Interviewers: Paul Taylor, Cheyenne Maragnano, Emma Glinsman

[Beginning of Interview 2.1]

Cheyenne Maragnano/Emma Glinsman: When exactly did you decide to enlist in the Army and was it your decision?

Sol Goldstein: It was my decision and I decided to enlist in the Army. Well, I got bored with school and I read about what was happening in Europe, the world.

CM/EG: And what did you read?

SG: Sorry?

CM/EG: What exactly were you reading that—

SG: What was I reading?

CM/EG: Mmhmm. Like, what were the headlines then?

SG: Well, I was reading The New York Times and the local paper and it was talking about what was happening in Europe. At that time, the local paper, the Sun papers had correspondents abroad, aboard, and I was reading about what they were doing to Poland and places like that, and I thought, “What a terrible thing.” There was a draft on. They were drafting people, but I'm not going to wait for this. I'm going to enlist. [coughs] So I did. I enlisted in the Signal Corps which kept me all over the states for about 3 months, attending the school here in Baltimore, and I learned how to make radios, and didn't do too good a job of it. And then I was called to active duty and I was sent to Camp Crowder, Missouri, and there I was given basic training, how to use a rifle and so forth and so on. Then I was shipped to England. In England, I joined the first division, the big red one, the first infantry division.

CM/EG: You said there was a red one?

SG: It was called the big red one. If you know anything about patches, the patch was, a patch, a Roman numeral one in red. That's why it was called the big red one, and there were movies made about it. There was a movie called "The Longest Day."

CM/EG: Oh, yes.

SG: And there was a movie called "The Big Red One," and there was a movie called "Saving Private Ryan." All of them featured the first division. I was in the 16th regiment, C company.

CM/EG: 16th regiment, C company?

SG: Yes, C company, the 16th. See, Armies, in those days were broken into divisions, companies and so forth. [coughs] The Army was, but the division was the first division, called the first division. Then it was broken down into regiments—the 16th regiment, the 18th regiment. I was in the 16th regiment. A
regiment is broken down into companies. I was in C company. Companies are broken down into platoons, and then you're in a platoon which isn't really important, but I am probably, I think, because I've checked it, I think I'm the only survivor of C company in World War II.

CM/EG: Oh.

SG: I, I think I am. I don't know whether I am or not, so anyway, excuse me. There's a call coming in. [phone rings] Hello. Hey. Almost.

[tape skips]

SG: No, I left, I'm in England.

CM/EG: Oh, you're in England now. Alright. Let's see—

SG: First division. And—are we on?

Paul Taylor: Good to go.

CM/EG: England, okay.

SG: And we trained in England, and I was in a headquarters company and in London for a while, and then we trained on the Scottish coast. By training, I mean we, we, because the first division had just come back from Italy, Africa, Angio and they were supposed to come back to the States to train on the soldier's platoon, the first that had seen combat, but instead they were sent to England and basically to train the 29th division. The 29th division was a division made up of soldiers, people from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, this area.

CM/EG: Mmhhmm.

SG: So it was rather strange that I was in the first division instead of the 29th. That's why it was my choice, and then we were trained, we were trained to the 29th division to teach them how to fight and how to do this and that, maneuvering and what have you, and on the Scottish coast what we learned and trained in was, we had ships and we would take cargo in nets. Do you know what a cargo net is? Have you ever seen them lift cargo onto, onto a ship? It's a big cargo net made of rope and so forth and they lay it flat on the ground. They put stuff in it and then it lifts up by a crane. Well, they used to take those nets and hang them off the side of the ship so they were lying down alongside the side of the ship, and then they were fastened to things inside the ship, and you had to crawl down that net, hand over hand, foot over foot, into what are called landing craft, Higgins boats. They were called Higgins boats, named after the man who invented, and you had to get in that boat, and then that boat took off for wherever you were going. If you see pictures of the South Pacific, they used them a lot. We used them in the invasion of Normandy. And so many times a fellow would come down those, those nets and if you slipped, you could slip in the water. You were carrying 120, 130, 140 pounds of weight. If you didn't get out of the way fast, you were drowned, and a number of guys did drown.

CM/EG: Oh.

SG: Some of them came down, slipped and fell in the boat, broke their arm or leg or so forth. So we took casualties and weren't anywhere near fighting. And we did that for about 6 months or more, and also while we were doing that, we were training the 49th division. And then we were shipped to Weymouth, England. Weymouth, England is on the southeast coast of England.
CM/EG: How do you spell Weymouth?


CM/EG: Okay.

SG: And there we were sequestered. Nothing came in. Nothing went out. There were military police, [indistinct] police around the whole area, and there were literally a couple of million American troops—a million!—in that area, and we weren't allowed to leave the area or anything else.

CM/EG: In what year was this? 19—

SG: '44.

CM/EG: '44?

SG: '44.

CM/EG: Okay.

SG: '44? When was the invasion? The invasion was June 6, 1944. Yeah. And so we, some things I'll forget, so you'll have to remind me so, because it's been a long, long time.

CM/EG: Oh, yes.

SG: And we, we, we were there and [coughs] there wasn't much you could do because I don't think the powers that be, generals didn’t know what was happening there because in other parts of England, the north of England, they had General Patton and they had factices—it's a French word—facsimiles, factices of tanks made of, made of plastic and trucks made of plastic and so forth, and they had thousands of troops there, so they would try to convince the Germans that the invasion was going to take place at the Port de Calais, not in Normandy.

CM/EG: Mhmmm.

SG: The most logical place would be Calais because it's much closer to England than Normandy. So, one night we were ordered to board ship, and we boarded ship and we stayed on that ship for 3, all 3 days. It was terrible. It would stink. You know, Men who haven't showered or anything and bathrooms overflow, what have you. It was terrible.

CM/EG: How many men did, would you say were on the ship?

SG: On the ship I was on? Maybe a thousand, maybe a thousand. And then about 2 o’clock in the morning, we were all sleeping in cots, you know, like hammocks, and we heard this noise which was unbelievable and a lot of fellows tried to get up to the deck and they wouldn't let them, a bunch of them, what you could see through the portholes or something. The sky. The sky was covered with airplanes, every kind of airplane you could think of was flying from England to the mainland of Europe for France. It was unbelievable. And as the ship started moving, and as you looked through the portholes or so you could see, they said there were so many ships in the battle that you could have walked from England to France and not gotten your feet wet.
CM/EG: [laughs]

SG: And it almost was true because there were so many ships. There was the U.S.S. Tech. It was a huge, huge, [indistinct], a battleship. There were, there were destroyers. There were frigates. There were slopes, all kinds of ships, and they started firing, and the noise of the firing and the smell of the cordite. Cordite is used in making ammunition and when it's fired, you smell it. And the smells and these noises were just horrible, so some of us took stuff and put it in our ears because it was just deafening.

CM/EG: And this was all firing towards France?

SG: Yeah. If they had been firing at us, we would have been in trouble. So our ship moved toward France and we were about a mile off the coast and the ship stopped and we started boarding our landing craft. The men who started coming over the side of the ship on those nets I told you about that you throw yourself down off the ship, like 3 stories high and you had to come down to the landing craft. And the, by this time, you're carrying live ammunition. You're carrying live grenades, so your weight. That was 110, 120 pounds and [indistinct] 130, 140, 150 pounds. [coughs] If you're carrying a bazooka, you're close to 180 pounds. If you're carrying clay or mines, you're up that heavy. So the guys were coming down those ships. Now the water is like this and the boats are like that.

CM/EG: Ugh!

SG: And some of the guys missed the boats and went plummeting down. Some of the guys came when their boats fell and maybe broke an arm or something, but this is what it was like. It was chaos. We got the boat loaded with about 75 men and we took off. The coxswain came. The coxswain was a Navy guy who drove the boat and we headed for the coast. As we headed towards land, the firing was so intense that the smoke from the firing, you could hardly see, but over here as you approached—now I'm approaching the shore—on my right hand side was this huge concrete abutment that was machine gunned and heavy arms in it. On the left was the same thing. Coming right at us was machine gun fire, and we got lucky. One of the air, one of the frigates or something ran itself onto a sandbar and they lowered its guns and fired her guns straight at those gun placements of the Germans and knocked out, I think it was the one on the right was knocked out. So when we got to the shore, we had to walk through water. It was up to our waist, but we were lucky. When our boat stopped and the ramp came down, we were in about 3 feet of water, 2-and-a-half, 3 feet of water. Some soldiers weren't as lucky. When their boat ramp came down, they stepped off, they were in 6, 7, 8 feet of water and they drowned. We lost a lot of kids from drowning.

In telling you this story, you hear me say kids. I was 19 years old, but to me they were kids because they were my kids. And before we had cleared the beach—had to get to beach up to—and the beach wasn't like this. It was like that. Before we could get up to the top of the hedgerows and the brush, I lost about 40 percent of my soldiers, either killed or wounded, in that assault, and yet we knew that if we didn't keep moving, we'd be all killed. So you had to keep moving, people dropping next to you and bodies being blown up around you, and you just kept moving. And we got to the top of the beach, we, there were shrub and so forth and we got into what we did later. We called the hedgerows. Hedgerows are not hedges that you see, hedges in the, a city or a town. Hedgerows in France are rows where farmers for decades have thrown rocks and dirt and stuff over when they're farming, clear the land, and it seemed like rocks multiplying. And they sent, and so, some of them were 6, 7, to 8, 10 feet high, and the grass and shrubs and stuff would grow on top of it. So you could be here. A German could be 12, 10 feet away from you. You didn't know it unless he threw a grenade across and you threw it back to him so you try to avoid doing that. And we moved out. We had to take the town of St. Lo and the first, 101st airborne division had dropped in with the 82nd division, the glider forces, the night before, but they hadn't been able to take the town. So we moved in, and with them we took the town of Saint-Lô and it was done in very good hands.
CM/EG: And what do you mean by take the town? What exactly does that entail?

SG: Killed the Germans and took possession of the town.

CM/EG: And then, so at this point there weren't any like French people living in the quarters?

SG: Oh, yes, there were French people, yes.

CM/EG: But they were staying indoors?

SG: We tried not to kill them. They were, they weren't, they weren't adversaries. They were people who lived there and some lived. Some did die. A number of them were killed in the invasion with the gunfire and the bombs being dropped by American planes.

CM/EG: Right.

SG: So, then we started to move northeast. We took the town of Carentan.

CM/EG: How you, how do you spell the first town that you took?

SG: Saint-Lô?

CM/EG: Mmhmm.

SG: S-T, capital L-O.

CM/EG: And so this town—

SG: This town was Carentan. C-A-R-A-N-T-A-U-N*.

CM/EG: Did you get that?

CM/EG: [laughs] I spelled it with a T.


CM/EG: And how close were these towns like, would you say, like how many miles do you think you all did?

SG: Well, some of these town were maybe 30 miles apart or not quite.

CM/EG: So in—

SG: We walked and we took out rides on trucks and tanks, you know, however you get there. It didn't happen overnight.

CM/EG: Yes, so, where—

SG: It was over a period of time.
CM/EG: Did you sleep in the—

SG: But the thing is the first week after we hit the beach, and this is June, nice warm weather. A week after we hit the beach, we had the most horrible rain storm, wind storm, you ever, that they ever recorded, and they had floated from England, floated, huge concrete docks from England to France, floated in the water and set them up in place. These winds and rain were so bad, it toppled. That's how bad it was. And so we spend about 4 days just soaking wet, stinking wet. It was horrible.

CM/EG: And you had to—I'm assuming you were sleeping outside.

SG: Where else would you sleep?

CM/EG: Yes, exactly.

SG: Nobody's going to invite you in. There were no hotels.

CM/EG: [laughs]

SG: So you slept wherever you could. I've been asked that question a lot of times, and right now, for example, sitting here with you, I can sit here and close my eyes and be sound asleep in minutes and 15, 20 minutes, I'm fine. I jump up. I'm fine. At night when I sleep, I don't sleep. In all these years, that's been almost 70 years, I sleep for a couple of hours and I'm up. I may get on the computer. I may listen to music. Then I go back to sleep. I'll sleep for a couple of hours. I get up again. That's all—I attribute it all to that.

CM/EG: Sure.

SG: So, it's the same as my eating habits. I can have a bite. I can go all day and not have anything else 'til the next day. As long as I have water, as long as I have something to drink, I'm okay. As long as I have liquid, I'm fine.

CM/EG: Do you need a drink right now or—

SG: I'm fine. [indistinct] So anyway, we fought our way through France and up into Holland. We helped the British there because the British were stuck in Holland and they had a bad, bad, bad battle up there, and we helped them. And then we fought our way up into Belgium and we had a horrible, horrible winter. It became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Have you ever heard that term? But, the term comes from the fact that the Germans had consolidated their forces and were going to drive through the American forces to the town, Antwerp.

CM/EG: In Belgium?

SG: If they could take Antwerp, they could stop all supplies coming in for the Allies, and so this was like a bulge in our front. If our front was like this, they had put a bulge in it like that. So we had to stop them from doing that. But it was a horrible winter—snow, cold, ice. It was terrible, freezing, and you, you, we didn't have clothes, meaning that we didn't have camouflage clothes. We didn't have them. So we used to go into houses over, hotel, whatever, and we'd take the sheets and we'd drape them around us because if you didn't, you looked like a piece of coal in a, in a snow pile. The Germans could pick you off, just pop. You were so obvious. So we'd wrap sheets around us that we found, and I also had learned to keep my feet dry and my head dry and my feet, so I always carried two pairs of socks in my helmet. In other
words, you don't wear just a helmet. You wear a plastic helmet and on top of that goes a steel helmet, so I used to put the socks in between them, and when I put that steel down and buckle there, the socks were in there. So I was able to put on warm socks and dry socks. And we lost a lot of kids up there because of frostbite, getting kids that had their feet cut off, toes, fingers, not being shot, but just because of the weather.

CM/EG: And this is, I mean, so we, so what year or month, sorry, what months were this?

SG: December, January of '45, I guess.

CM/EG: So most of the spring and summer was spent going from France—

SG: From Normandy up to Belgium.

CM/EG: Okay.

SG: And then after that was over—because what happened was that the clouds parted. The weather got better. We were, our planes were able to fly, drop us ammunition and food and stuff, and so we were able to survive it.

CM/EG: Who was bringing you all food at that, I guess, who was all, who was bringing you food during the winter? Like, how were you—

SG: That, how we survived it?

CM/EG: Food, since there obviously wasn't—

SG: Well, we had K rations and we had, K rations, you'd have a box about this big. In it would be maybe 24 cans. I'm not really saying it right. But if you had a box of omelets, it would be 25—no, 24 cans, and the can's about like a can of Campbell's soups or something, and you 'd open it. There was always a can opener in the box. You'd open it and it would be omelets. You could eat them raw, or cold. It was already cooked. You could eat them cold or you could heat it if you had a way of heating it.

CM/EG: Omelets in a can?

SG: They were—huh? Omelets, yes. There were cans of Spam. There were boxes with, with oatmeal [indistinct] put it in. There were bars—this was a big lifesaver—bars of chocolate. They were about six inches long. They were about an inch thick and it was square, and it was like a piece of rock, or if you had, took a trench knife, you had a bucket, a canteen of water, and you'd chip off pieces of it and you'd go for a week just eating that and drinking water. And they also had a bar of pressed fruit.

CM/EG: Mmm.

SG: Same thing. You'd chip it off with a jack knife. You couldn't bite it. It would knock your teeth out. So you chipped away with your knife. And, and water. You had to have water. So we used to melt snow and we'd get [indistinct]. They'd send up tank trucks to take water. But that's how we got our food and, but there were some places where you couldn't get food back so they'd drop it by plane.

CM/EG: So at this point the skies have opened up and—
SG: This was over, maybe you heard about the Battle of, of, of, where was that place? The Battle of Bastogne.

CM/EG: Bastogne?

SG: The Battle of Bastogne when the Germans surrounded it and they asked the general to surrender and he said, "Nuts to you. I'm not surrendering." And they stayed and fought him. Now, this is the 82nd division, airborne division. They fought them off. When the skies cleared, they dropped supplies to them. They dropped us ammunition and so forth. Some of the drops landed in the German area, so the Germans got them. Some of them landed in our area. So anyway, we, after that we proceeded northeast and we came to the town, Aachen, Germany, A-C-H-E-A-N, A-C-H-E-A-N, Aachen, Germany, and that was a big size town.

CM/EG: So this must be—

SG: In Germany.

CM/EG: —on the border of Belgium and Germany?

SG: This is in Germany, past the Siegfried line.

CM/EG: Okay.

SG: The Germans had a Siegfried line. It was a, in Germany [indistinct], and when we got in Aachen, Germany—

CM/EG: And this is still '44 in the spring time?

SG: Yeah. That was in '44.

CM/EG: '44?

SG: Yes, this was, yes—wait.

CM/EG: It must be, if it's still in the winter.

SG: Wait. Wait, wait, wait. Wait just a minute, let me think about it.

CM/EG: It's okay.

SG: It was '44, '44, yes, at the end of the winter '44, February, March of '44. And we went in. We went into Aachen and it was bigger city that what we'd been in, so as we proceeded in the town and into the city along the roads it was trees. Not knowing what we expect, we carried a lot of grenades and we would throw grenades into the buildings, into the houses, just smash away the door and threw them in. Blew! And we didn't know whether there were children, men, women, dogs, cats. Nobody asked. Nobody cared. It was just a matter of cleaning it so nobody would shoot you as you went by or so forth. So we probably killed a lot of innocent people, but at that point it was survival. So we proceeded north of that and in that, in those days we didn't have the equipments you have today in the military, and some of the radios and stuff we used were like World War I. The original guns we used, the Springfield Rifle, was a World War I till we got the Garand Rifle, like a semi-automatic rifle. And so, let's see, so—where was I? So our colonel said, "Take a recon unit and see what the hell is going on to the east of us," because, as I say, it
was horrible, difficult to have contact. Sometimes the radios worked. Sometimes they didn't. So we would send out what we called reconnaissance units. Recon units. So I took 7 men, a jeep and a magnum 30-caliber machine gun in the jeep, and on the floor on the bottom of the jeep, I had sand bags in cases we got a mine or something, it might help to save us. And then I took a half track. Now, a half track is a big, huge truck-like that's all steel, and the back of it, instead of having four tires, the back part has tank treads like on a tank, and the front has its own regular tires. It's a huge, big, clumsy piece of equipment and very powerful, and I was able to mount the 50-caliber machine, and the reason I did that was because a 50-caliber, if we ran into any aircraft, I could turn it up and use it as an anti-aircraft gun.

CM/EG: Ohh.

SG: The 30-caliber wasn't strong enough, but the 50 was. So we took off, and the first night, we slept in the woods and we didn't run into any Germans, no, nothing at all, and then the next morning about 5 o'clock after we had all eaten our K rations, we got in our vehicles and we started moving, and we were in a part of Germany where the town of Weimar is. It's a beautiful part of Germany and it's the city where Goethe was, came from, part of, and as we were moving, one of my men said to me, "Sergeant, what the hell is that smell?" He said, "It's a horrible odor."

And I said, "Yeah, I know. I smell it, too. I don't know what it is." Now, we had been exposed to cattle, horses, humans, pigs when they killed and lie in the sun and bloated and then suddenly, boom! The body would explode, not, just from the sun and the heat, and the gases that came out were, if you smelled, it was horrible, just horrible. But this was not the same. This was entirely different. None of us knew what the hell it was. And we made a left turn on this road, in this wooded area, and lo and behold, there was this big, high chimney, a red brick chimney, and white smoke billowing out of it, and as we got closer, the smell became more intense. We turned the corner, made a right turn, and there in front of us, it was maybe a quarter of a mile, half a mile away, was this fence, huge fence. And I took my glasses and I could see that there was like barbed wire on top and it looked like there were 3 fences, 1, 2. I could count only 3 fences, 1, 2, 3, and I—I couldn't imagine what it was, and I turned to one of my fellows, a corporal, and I said, "You know what? I think we're about to liberate a prisoner of war camp," because up to that point, no one had ever told us there was such a thing as a concentration camp. We didn't know there was a place where they were murdering people and burning people and killing people. We knew nothing about this.

Now prior to our getting there, we could hear artillery fire coming up from the south and we knew that the first army, Patton's army, was moving up to the south, so we tried to get in touch with a company. I used the radio I had and so forth, able to get to them a little bit. They said, "Yeah, the first is coming up on wherever you are, so be careful." So, you have to understand something. This place where we were was Buchenwald concentration camp. There's Auschwitz and there's Dachau and there's Ravensbrück and there's Sobibór and there were dozens of them all around. This is one in Germany, it was built originally to house political prisons and political people that were opposed to the Hitler regime. Then it became a killing camp. Now most of these places, such as Auschwitz, Treblinka and so forth, Terezinstock, they, they're not one camp, but maybe a mile away there may be one they call satellite camps. Now, Buchenwald had, I think, it was 3 satellite camps. Now, we were at one of the satellite camps, and when we saw these fencing and one of my guys said, "I think it looks like an entrance up there to the right," and I said, "No, we're not going to go up there. We're going through the fence. So I moved the cars around, put the half track in front, and we plowed right through the fences. Now, through my glasses, I could see movement inside those gates, the fence. I knew there was some, something was there, but I didn't know what it was, and I still thought it was prisoners of war, American prisoners of war, French prisoners, American prisoners, and that's what we were liberating. But they were so emaciated, even through the glasses, that I didn't know what to expect.

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CM/EG: And these glasses are so that you could see through?

SG: My, my, my binoculars.

CM/EG: Binoculars.

SG: Yeah, the Army [indistinct] noncoms and officers carried them around. So we ploughed through the fence, tore it down. We got inside. We jumped down off of our vehicles. Now, you have to understand something. I was then 20, 20 years old, I think, 21. Yeah, 21. And this was the 11th of April, 1944, and I was 6 feet, 2 inches tall. I weighed 185 pounds. I didn't have an ounce of fat on me and I'd fight to drop a pin, and many a fist fight, many a fight, I get into. I was in great shape. In my hands, I held a [indistinct]. It's a knife about this long. It carries 30 shots in a clip. I had 60. I used to take the clips like this and put them together and I put tar tape around them so that when I fired a good automatic and fire 30, I could just pull it out and flip and have another 30. Instead of just 30, I had 60. You learn all kinds of tricks.

CM/EG: Yeah.

SG: I carried a 45 automatic pistol in my hip, and in my boot I had a razor sharp knife I could shave with. That's how sharp it was and it was in my boot. And I'm standing there like this, looking at these what I thought were people as they shuffled toward me, making noises and such. The stench was horrible, and a little man walked up to me with wooden shoes, these little [indistinct] shoes, a hat in his hand. He looks at me and he said to me in German, [German phrase]. Well, I understand German because I speak Yiddish. And I said to him, not in German, but in Yiddish, Ya, mir nito amerikaner zelner aun ikh bin a id. Yes, we're American soldiers and I'm a Jew. He reached over. He grabbed my hands around that gun and I was sort of petrified. He was about 4 foot 10, 4 foot 8, and he just looked at me and in Yiddish, not in German, he said to me, Vos hot ir azoy lang tsu bakumen do? What took you so long to get here?

CM/EG: What did you say originally?

SG: What took you so long to get—Vos hot ir azoy lang tsu bakumen do? What took you so long to get here? I completely dissolved. I began to cry. Tears were coming down my face because I could only think, he's right. What took us so long to get here? How did we let this happen? I was just completely dissolved. My corporal came over. He said, "What happened? What's the matter?"

I said, "It's okay. It's alright. It's okay." I took out a handkerchief. I wiped my eyes and the corner of my face because my mouth, my nose because the stench was so horrible. These people were coming around. They wanted to touch us and so forth. And then we made some mistakes. We made a lot of mistakes. One mistake we made was we gave them water. We shouldn't have done it. Some of them just collapsed. Some of them, we gave some of the cans of omelets and they'd just swallow it down. You can imagine. One I gave a bar of chocolate to, cut off a piece he was trying to bite. His teeth, what he had, came right out of his mouth. Not false teeth, but his teeth. People died because we didn't know what we were doing, and this little man named Josef, he took us to the barrack. You'd take a room this size. You could put a thousand people in there. How? They had like bookcases. They were 18, 20 inches apart, and they slid in there and they slept in there, and they pooped in there and they peed in there and they did everything in there. The stench was horrible. We were in there probably 20 seconds. It was too horrible to even stay in there in that filth.

One of my guys hollered down, and when you're in a line unit and somebody hollers down, you try to burrow into the ground because it either means incoming fire or shelling or something. So we're on the ground. I'm looking. I got my gun. "What's going on?" He said, "Look!" And I look and there are piles of bodies stacked against the buildings, just piles on bodies. And you can see these bodies moving, and this
little man, Josef, looks at me and in Yiddish again, he said, *Hobn keyn mura. Di rats zenen esn zey.* "Have no fear. The rats are eating them." And you could see it, rats like this, eating the bodies. We shot a couple of them. We couldn't kill them. And that night, that night, the third Army came up and the medics came and they told us, that's what he told us. "Don't give these people anything to eat. You're killing them." And they made some kind of like a gruel, like a farina or something like that, and they hand fed them, most of them. They set up a medical tent. They put cots. They put, but the smells were absolutely horrible.

The next day, General Eisenhower, General Patton, General Bradley, General Tidworth, the reporter from London came, and we had, Eisenhower had them bring the mayor and the whole city town, from the town of Weimar up there and they had to pick up the body. The Army dug a huge pit and they had to pick the bodies up with their hands and lay them gently in the pit because that stack that I told you about and the smoke was from the crematorium. It was 6 slots. They had a steel sled and they put bodies on it and throw them and then burn them up and then just ashes. And we blew it up. We took hand grenades and we blew it up. And that's the day that Eisenhower stood there and he said, "I want everybody that has a camera take a picture of this and everybody that has a pencil and paper is to make a note of this because some time, somewhere in the future, some son of a bitch is going to say this never happened." Those were Eisenhower's exact words. I was as close to him and I am to you right now when he said it, and Edward R. Murrow was the, was the reporter, announcer from London and it was, it was just horrible. It was such a horror. My, some of the guys with me never talked to each other. We hardly looked to each other.

But the next day, we had to leave because we were in line, our unit was moving. So we left the camp. We took off and 3 days later, we were in Germany, the northern part, and we took 2 German prisoners, 2 soldiers. They had been on the road. They surrendered. But, you can't carry prisoners with you. It's not like you can tie 'em up and drag them along. When you take prisoners, you send them back to a stockade. Well, the stockade was probably an hour and a half back on line. So I made another mistake. I picked 2 of the guys who had been with me in the camp and I said, "Take these guys back to the stockade." In about a half an hour they came back. I said, "Where's the prisoners?"

"They tried to escape and we shot them, sergeant."

**CM/EG:** Mmm. That's too bad.

**SG:** I said, "You did what?" "They tried to escape and we shot them." I knew they were lying and—because they were, these Germans were beat. They were spent. They just wanted something to eat. And I didn't say anything. In the meantime, these 2 or 3 days, as I said, the 8 of us. I had 7 guys. We never talked to each other. We never looked at each other. It was almost like we had all been exposed to something so terribly obscene that we didn't want to, and we were. But, that night we took a German major prisoner. They brought him up to me and I said to him, "Do you speak English?"

He said, *Ja, good."

I said, "Good. You're my prisoner. I'm in command here and my name is Solomon Goldstein. I'm a master sergeant, United States Army, and I'm a Jew."

And he looked at me and he went [growls, spitting sound; German phrase]. He spit right in my face. A leg came up and a knife came out of my hand and I cut him from ear to ear and we threw him in the woods. I tell you that, and I tell this story, I'm telling it because I'm not proud of it. Again, a mistake. I didn't have to do that. I could have hit him with my fist. I could have kicked him. I could have hit him with a rifle butt. I didn't have to kill him. But, as the years have gone by and I've tried to understand why I did what I did, and the only thing that I can think of is that I was so scared, fighting, that he was going to put me in
that camp with those people and I was going to be one of them, either ending up in a crematorium or
crawling around on the ground looking for something to eat, and that's why I did it. Now, that may be an
excuse, and I may be saying that to, to condone what I did, but I did it. I'm not proud of it. And the only
reason I can think of it is, I did it is because of the fear of being a part of what I had seen. And so that, for
days, that was a terrible part of my life and even now, here it is almost 70 years ago, 64 years or 5 years
ago, I think of it.

We, we continued on and we ended in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, and the war was over, and the American
soldiers could come home. How did we come home? You came home by virtue of the points you had.
The one who had the most points came home first. And how did you get points? If you were in combat,
you got a certain amount of points. If you were overseas a certain amount of time, you got points, et
cetera, et cetera. So I had enough points to come home the day after the war was over, but I didn't come
home.

CM/EG: So—should we?

SG: I stayed—excuse me?

CM/EG: I was going to say, maybe would this be a good time for a break before—

SG: Whatever you want [indistinct].

CM/EG: How do you guys feel about it?

PT: Yes, this is great.

SG: You want to come over for dinner?

CM/EG: We do want to come to dinner. We were just going to switch positions.

SG: Okay, alright.

CM/EG: To try and ask some questions.

[tape skips]

SG: If you've seen pictures of people who were in concentration camps, you'll notice that none of the
men have beards. Does that, does that mean anything to you?

CM/EG: It does because, I mean, there was no way to shave and—

SG: The body—

CM/EG: Yeah, so it seems.

SG: The body did not produce. The body was so emaciated, the starvation was such. It's the same reason
why women did not have periods. Women did not have their periods because they were so emaciated,
their bodies were so beat up from lack of foods that it couldn't function properly, and it took many of
them years after to get back to—they wanted to have children. They thought they'd never have children.
That's the reason. The men never have beards and so forth because it just didn't grow.
CM/EG: Wow.

SG: So, anyway, I—are we back on track?

CM/EG: Yeah, we will be in just a second.

[End of Interview 2.1]