd of February, 2009, so on the 11 January we celebrated our 63rd wedding anniversary.

We have three wonderful children which I was wondering, after we had been married for some time, whether I was going to be able to produce children because of the injury that I suffered in the war. After we'd been married for six, seven, or eight months, she was working in a clothing store there on Main Street, and I came up the street and she met me right in intersection where First Security Bank and this clothing store was and she threwed her arms around my neck and told me that she was a pregnant, that she was going to have a child. I was so thrilled that we stood there in the middle of that intersection for a long time, embraced. I thank God for being able to produce children.

We had the boy which she was deathly, deathly sick carrying that baby. The baby was delivered on May the 9th...

FEMALE VOICE: '48.

VET: in '48. And then we had a...

FEMALE VOICE: Now, next, his name.

VET: Boyd. His name is Boyd Ray Stapley and he was our first and then have a daughter that was borned a year or so later and her name is Belinda. And then eight years later we had a boy and his name is A. Brad Stapley. And so the Lord has been with

us and blessed us. My wife has been a joy to my life and her parents, her mother and father, was great for me. Her mother told me many, many times that she had five sons, and now I've got six. She thought a lot of me and I thought a lot of her.

The last twenty years of her life she was blind and she run a little fruit state at the "Y" in La Verkin where you go up to Zion and she run that little fruit stand and the Greyhound bus would stop there and that dear woman sold fruit over the counter and I'll bet you that 98% of the people that walked up to the fruit state did not know that woman was blind. We would take the children down and we would have a visit and the very first thing when we walked into the house, "How do I look? Is my dress clean? Do I look nice?"

She was a perfectionist. She would get down on the floor with a little brush and sweep the floor on her hands and knees. She would scrub, clean everything two or three times. She...

FEMALE VOICE: Ray, you're getting into family now and not war.

INT: That's ok. That's let him talk.

VET: Anyway... We had the three children. We have...

FEMALE VOICE: 13.

VET: ...13 grandchildren.

FEMALE VOICE: And 20 great-grandchildren.

VET: We have 20 great-grandchildren and every morning I wake up with an 82 year old lady at my side and I'm 83 ½ years old at this recording and all the experiences that I have had in the war and in the marriage... my wife and I served a mission together in Oakland, California. It was on a foreign mission because we were working with the Cambodians. Then we served another mission together for eight years in the St. George temple. So we have had a wonderful life together. We have done many, many things.

I took my wife... her and I went back to Europe. I was going to show her where I was in the war. There was not one place that I could stand and say, "Look. I have stood here before." It had changed so much.

We wound up going into East Germany. We went through the Berlin Wall and a... on a tour bus, and we were able to see the difference in that great city from one side of the Wall to the other side was almost like night and day. My wife says, "The trees and the shrubbery even look sad." And we visited there for all day long. We came back and we traveled all the way down through Europe. We saw fourteen countries. While we were there we were on our Eurail(?) and we backpacked through Europe.

I had a little backpack with clothing in it. She had a little backpack with clothing in it and we rolled them up like they do in the military and I had my camera and she had her cosmetics, so we each had a bag. And I don't know how it is right now in the European country but if you make arrangements to be there on a train you better not be one minute late or you'll be waving to the train that has passed a minute ago. It's all

gone. So the trains are prompt. And they would get up and travel eighty-, ninety miles an hour out in the open country and so from one country to another country didn't take that much. But to exchange the money and stuff was a problem 'til we got use to exchanging monies and we went all the way through Europe together. Saw many things. But I could not say that I had stood there before, because when I was there the first time it was all in rubble. It was a sad looking part of the world. We went back twenty years later. Places had built up, brand new homes, brand new buildings, brand new street directions and whatever, and it all looked really, really different to me than it did the first time I went through there.

But with the war and all of the experiences of it and what it took to get rid of Hitler's dream, and what my eyes have seen, and my ears have heard, and my feet have stood, and my hands have touched, I would do it again. I would do it again! For a great and beautiful country that we live in...that if we live righteously, God will live with us. I pray for our freedom. I pray for those that lost their lives in World War II.

I read a piece in the paper the other day where the Russians were trying to find out, approximately, the death toll that World War took in that big nation and they had a count of, roughly, of 23 million people, according to that writing in the paper, that had lost their lives or became prisoners of war in that great nation. I don't know how many people lost their lives in United States, but when I got home and was married and we started doing a little bit traveling we went back to the East Coast and I tried to find people that I was acquainted with in the war, and I found David Wenzel. He had moved to Florida and my wife and I visited him and his wife and his daughter for a couple of days. And then in about three years he came out here to Cedar City, Utah, and him and his wife and child visited us for about a week or ten days. And he told that when I left to come home from Europe in the war as a soldier, that the rest of the company went to the South Pacific because the war was still going on in the Pacific, and they went there. They didn't see any action. The war ended and he came home, met his wife, and he was married.

He died, here, about four years ago. He was a...he was like a brother to me. He was a good man. I could say one thing about David Wenzel, he was a Jewish boy, I never saw him with a cigarette between his lips. I never saw him with an alcohol container between his lips. I never seen him affiliate with the women. Him and I were great together. I saddened when I heard about his death.

I thank my Heavenly Father every day for this goodly land and for the peace and safely that you and I enjoy and hope that God's will be with my posterity and loved ones and with you wherever you may be that you may have joy and rejoicing in your lives, that you'll praise God in His gift of life here upon these United States. God bless you and God bless America, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

INT: Amen!