

INTERVIEW

Edwin D Jacques Jr

YEAR

2006

GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Edwin D Jacques, Jr.

DATE: March 6, 2006

PLACE: Dodge City, Kansas

INTERVIEWER: Joyce Suellentrop

PROJECT SERIES: Veterans Oral History Project for Gray County

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Edwin Jacques, after receiving a deferment for farming, later cancelled that and went into the infantry at Fort Leavenworth. He left behind a wife and four-year-old child. His basic training was cut short because his company was sent to Europe to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. After two years in France and Germany, he returned to civilian life and farmed for many years in the Ensign community. He raised two children and now lives in Manor of the Plains in Dodge City, having lost his wife and daughter. He has a son and family in Sublette. A granddaughter is a great help to him now. He has had a number of illnesses but has taken trips to Europe and Hawaii in spite of that.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Entering the service and training and life as a part of war zone front line action France and Germany. His service in several positions in the service and return trip to Europe as a tourist in 1996, and his trip to Hawaii are discussed. He tells of several illnesses and loss of his wife and daughter.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: 2 - 60 minute tapes

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 2 hours

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 27 pages

ORAL HISTORY
Jacques Jr, Edwin D
Interview Date: March 6, 2006

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)
Interviewee: Edwin Jacques (EJ)
Tape 1 of 2
Side A

JS - We ask these same questions of everyone. The first question is, when World War Two started in 1939, where were you and how old were you? How did you find about it and what did you think?

EJ - Well, we really didn't pay a great deal of attention in 1939. The thing that really brought it home to us was when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941.

JS - Do you remember where you were?

EJ - Yes I do. I was working at the Haggard Co-op and living at Haggard, Kansas.
We heard it on the radio that evening.

JS - What did you think?

EJ - That was a hell of a thing to do.

JS - How old were you?

EJ - I was twenty years old.

JS - Did you think you might have to go into the service?

EJ - I figured that I probably would. We were already registered, but my dad had told me that he had gotten me an agriculture deferment. In 1943, I told him that all the kids in the neighborhood were in the Army or Navy or someplace and I told him I thought we had better cancel that deferment. He did, so I went in the Army in 1944.

JS - Were you drafted or did you enlist?

EJ - I was drafted.

JS - When you heard about Pearl Harbor, do you remember what you, your parents or the community thought about that?

EJ - About the same as I did. It seemed rather strange to us that a country the size of Japan would attack the United States, but we found out a lot of things in the next six months. Maybe the Japanese weren't so stupid after all.

JS - The war in Europe had been going on since 1939. Did you keep up with that or were you even aware of it?

EJ - Yes, we kept up with it. A neighbor of mine was German, and he was a very radical German, too. He didn't like the United States at all. It wasn't very long until he moved. We had a few people like that. There was one here in Dodge City. I guess everybody had his own opinion.

JS - Did you know of anybody who was opposed to us getting into World War Two?

EJ - I am sure there were, but they were pretty quiet about it if they were, at least in this neighborhood. Seemed like everybody here was gung ho. Let's get it done.

JS - Were there a lot of young men, people that you grew up with, that had joined up or been drafted?

EJ - A lot of them had been drafted and a lot had volunteered. We had some in the Merchant Marines which really at that time, was not a part of the Navy. It wasn't until later, it wasn't at that time.

JS - You were drafted. Were you married?

EJ - Yeah, I had been married quite a long time.

JS - Children?

EJ - When I left, I had a daughter four years old.

JS - What did your wife and your parents think?

EJ - They considered the possibility that I would never come home. We said that this is not what we are going to hope for. We are going to plan for me to be back here. That was the supposition that I went into the Army with, was that I was going to come home.

JS - You were married and living in the Ensign-Montezuma area. Did your wife just stay in your home?

EJ - She went to live with her parents. Her parents and my parents lived three miles apart and she spent time with each one of them until she came down to

Little Rock where I was taking basic training. My basic training was cut short by a month or so because of the Battle of the Bulge. We did not come home together. I left the base on one day, and I think about three days later they had everything lined up and moved all the families out. My wife found out after she got home, she knew that Frances was not well when she left Little Rock and she scattered chicken pox all over the country. The train that they left on was full and my daughter never saw a stranger in her life and she was all over that train. It never made her sick, but I know there were lots of people that she met that were. Of course, we have no way of knowing how that played out.

JS - You said the Battle of the Bulge caused your basic training to be interrupted. Then what happened to you?

EJ - We were all supposed to get a ten day delay in route. That meant we were supposed to have 10 days at home before we had to go overseas. I had two nights at home. When I got to Kansas City, all of us that got to Kansas City that night were met by the MPs. We were taken to one special place. We were taken to the airport in a bus and that was the first time I ever flew on an airplane. We went from there to Fort Mead, Maryland. We got shots and all that sort of stuff there. Then we went to where they were going to ship us out from. We went to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. In less than a week, we were on a ship headed out. Now, there were hundreds of us. The ones that got to the port first were put on the Queens.

JS - By that, you mean---

EJ - Queen Mary or Queen Elizabeth, one or the other. They had been taken over by the Navy and were used to transport troops. They were fast. They went right straight across and landed in Scotland. The ship that I was on was the USS Washington, and it was a slower ship. They sent us down the coast and across the southern route. We landed in Marseilles, France. We had had all of our shots, the whole shmeer before we left. I have no idea what happened, whether they threw the whole shmeer overboard or what. We took all of those shots and everything again after we got to Marseilles. We were there a week. When we got on the ship the temperature was in the fifties, and when we landed in Marseilles, it was below zero. We were wearing summer uniforms. We got winter uniforms after we got there, but it was cold. We were in Marseilles about two weeks before they shipped us out. Did you ever hear the expression "Forty and H"?

JS - No.

EJ - Either eight horses or forty men. That's the cars that we were shipped north on. We were on the low end of the totem pole. Any other train that was on that line was ahead of us. We took the siding and waited for them to go by and things like that.

JS - Did you know where you were going?

EJ - We had no idea. Yes we did, we knew we were headed for the front wherever that was. They took us to a replacement depot in Epinole, France. We were put in there alphabetically. There were three of us with the same first name and same middle initial. We never pulled KP or anything. If they'd come looking for one of us, "He just left, he is gone."

JS - Good thinking.

EJ - When they started calling names to go to the company, I was the last one they called. They knew that I was the one they wanted. Do you remember the Mitchell family north of Cimarron?

JS - No, I don't.

EJ - Well, Raymond Mitchell graduated from high school in Cimarron the same year I graduated from Montezuma in 1938. His mother and my mother had taught school together. I didn't know anything about any of them until I met him at Little Rock. We went overseas together. We went to the same division, but we did not go to the same company. I served at the front about 10 days before he did. We were sent to the 3rd Infantry Division. We both went to the 15th Infantry. I went to A Company and he went to C Company. We got to see each other occasionally, but that was all.

JS - When you went to basic training, could you describe what basic training was like?

EJ - We were in a heck of a shape. They had to rebuild us and they did. They ran our wheels off. I gained twenty pounds the first thirty days I was in the Army. I never gained an ounce after that until after I came back home. They just worked the tar out of us.

JS - This was physical exercise?

EJ - Physical exercise, they taught us how to shoot a heavy weapon, how to shoot a rifle, how to handle grenades and to shoot a deal where you dropped a shell down a tube and fired it. I can't think what it was called.

JS - Was this the first time you had been away from home?

EJ - Yeah.

JS - There were people from all over the United States?

EJ - Not exactly, they were from all over the Midwest. They were from Nebraska and Colorado, but not too many from Colorado. Some of our men from Gray County went to Wyoming to train. It just depended on the luck of the draw, I guess. When we left Cimarron, we were not in the Army, Navy or anything. They took us down to Leavenworth and there we were assigned to the Army, the Navy or the artillery or whatever.

JS - You had no choice?

EJ - No, they just said you, you and you.

JS - Was it hard to take orders?

EJ - I had taken orders from my dad for a long time, so no, it wasn't a lot different.

JS - And maybe from your wife?

EJ - We won't go into that. The way we received orders, some of them were harder to take than others. The reason they sent me into the infantry, I know darned well, when they asked me if I ever did any hunting and did I ever live outside, I said yes. We went rabbit hunting and bird hunting. I was used to shooting a gun, a rifle. Yes, I went into the infantry.

JS - In basic training you did a lot of marching?

EJ - Yes, I expect we spent two hours a day in close order drill and calisthenics. Close order drill was to get you used to receiving orders and acting on them immediately.

JS - What kind of orders would you be receiving?

EJ - Right face, left face, to the rear march, and things like that.

JS - Were you carrying a pack?

EJ - We always wore a pack.

JS - What would be in that pack and how much would it weigh?

EJ - We'd figure at least 40 pounds. We carried a rifle. We lived with that darned thing. We had to be able to run a mile with that full pack and our rifle. When we got to the end of a mile we had to hand over hand up a wall, down the other side and then go 100 yards further on. They taught us to cross a river on a rope. I hadn't thought about that for awhile. We walked on one rope and held to another one.

JS - With the pack on?

EJ - With the pack on and your rifle over your shoulder.

JS - You said you gained twenty pounds; the food must have been good.

EJ - I won't say the food was outstanding, but we ate anything that was put before us. We were hungry. I had never had that kind of exercise before and none of the rest of us had. When I went into the Army, I weighed 120 pounds. I had been working down here at the Dodge City Co-op. I was manager of the feed mill. We would move about thirty-six tons of feed in and out of the mixer in a day. I was doing hard work, but it was repetitive, just with my arms, not my legs and everything. It was entirely different. We were regular. We slept regular. We were up at a certain time. We ate at a certain time and all that.

JS - Did you have duties other than basic training that you had to do, like KP or anything?

EJ - We all had to take our turn at seeing that everybody got fed. There were so many of us that that was not a hardship.

JS - Did you have free time?

EJ - Yeah.

JS - What did you do in free time?

EJ - The first month we were pretty well restricted to base. We could go to the PX or go to play pool or play cards or whatever. At the end of the month, my dad and mother came down to see us. My wife had moved down there so we would get off at the end of the week and things like that and have the weekend free. We couldn't get very far away. They knew where we were all the time. Living in Little Rock, Arkansas, was a little bit different. We learned an entirely new way of life.

JS - What would that have been?

EJ - We lived in an apartment. We had never lived in an apartment before. We'd always lived in a house. My wife got an apartment over a restaurant, which was not bad, nice apartment.

JS - You ate and slept on base?

EJ - Yes, until the weekends and then we would eat wherever we wanted to. Cockroaches, that is the thing that we ran into at that apartment. Not just at that

apartment, they were pretty much everywhere there in Little Rock. It was after we had gone to bed one night, my daughter was sleeping in the living room. We were in the bedroom. We heard something and couldn't imagine what it was. My wife said it was a mouse. Frances started to holler. It was in the waste basket and couldn't get out and that was the biggest cockroach I ever laid eyes on. It was as big as a mouse. They were all over. My mother said when she got down there that they shouldn't open their suitcase other than to get something out of it and close it back up. The place was lousy with cockroaches. Dad and my sister came down there a little bit later. Mother stayed there for a week. She didn't stay in Little Rock. She went out to my brother-in-laws'. He lived about 20 miles south of Little Rock. It was a pretty nice place. She went out there and we went out on the weekend.

JS - When you were shipped to the front, was the training you had received adequate?

EJ - I would say it was. We didn't know what to expect. I suppose yes, it was. There were a lot of things we had to learn on top of what we had already learned.

JS - Like what?

EJ - Learn to stand guard and having some idea of why you were doing that, where you were doing it and what you were supposed to watch for. That was something we had not had to do in our basic training. We had had guard duty, but this was an entirely different proposition. Anything that moved would just scare you to death. One thing about it, there was someone around there to help you so we got along pretty good.

JS -What were your first impressions as you got on that train to go to the front and when you arrived at the front?

EJ - We were packed in there so tight there was no way you could eat, sleep or anything else without either getting in somebody else's plate or somebody's sleeping bag or something. It was crowded.

JS - How long did it take you?

EJ - I think it was about five days. I am not sure, I don't remember. I know that one town we went through where we stopped for quite a little while waiting for another train to go by was Leon, and there was snow that deep along the sidewalks. Well, this looked like this is going to be a happy stop when we get up there. The snow was not quite as deep when we landed, but we were in the snow for two months after that.

JS - Was fighting going on?

EJ - Yes.

JS - Could you describe a little bit about that experience?

EJ - Well we had tanks, tank destroyers, heavy artillery and things like that leading the way for us. You heard what a burst sounded like going over your head or going beside you. They just popped like the dickens. I am not ever sure whether I ever killed anybody or not. I shot at a lot of them, but I don't know whether I ever killed anybody or not.

JS - At this time you were pushing the Germans back, is that right?

EJ - When we came back off the line somebody else was taking our place and we were preparing to cross the Rhine River. We crossed the Rhine River. I think it was in the first of April. When we got across the Rhine River, they put us on tanks, tank destroyers, and trucks and started us down the Autobahn and we were picking up foreign troops coming inland. We were coming up by divisions and they wanted to know where to go, what to do, how to get out of this. We just said, "There's somebody back of here that will take care of you."

JS - What was the Autobahn like?

EJ - It was a four-lane highway, but it was not divided like I-70 is. It was four-lane with two going this way and two going that way and no speed limit. Germany never had a speed limit on anything. That was the first time I ever rode at 100 mile an hour.

JS - Was it just war traffic?

EJ - That was about all there was at that time.

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Edwin Jacques (EJ)

Tape 1 of 2

Side B

EJ - You have heard a lot about alternate fuel. That was my first experience with alternate fuels. These trucks burnt wood.

JS - The German trucks?

EJ - The German trucks burned wood. I had no idea. I suppose it was kind of a steam engine, I don't know. They burned wood and they had to carry a supply of wood with them. They had a converter here on the back corner of their vehicle. This was the first time I ever saw anything like that.

JS - I have never heard of that.

EJ - Nobody else has over here, either. That's the only way I can describe it. The cars were a little better than that. They burned kerosene or something like that. The gasoline was all for the Army and the Air Force.

JS - You were in France fighting about how long?

EJ - We landed in January and crossed the Rhine about the first of April. Then we were in Germany. Four months.

JS - I know you were fighting a war, but what was your impression of France or the French people?

EJ - We really didn't see very much of the French people. They stayed pretty well out of the way. If we took over a house, we asked permission if we could use that house. When we crossed the river, the captain said, "Whatever you want, take it." We did.

JS - What would you take?

EJ - A house or if we saw something we wanted to eat, we ate it. That time of year there was lots of fruit. We did, we lived well.

JS - By that time the Germans knew the war was over?

EJ - Oh yeah, they knew it was over.

JS - That's why on the Autobahn, you were going one way and they were going the other?

EJ - They were walking back the other way. They had quit. They were done.

JS - Why were you going down the Autobahn?

EJ - We were headed for Austria. We didn't know, but that was where people thought Hitler probably was and he would have quite a stronghold there. That's where we were headed. When we got out into Austria, there was absolutely nothing there. My company wound up on a lake, almost in Italy. We stayed there for about three months.

JS - Is that where you were when the war officially ended in Europe?

EJ - No, we were still in Austria when the war officially ended. I think that was April the 8th. It was still working over in the Pacific and most of us thought that

was where we were headed. There were a few of them they did ship over there, but not very many.

JS - Do you remember how you found out that the war in Europe had ended? Would it have been from your superiors?

EJ - I don't remember. It was kind of by osmosis, I think. Probably the Captain told the Lieutenant and the Lieutenant said, "Hey, it's all over with, let's quit."

JS - When you shipped out and started across that ocean, what were some of your thoughts?

EJ - That's a heck of a big puddle. That was the first time I had ever seen a pond of water that big. Meade State Lake was the biggest pond of water I had seen up until that time.

JS - This would have been quite an experience. You said it was the first time that you flew, the first time you were on the ocean and the first time that you were fighting. What were you thinking all those times?

EJ - Just trying to stay alive. That was the main thing as far as all of us were concerned. I expect we advanced more by accident than by anything else because most of us were just as green as grass. We had no idea what we were supposed to be doing or anything. We hoped that somebody up there did.

JS - You were led by a superior officer. What would he say?

EJ - Somebody had told him where they wanted our company to go. He came back and told us what we were supposed to do. He would supposedly lead us there. Sometimes he led us from behind, but that didn't make any difference. That was the way that things came down.

JS - Were you taking villages or moving up particular roads?

EJ - Our regiment, the 15th Infantry, cleared and cleaned all the soldiers and everything out of Augsburg, Germany. Augsburg was a city, I suppose, the size of Hutchinson. We put everybody in jail that had a uniform on. We found out later that the guys that we were putting in jail were firemen and policemen. We didn't know one uniform from another. All of them wore beautiful uniforms.

JS - When you say put them in jail, what does that mean?

EJ - Just that. We took them to their hoosegow that they had and put them in jail.

JS - Did someone stay and administer the town after you secured it?

EJ - There was someone came up behind us and took care of that. Our job was to clean it up. Somebody else took care of them.

JS - When you were marching into the town to secure it how did you eat and did you sleep?

EJ - We carried our rations with us. We got our rations of a morning, usually, before we left. Sometimes we didn't get any and that was just too bad. We had everything back here in this pack. We had a sleeping bag and we ate and we slept right where we stopped.

JS - Did you all smoke?

EJ - No, not all of us. Most of us did. I started smoking at home when I was thirteen and I quit smoking in 1980.

JS - You smoked a long time then.

EJ - I did.

JS - You are very healthy.

EJ - I had my first heart attack in 1980. The doctor said, "That is a good thing to have. It worked just fine. It didn't hurt you and it scared hell out of you." They sent me down to Kansas City. The doctor that I was going to had taken his basic training in St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City. As far as he was concerned there wasn't any other Heart Hospital in the world. That's where he sent all of his patients. They looked me over, gave me an angioplasty and the whole thing, and sent me home. That first angioplasty lasted me thirteen years. Since then, I have had six more.

JS - That might be a record.

EJ - The last time they gave me an angioplasty, they put in three stints. Do you know what those darned stints, still do?

JS - No

EJ - If I walk into Dillon's or if I walk into Walmart, they beep.

JS - Because of the metal?

EJ - Yes, one day when I started to go out at Dillon's a woman started following me and she said it didn't make any difference because it buzzed when I came in. I didn't know what it was for a long time so I asked the doctor about it. "Yeah, it'll do that," he said.

JS - I hope you don't fly.

EJ - Yes, I do.

JS - Does it set off the buzzer?

EJ - Yeah, we had to know all about that. I carry a card with me all the time that tells what the number of them is and everything and the same way with my eyes. I have to have a card for them too, so if I have to go to another eye doctor, he will know what has been done, etc.

JS - You said it was good that the heart attack scared you. Were you frightened or scared as you were having it?

EJ - I didn't know what in the world was happening. Some people have chest pains. I have never had one in my life. My pain was all right here. I went to the dentist two or three times. There was nothing wrong with my teeth. Finally I was going to have them all pulled out. He refused to do it because there was nothing wrong with them. He didn't know what was causing it and I didn't know what was causing it. They said that was from the heart attack. That had bothered me for six months.

JS - Sounds like you were lucky.

EJ - I was very fortunate.

JS - Is there a particular incident, a particular person, a particular story that when you are sitting around talking or thinking about being in Europe that you sort of remember or tell people?

EJ - Well, the First Lieutenant that I had was from a little town down here in Eastern Kansas and he was as green as all the rest of us were. He had a job to do and he was trying awfully hard to do it, Lieutenant Hill. Yeah, I remember him very well. The first platoon sergeant that I had was an Indian from West Virginia. West 'By-God' Virginia. I had two sergeants, Sergeant Kneep. This Indian was from West Virginia and Sergeant Kneep was from Akron, Ohio. I will never forget those two guys. The captain that we had was one of those captains that was supposed to lead you, but he usually was behind you pushing. I really don't remember much about him except that he really wasn't a very good officer. He shouldn't have been put in charge of a rifle company because he was a coward. Of course, when I went into the Army, I went in through Fort Leavenworth. That was what they called the staff college. The field officers, majors, colonels, generals, etc., had to come back there periodically and go to school. I know that the colonel that we had, Colonel Edson, about the time the war was over; they pulled him and sent him back to the staff college. We didn't figure we'd ever see

him again, but no sir, he came back. The other main non-commissioned officer that I remember was a Master Sergeant. I worked in the motor pool for a little while and he was in charge of the motor pool. Sergeant Check. That was his name, but he also was a Chech. He was from Chechlovakia, originally. He joined the 3rd division when it was in China during the Boxer Uprising in 1910. He'd been in the Army for a long time. I don't know if they advertise it, but we had a liquor ration in the 3rd division all the time. It wasn't very expensive. I had never drunk very much so it didn't bother me at all, I just sold mine, but Sergeant Check sent a two-and-a-half ton truck to Brussels every two weeks and, I think, came back loaded to the gills with whiskey, wine or anything you could mention.

JS - You sold yours. How much money did you receive?

EJ - My wife got most of it.

JS - Did you send it home or what?

EJ - Of course, she got hers before I ever got any. I had gotten to the place that I was up to about a hundred dollars a month. I had gotten up to what they called a T-5, which was nothing, but a corporal. I had gotten up that high. What my job was, I carried the radio in the company. Sometimes we had one of these little ones, about the size of a cigarette carton. They worked just about as good as the first radio that I put in my truck. If you could see the guy, you could talk to him and your radio would work. That's about the way this one worked, but then they came out with this command radio and it was a pack outfit so I carried it. I think it weighed about fifty pounds. You could get regiment with that.

JS - Because you had the radio you had to stay close to the commander?

EJ - Yes I did, I had to trit-trot right along with him. We had what they called a sound power telephone. We could not have a telephone at the front line that would ring so we had to have some other means of getting that guys attention. Most of us could whistle a little and we whistled into the speaker on that telephone and somebody would answer you. All right, we had a little old ball of wire that we carried with us. If a tank ran over that or something we didn't have any telephone communication. If our radio was out we didn't have any communication at all and it was my time to go back and find that break in the wire and fix it. We were just going into Nuremburg. I had to go back very near five miles before I found the break. I fixed it and came back and there was a lot of fighting in Nuremburg. I think there were more Congressional Medals of Honor given for Nuremburg than anything else. That's where I got my Distinguished Service Cross.

JS - Why was the fighting so intense there?

EJ - Nuremburg was the cradle of the Nazi Army. If you remember the 1936 Olympics, we had a negro that won the mile in the Olympics at that time. That hurt Hitler awfully bad.

JS - Was that Jesse Owens?

EJ - That was Jesse Owens. We had our awards ceremony in that stadium where they had the Olympics, or at least part of it. Yes, there were a lot of soldiers in that town. The thing that we didn't know was that there were a lot of them underground. We had to dig them out. Nuremburg was a walled city. Underneath that wall, three levels, we had to go down and clean them out.

JS - They lived there?

EJ - They lived down there, they had their offices, their hospital, and the whole thing down there.

JS - How did you get down?

EJ - We just followed the way that they had gone. They weren't fighting. We just had to go down and get them.

JS - They had given up by then?

EJ - They had given up, but that town was full of German soldiers. You went down there with the idea that somebody was going to shoot at you, but just nobody did.

JS - When you crossed the Rhine and marched into Germany, did you have an impression of the German people and their soldiers.

EJ - We, of course, had seen the German soldiers, but we didn't see very many German people. They tended to stay back out of the way. I know that there are people that say that the holocaust never happened, but it did. We saw where it happened. It wasn't pretty.

JS - No. When was that and can you describe it or does it bother you too much?

EJ - These were not German people. They were Pole, Ukrainians and all the little countries around there that Germany had captured or killed or whatever. Most of them were Jewish people. I was not in any of the troops that opened any of these places, but I saw them after they came out. It was pathetic. Oh yeah, there are good people that say that never happened. Yes, it did.

JS - Were you able to write home and was your wife able to send letters to you at this time?

EJ - I could write letters home. They were always censored and things like that. We used V-mail, which amounted to putting it on tissue paper. Everything was airmailed. Yes, we could write whenever we had time and we could receive mail whenever there was any that came in. We would receive mail at least once a week.

JS - Did your wife or your parents send you things? What would they have sent you if they did?

EJ - I don't remember the folks sending anything. Well, yes they did too. My wife sent me a carton of cigarettes, one time. My mother sent me a package of cookies, one time. They didn't get there in very good shape, but they were edible. All of them wrote to me. Sometimes they were slow getting there and maybe they weren't picked up.

JS - Any more stories like a funny story, a sad story or a scary story that is very specific that you remember about your experiences?

EJ - I remember the first time I saw a fleet. I don't mean a few. I mean a fleet of airplanes, bombers, going over towards Germany. It was at night and it went over for hours. We couldn't imagine what in the world it was. We had never heard anything like that. We heard a few of them coming back. They didn't always come back the same way they went. I remember one time about the same time was night patrol in the snow. Our clothes were dark, and while on white snow we had to do something about that. The only thing we had that was white was a mattress cover. We cut a hole in that mattress cover, put our arms out through it and we were camouflaged (chuckle).

JS - That's ingenious, yes.

EJ - Another thing they did and it scared a lot of us, was artificial moonlight.

JS - Can you describe that?

EJ - I can try. Far back behind the lines, I don't know how far, they took lights, huge batteries of them, and shown them up on the clouds and we couldn't imagine what in the world it was. We had seen the Northern Lights and things like that, but this didn't look like that at all. Finally they told us what it was. "So you people can see where you are going," artificial moonlight.

JS - Would that give you away to the enemy?

EJ - Not really, we had these camouflage things on in the snow. It was like you were walking down the street. Not brightly lit, but occasionally a light. You could see to get around.

JS - When you were moving in you didn't have air support?

EJ - Sometimes, usually the heavy artillery and the air force would go in ahead of us, but sometimes they were working someplace else. If we got in trouble we would call in for air support. We had a little Piper Cub that pattered around with us. He was an artillery spotter. He'd say, "Just drop some over here." And he'd give them the coordinates. We wondered what that little old plane was that was flying around there, but he was always almost down on the ground. He was staying out of the way.

JS - The men that you were fighting with, did you make good friends?

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Edwin Jacques (EJ)

Tape 2 of 2

Side A

EJ - Well, we didn't try to make too close of friends right at first. We didn't have any idea how long they would be there. I know one young man, I didn't know where he was from or what his name was, but he had only been with the company a couple of days and we had just pulled off the road and down in the ditch. He was beside a tree and the Germans spotted three artillery shells right down the middle of that road and he got a piece of shrapnel in his foot. I never saw him again. I asked the medic about it, he said, "Hell, he got the million dollars. He went home." That's the reason we didn't make any close friends. I know that several of the ones that went across on the Queen Mary were in the front long before we were so I never did see any of them again.

JS - The ones that you kept in contact were the ones later?

EJ - Yeah.

JS - How long did you keep in contact with them or do you still?

EJ - No, I have tried to get in contact with one or two of them, but either they are dead or say the heck with it or something. I do know that Raymond Mitchell, over here at Cimarron is gone. He died a long time ago. I'm not sure, but I think he had an aneurism. He had bought a farm north of Cimarron and his mother and brother lived a little ways away. They said he had just fallen off the stool. They had an autopsy and everything and they said he was just full of blood. Evidently the aneurism had ruptured.

JS - So, you had crossed the Rhine, gone through Germany, into Austria and you wound up close to Italy. You were there several months?

EJ - We went down there about the first of May and we went back up into Germany, I suppose, about the first of August so it had been about three months.

JS - When you were there close to Italy, were you just there or were you fighting?

EJ - No, we were on guard at a border crossing. That's where I met General Eisenhower.

JS - Really? Tell me about that.

EJ - It was the first time I had ever met a General Officer and I was tongue tied. I could not say a thing. I expect he thought I was the dumbest thing he ever saw. Probably I was. That was the first time I ever met him.

JS - Was he just there looking?

EJ - He was just going through. I don't know. He had been meeting troops and things like that.

JS - Did he know you were from Kansas?

EJ - Yeah, he thought these Kansas kids were good and strong.

JS - When you were there you just pulled regular duty?

EJ - Yes, just guard duty was all it was. At that time, I was the cook most of the time. My mom had taught me to cook a long time ago. She said, "You never knew when you'll need it."

JS - That was true.

EJ - That was true.

JS - What kind of things would you cook?

EJ - Stew mostly. We'd get a little piece of meat and we could go out and find somebody's onion patch and maybe somebody's garden.

JS - Where would you get the meat?

EJ - From the Army. They would bring food around to us. It was not all prepared. We had to fix it. It might be a chicken. I roasted several chickens.

JS - What kind of food did you miss most?

EJ - It didn't make any difference what it was. It was just that, at home we didn't have to fix it. My mom fixed it or my wife fixed it. Over there, I had to do it.

JS - Did you have desserts?

EJ - There was always fruit. The thing, I suppose, that I missed the most was eggs, and I still despise powdered eggs to this day and they think I am kind of odd up here.

JS - What would you have to drink?

EJ - Water, mostly.

JS - But not milk?

EJ - If we found a cow.

JS - Seems like you lived off the land a lot.

EJ - We lived off the land a lot after we got into Germany. We did a lot in France too. We didn't ask for everything.

JS - You moved back to Germany and what did you do then?

EJ - By then I was moved into Service Company and I was doing clerical work.

JS - You were keeping records?

EJ - Yeah, keeping records. When we established an office, we had to have desks, chairs, and things like that. Somebody had to go out and get them. I was one of them.

JS - Where would you get them?

EJ - From offices, from homes, any place there was. If we wanted it, we got it. We had to keep a record of it because somebody might have to pay for it. At one time I had seven German women working for me. They did the typing because I was not a typist.

JS - Did they know English?

EJ - I could get enough German that we could get along. I couldn't talk very fast. They had to slow down, but we got along.

JS - When you went to get a desk, it might be in someone's home?

EJ - Yes.

JS - You would just go in and say, "We are taking this desk"?

EJ - We would just tell them we were going to take this desk. We would write down what it was, how big it was, what it was made of and things like that. They would have to sign it, where it was going and there would be a requisition made for it and maybe they would get paid for it, and maybe they wouldn't. I don't know.

JS - Did any of them object?

EJ - Not very hard. They thought the time of objection was probably past.

JS - Let me go back to when you were close to the border of Italy. What kind of people would be coming through that border? Was it just military?

EJ - Just military. There would be people that lived there that would be going through there, but we would see that they had come one way and we would expect them to be coming back.

JS - So you would ask the military, would it be English?

EJ - It might be English because the different services did move about quite a bit.

JS - You would just ask them for their papers?

EJ - We would just ask them what they were doing, where they were going, and usually we had something notifying us that there would be a group to come through. We would expect them at a certain time or something like that.

JS - They came through on foot?

EJ - No, they would be on vehicles.

JS - When you went up to Germany, how long did you stay there and where was this in Germany?

EJ - I was in the little town of Arolson.

JS - Do you know how to spell that?

EJ - I can spell it phonetically, Arolson, and that was where Service Company was stationed. Now there was A Company, B Company and C Company that were scattered around in different little towns around there so I got acquainted

with people over the telephone. I would never meet any of them, but I got acquainted over the telephone.

JS - You were the man to go to?

EJ - I was the man to go to. I was Aunt Mary.

JS - Was the life of the German civilian getting back to some state of normalcy?

EJ - Yeah, it was getting back to where it was normal. I say it was normal, I have no idea what normal was for them. They were getting along a heck of a lot better than they had been. The one thing that we noticed about the time that the shooting stopped, they didn't want, anybody over there, to be even close to the Russians. That was definitely a no-no.

JS - Did you come into contact with the Russian Army at all?

EJ - Yeah, we might give somebody coming into our area a place to stay. The Russian Army would come in and say, "Where is so and so?" "We really don't know." We never told anybody in the Russian Army where anybody was because they did not want to be found. They might be Polish, they might be Chech, they might be anything. They did not want to be found by Russians.

JS - Did you just understand that you wouldn't tell the Russians where they were?

EJ - That was just kind of a thing that came down word of mouth, that this is one thing we are not going to do. I don't know whether we had any orders that way or anything. It was just one thing we are not going to do.

JS - How long were you there then and then where did you go?

EJ - That's the last place I went. We got up there sometime in August and I left there the last part of February the following year. We went by train to Bremerton. You can't imagine the ship they put us on. The ship that we went over there on was a big ship. I think there were fifteen-thousand troops on it. On another boat they put us on to come back on, there were a thousand of us. It was a little can and we came right straight across in March. We came across in rough weather. Sick, oh my God, people were sick. If that had been my only experience crossing the ocean, I would never have gone near the water again. I knew it could be good, but that was terrible.

JS - Were they just using any boat they had to get you home?

EJ - They were trying to get us home. I don't know how close we were to the United States, but the sun came out and we got up on deck. We shed our shirts

and everything. When we got into New York, we were sunburned. I know that I, and five or six other fellows, one of our friends lived in New York and he said he would take us around and show us the town. "You have to be back, but I will show you the town and I think you will all want to get a haircut." Not only that, but they kind of smoothed down our suntan, too. We all got to make a telephone call home. We couldn't talk very long, but I did get to talk to dad and my wife and I told them I would be home at such and such a time. I didn't know if I would quite make it exactly that, but it would be close. I met my wife in Kansas City coming back.

JS - When you were in Europe, how did you get your haircut? Did they have a barber?

EJ - Some guy would cut it for you. It didn't make a difference, he wasn't a barber. He would do it for you. I'd keep my hair cut pretty short. They would cut it shorter than that. They'd use clippers and cut it all off. You could wash your head with a washcloth and you wouldn't get any bugs and things like that.

JS - You didn't bathe regularly. That wouldn't have been possible, right?

EJ - If anybody got into a bunch of cooties, the whole bunch would get a shower. I will guarantee you would get a shower and clean clothes immediately. That was one thing that they would not stand for. If we would go into a house with lice or mites or something we would get a bath and clean underwear and clean clothes from the skin out.

JS - What would a shower have been?

EJ - They would set up in a barn or somewhere. Anything that was kind out of the weather. They would bring a truck load of water and they would heat that water and you would get that shower.

JS - Before we come back to where you are coming back, what other information might people want to know that would be important? What was your overall impression as you were coming home of the war effort, your part in it, what had happened to you and how you had changed?

EJ - We were very glad it was over, of course. I know my thought was, "I'd like to come back here and see what things look like when people aren't shooting at me." I think the other fellows felt pretty much the same way. Whether any of them felt that they had been there and seen all they wanted to see, I don't know. I did go back.

JS - You did, when?

EJ - Yes, fifty years later.

JS - That would have been in 1995 or '96?

EJ - '96, I think.

JS - You went to the same places?

EJ - Pretty much, this tour that I took, we landed in Frankfurt. We went to Nuremberg; we went to Salzburg, Austria. We went on to Italy and on to Florence. We went down to Rome. Now, I had never been into Italy at all. We went back up into Switzerland and back into Germany. The one thing that I did not get to see that I found out afterward that I sure wish I could have was the John Deere store in Gomstak, Germany. I thought it was just a store. When I got home, I was telling my son-in-law about it. He said, "No, that was the big shop, the whole thing there in Germany. Gomstak was the headquarters for John Deere in Germany. Heck, it looked just like Dodge City.

JS - Why did you go back?

EJ - I wanted to go back and see how much changed it was. Yes, it was cleaned up a lot. A lot of the towns had been rebuilt. The big point was that nobody was shooting at me. I had never been to Italy and I got to see a lot of Italy. I got to go through Switzerland. There were two or three places I had wanted to go on leave when I was over there. One place was Brussels. Another place was Paris and I never got to do either one. I still haven't been to Paris or Belgium, either, but the town of Frankfurt, Nuremberg and all those towns are cleaned up. They look nice. One of my friends went back over there and he was a school teacher and he went to, I don't know if it was a college or what. It was in Nuremberg and he said they had, he thought, a really nice thing as far as he was concerned. He said he got a lot out of the term that he went to this school. He said he thought it helped him a lot.

JS - Could you recognize any of the places in Nuremberg?

EJ - Yes, of course, the city wall was there. I suppose it still is, I don't know, because I don't think they would ever tear that down. The thing that I noticed was the trees were a lot bigger. The country had, a lot of it, grown up since I had been over there. When I was in Salzburg, Austria, we went to someplace that they had to stay that they ordinarily took their tour groups. I told them there was a place in Austria that I would like to see, but I didn't know just exactly where it was, but when we were leaving we were only about a couple of blocks from it. They said it was not on their itinerary and we couldn't go there. After I got home, I was talking to the tour company about it and they said they could vary them a little bit. I would have liked to have seen that. It was a big auditorium where we went to see a program of some kind while we were there. I would like to have seen that again. The rest of the highway down through Austria except down to

Birchesgarten, which was Hitler's place, I believe. That was not changed a bit. I suppose that was something that the government would not let them change. We went on into Italy and I got to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa. I got to see all the tourist spots in Rome and things like that.

JS - But no Paris?

EJ - No Paris.

JS - Did you get any leave at all when you were over there in the war and where did you go? You said you wanted to go to Brussels and Paris, but didn't get to.

EJ - I got to go to Nancy, France, one day. That is where my family originated. The Jacques name was on a lot of stores and things like that. I wished I had known a lot more about the family before I went over there. Seeing my name all over and we had our name on our shirt, and little kids called me by name and things like that. That was different.

JS - Anything about Europe you can think of before we bring you back home?

EJ - I think as far as Europe is concern, I am about over with it.

JS - Well, it is not too late. You could still go back and see Paris.

EJ - I will tell you about the trip that we did take just lately. My daughter died and my son-in-law got married again the 4th of June last year and he took his whole family to Hawaii. I went and asked the doctor if it was all right for me to get on that airplane. The only thing they told me was I had to keep those hose on to keep my blood circulating. Okay, I got them. You have to wear them all the time you are on the plane. I got along just fine. We flew from Denver because it was going to cost \$15,000 and more if we flew from Wichita so we flew from Denver. I walked out of that Denver airport carrying my luggage. I was played out. I don't know how far we walked. It seemed like a mile, but I know it wasn't. I got home and about a week later I was out here at Monte visiting my granddaughter and I just keeled over. It scared her to death. She couldn't pick me up. I don't know if I was out thirty seconds or thirty minutes, she never did tell me, but I woke up, got up and was ready to come home. I had an appointment with the doctor down at Meade the next day. Evidently Sis had got on the telephone to that doctor. I got down there the next morning. He never even looked at me. He said he had a room up there in the hospital and, "I'll get a wheelchair we'll go up there, but I have got to call first and see if there is a room for you in Wichita." They got me up there and they put me on the heart monitor and the whole bit. He came in and said, "I have an appointment for you at St. Francis in Wichita tomorrow afternoon at 12:30." I asked Shannon if she could take me down and she said, "Yeah, if that is what it takes. If I can't go, JB will take you." The doctor said going from this hospital to that one, you have to go in an ambulance. That is not

fun, but I went in the ambulance. We didn't get there at 12:30, but we were pretty close and they ran me through all the tests and everything. The one that I could not pass was the last one. They ran that little old thing up in my heart and they hit a block. He was afraid to push it out so they cut me open. He said if they had tried to push it on through, they might have broke something and then they would have to cut me open and it would have been an emergency so they did it this way.

JS - You came out of that okay.

EJ - I came out just fine. I feel like if I had this heart attack or whatever it was, over there, they would have just dropped me off in the ocean and said, "The hell with him."

JS - They'd have buried you at sea.

EJ - Yes.

JS - Let's come back now, to your coming back to United States. You called your wife and your parents. You came back to Kansas.

EJ - We came back on a troop train. It was just like when we were going up the other way in France. We took the siding for everything that came along. I saw the back door of all the towns that we came through. I think it took two days to go from Camp Kilmer to Leavenworth.

JS - That's where you got out officially, at Leavenworth?

EJ - Yeah.

JS - You were coming home. Did you know what you were going to do?

EJ - I had a job here at Dodge City if I wanted it. I came back and I talked to Jimmie Dean and I told him I kind of thought I would like to work for myself. I went back and I was a farmer for about forty years. My wife went into a nursing home.

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Edwin Jacques (EJ)

Tape 2 of 2

Side B

EJ - They told me when she went in she would live maybe two or three years. She was in there eight years. I have had prostate cancer, I had skin cancer, I

had, I don't know how many other things. I had angioplasty two or three times while she was in there. I was my own caregiver. When I had to go to the doctor or something like that, my daughter was still alive at that time. The last time when Opal went into the nursing home my son-in-law came out and told me, "You have worked on John Deere machinery all your life, why don't you come in and work for us?" So I worked for them for seven years. I didn't know whether I would enjoy it or not, but I did. I enjoyed it.

JS - Your daughter, that's the one when you were away?

EJ - She was just a little bitty snot.

JS - When you got home, how old was she?

EJ - She was four years old when I left and I was gone a little over two years so she was in the first grade when I came back. She was in school when I got home. I know my wife met me in Kansas City and we came home the next day. Then, we adopted a son in '51. While I was gone, my wife had lost twin boys. A lot of people think, "Oh, a miscarriage, you forget that.", but she never did. I don't think they ever do. So we adopted Kim and he lives out at Sublette, he and his wife and their kids. One of them is married and the other is to be married in April of this year.

JS - When you came back, your daughter remembered you?

EJ - Oh yeah, she remembered me. I put her through her schooling. When she got out of high school she didn't want to go on to college. She had offers to and all that sort of thing, but she wanted to get married. She got married and their first child was born three years later and the second one was born eighteen months later than that. She had two babies right together and she said that's enough. Shannon has taken her place as far as I am concerned. She runs me all over the country and if I have to have any paper work done or something like that she takes care of it for me.

JS - It's good that you have her.

EJ - She's an insurance agent. If she has to be gone, I've got an ex-son-in-law over here on Fairway and he and his wife shuffle me around.

JS - What did it feel like when you came home? How do you feel like your experience in the service changed you and what did you learn from that experience?

EJ - I learned to depend on myself. Over there, there wasn't anybody else going to take care of me. I had to do whatever was required and I found out that was pretty well the way it was here at home. I got along a lot better, I think, after I

came home than I would have if I had never had to go. That's just a feeling that I have got.

JS - Do you think it changed you in any way?

EJ - I'm sure it did. I know these fellows that are coming back from the service have all kind of things wrong with them. I suppose we did too, but we didn't have time to get sick. We had to get busy. I think it was just something we had to do.

JS - You didn't question it, you just did it?

EJ - We just did it.

JS - Other than take care of yourself, were there other things you learned like how to get along with people?

EJ - Yes, you had to get along with people. You had to learn to depend on somebody else that was there with you too. All of these things are some things that I really learned while I was over there.

JS - Is there anything else that you can think of that future historians or people who are reading these accounts might need to know about the experience of you in World War Two?

EJ - The way I feel about my experience, I wouldn't think that anybody would need to go back and look at my history and say that this guy really did something wonderful. Maybe I better copy him. I don't think that would ever happen, but maybe I am wrong. I know that the things that I have read about the people that are coming back now, they have seen a whole lot of things different than I ever did. We were not in the desert and that would be a big difference. They have never fought in the snow which would be a big difference that way. We did not see any helicopters at all. They just didn't even have them. As far as the day to day service is concerned, I expect a lot of it is the same. They are working in the desert; I was in the snow.

JS - Would you have called yourself and the other young men patriotic? Did that cross your mind?

EJ - No, it was just something that needed to be done. My neighbors and their kids had all gone. There was no reason that I shouldn't.

JS - Had other members of your family, your uncles or others been in World War One?

EJ - My dad was called, but he did not have to serve. The war ended and they just sent everybody home. He never even went to a training center. I had a

cousin in Topeka that served in World War One and I lost a Topeka cousin in World War One. As far as I know that is all. I had a brother that served in the Pacific. He was an engineer and he got as far as Japan and turned around and came back. He said while he was over there, there was nothing he was interested in. He was at Fort Mead, Maryland, for quite a while. He said the things he was working with, he really didn't think had anything to do with the Army. He was working with different strains of grasses. I have no idea what for and he didn't either. He said he thought it was something they had to have somebody do and he was there.

JS - This was during World War Two?

EJ - Yeah, it was at the tail end of World War Two because he didn't go into the Army until after I came home. He got married just before he went into the Army and I know we had to take up a collection there at the wedding that day so they could go on a wedding trip.

JS - Were most of the men that you served with married or not?

EJ - Some were and some weren't. There's no telling. Neither one of the sergeants that I had, was married. The captain was married and one of the lieutenants was married. Most of them, if I knew anything about them, were not married.

JS - Unless you have questions or additional things, we are finished.

EJ - If you are through, I am.

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Edwin Jacques (EJ)

Tape 2 of 2

END