Jay Ricks – Life During WWII

By Jay C. Ricks

October 21, 2004

Box 6 Folder 23

Oral Interview conducted by Bethy Twitchell

Transcript copied by Bethy Twitchell April 2006

Brigham Young University – Idaho
BT: (As I thought the tape was going, but it wasn’t, the first few minutes have not been recorded. Basically, I just asked him what he remembered about Pearl Harbor).

JR: Okay, the next day was, was school, and our principal brought in a, a radio. We had an assembly and he, he tuned in to President Roosevelt’s talk, that he declared war.

BT: Okay.

JR: And prior to that, for years, you know that the British had been involved in Europe, and, ah, the United States had tried to stay out of the war, but we have provided a lot of, ah, assistance to the British, in the way of, ah, ships, I think naval vessels, and ah, and ah, materials, arms and petroleum products. They were supporting the effort, but they… It was quite an effort for the United States to stay out of the war. They didn’t want to get involved in Europe.

BT: I heard that.

JR: Yeah.

BT: So - and you told me over the phone that it was ‘44 when you were drafted. Is that correct?

JR: From Pearl Harbor on, the war didn’t go on very good, really. In the Pacific, there were a lot of, a lot of dark days, and things weren’t going too good. And, ah, I spent those years finishing high school. And also, my father had a farm. We… I didn’t realize how great agriculture was then, and maybe we don’t know, but at the particular time, ah, it became immensely important – food. Food, and actually, food was rationed. Your, your butter was rationed, your milk was rationed, your sugar was rationed, all these. And the need developed because all the people were being employed in defense, and they, and there weren’t, there wasn’t the people available for growing food. They tried to do all this defense work: build airplanes, trucks, tanks, and all this. And they just pulled everybody into that. And the few that stayed in farming attempted to grow the necessary food. And also Europe, in their battle, in Europe and England, it had destroyed a lot of the farming, farms, and, ah, farms were mined, and the crops were not grown. So they were very dependent on our country for food and I spent those years in school in the, the wintertime and working on the farm in the summer. And, ah, I graduated from high school in May of 1944. And my dad, many of my friends, soon as they graduated went into the service. I had five that went to the Navy on the same day. But my dad was in very poor health, and he wanted, he asked me, he says, “Jay, don’t you join, don’t you go until they draft you. I need you on the farm” And that particular year they – any boys that would associate with the farm – they deferred them. And, ah, I worked on the farm that year. In June was D-day. We graduated in May, and just a few days later the troops landed on the beaches of France. And this was, this was, this was a giant step forward but it was a long, we knew it was long road.

BT: Yeah.
JR: And at the same time we were conducting a war in the Pacific.

BT: Right. I heard that.

JR: And it’s almost impossible to conduct war on those fronts and provide for the needs of all those.

BT: It is hard.

JR: But, ah, we worked on the farm, and ah, we, ah, a great need, a real great need was for wheat. Wheat was so easily shipped and stored. And, ah, this area, the farmers grew a lot of wheat, and it was very much in demand, and all the, a lot of the boys stayed out to work on the farm and grow wheat. As soon as the harvest was in, ah, we were all drafted. The... I was sent to Camp Douglas in Utah – Fort Douglas. I went to Fort Douglas, and then on to Camp Roberts in California, where I took the training, and we finished the harvest in October and after November, and then, December, the Battle of the Bulge hit. And they couldn’t hardly find enough troops. They were just taking everybody and anybody and sending them over there to reinforce the troops. I got an opportunity to go Fort Benning in Georgia and take additional training. And at that time we were being trained to go to the Pacific.

BT: Okay

JR: At first, I guess, we were trained to go to the Atlantic and to Europe. And then in June, let’s see, it was in June that the Germans surrendered.

BT: What year was that, ‘45?


BT: Okay.

JR: In ‘45, yeah. And then in August, the Japanese surrendered. And I graduated from Fort Benning on the 18th of August. And, ah, then we were to go to Europe in the army of occupation.

BT: Okay, now, what is that?

JR: Well, we, we took over, so the troops that had been fighting could come home.

BT: Oh, okay.

JR: And we stayed and... they divided Europe up in zones. The Russians had their zone, the English had their zone, the French had their zone, and the Americans had their zone. And each of these countries was responsible for those areas.
BT: Okay.

JR: And we, ah, went over there and we worked, mainly, ah, the Germans had brought so many people from other countries, like Poland and Hungary, Czechoslovakia. And after the war, those people that just left, I didn’t know, worked for themselves, or do whatever they could to stay alive. And we got there, we, we, we worked them up into companies and provided for their needs and we used a lot of the Polish for guards, to guard the German prisoners of war. We had the German prisoners of war and we took the Polish and had the guards, and guarded them. We also had the, the Nuremberg trials.

BT: That’s right. Were you in Europe at that time?

JR: Yes, yes, I was there. I landed in the fall of ‘45. The war ended in June, and I landed [indistinguishable]. And then we were put on railroad cars, and I’ve got a picture of some of these cars, maybe here.

BT: I’d like to see them.

JR: Railroad cars. This was... these were taken in Europe. Pictures.

BT: Are these all of you?

JR: No, these pictures, them I took.

BT: Wow. Now, in what part of Europe were you in?

JR: Okay, I was, I was, I’ve got a map here.

BT: Oh, good.

JR: I was stationed in Mannheim

BT: Oh, okay.

JR: I arrived in Mannheim on the day of General Patton’s funeral. You familiar with General Patton?

BT: I’ve, I’ve seen bits and pieces of the movie.

JR: Have you? You got to see that movie. And I didn’t recognize the significance of that funeral because we had been traveling for ten days in little box cars, and we hadn’t had baths, and so all I wanted to do was to get into bed. And all the men from our outfit went to the funeral, and they offered, invited me to go with them, but I missed this opportunity. But this is a picture of Mannheim.
BT: Okay.

JR: Can you imagine seeing that from the air for bombing?

BT: Oh, no.

JR: This, this is the Rhine river.

BT: Okay.

JR: And this is the Neckar river. The Neckar river? It comes down from Heidelberg.

BT: Okay.

JR: And joins at Mannheim.

BT: I’m really familiar with the Rhine.

JR: Are you?

BT: But not, well, not really familiar. I know where it is.

JR: Okay, yeah, it’s a great river.

BT: I don’t know much about the Neckar.

JR: We’ve got some pictures of locks.

BT: Yeah!

JR: Where the locks,...

BT: Is that the canals and...?

JR: Here’s a picture. There’s the confluence of the Neckar and the Rhine. This is the Rhine. You can see it, like it shows on the map.

BT: Yeah. Oh, neat.

JR: And, ah, this is our headquarters in Mannheim, in the shaded area. And...this is a picture of the Danube.

BT: Oh, neat.

JR: We took convoys to different places in Germany, and I got a chance to get south far enough that we saw the Danube, the beautiful blue Danube river.
BT: Is it really blue?

JR: No, I haven’t seen it that blue. And this, these were taken on a... a holiday, so to speak. We had rest and recuperation. The Red Cross and this. We get time off and we’d go stay at resorts and go skiing or something like that.

BT: Oh, fun.

JR: This was taken at a resort. This is the Autobahn. They destroyed the bridges. The… there was a place we drove around.

BT: Wow.

JR: These are American flags flying, Old Glory flying at this resort. It was taken over by the Americans.

BT: And is that in Germany?

JR: Yeah, this is, these are all in Germany.

BT: Okay.

JR: Okay, and this is the eighth labor, this is on the Rhine River. And this was we were billeted there. And there I am, examining a German helmet, and it has a hole in it. It has a bullet hole right through the German helmet.

BT: Oh, wow. Were you able to keep it?

JR: No, I didn’t. I don’t know why. I just, I can’t remember. But this is a Polish man. We worked a lot with the Polish. We provided for their Polish needs. And this is, he, we had a marriage, he married, he was a wonderful soldier, Polish soldier. And his whole desire was to go to South America.

BT: Really.

JR: Yeah, they wanted to get in. They wanted to leave Europe, Poland, and go to South America. And these are castles. On the Rhine...

BT: Ah, neat.

JR: And, ah, this is...

BT: The Triumphal Arch?

JR: Yeah, Arc de’ Triomphe.
BT: Yeah.

JR: And this is, well, a German tank that would have been...

BT: Wow.

JR: And this is, ah, Notre Dame, Napoleon’s tomb, in Paris.

BT: Oh, cool.

JR: And this is the way they worked their fields over there– with oxen.

BT: Oh. Wow. I guess if that’s what they have there...

JR: And this is Maginot Line, the Siegfried line. Between France and Germany.

BT: Okay, and what were they again?

JR: The Maginot Line was the, was the two lines between France and Germany

BT: Oh, okay.

JR: And they thought they could never, ever be penetrated, and they, the German overrun them, just made an end run, and run around them.

BT: Right.

JR: And France gave up.

BT: It’s been awhile since I’ve took any classes or read up...

JR: This is a family in, Gonginnigans. They had a castle, and they lived there, and they invited us up to spend a weekend with them.

BT: Oh, cool.

JR: This is on the Rhine River. And this is an underground factory. All you see is the smokestacks, and the whole factory was underground for...

BT: Probably so it wouldn’t get bombed, right?

JR: Yeah, yeah, so they wouldn’t get bombed. Yep.

BT: Wow, neat. How well did you like Europe? I mean, beside that whole army thing, but...
JR: I beg your pardon, how?

BT: Beside the whole army thing, how did you like Europe?

JR: Oh, it was a tremendous experience for me. I got to see all the country and did some really interesting thing. I wouldn’t have missed any of it.

BT: Ah, wow.

JR: It was a wonderful experience.

BT: I’d like to go there someday.

JR: This is our trip to Switzerland, and that’s a Swiss bus. And in 1945, so it’s a beautiful bus. It would even be a beautiful bus today, wouldn’t it.

BT: It would. Very long.

JR: This is our company. I was a motor officer. This is... I took care of our motor pool.

BT: And there you are.

JR: Yeah.

BT: Now, what did a motor officer do?

JR: Well, he’s responsible for all the transportation, all the vehicles, and, and ah, all the transportation in our, in our unit.

BT: Okay.

JR: This was a good friend of mine that I met while I was over there. I, we had gone to school together, and then we had met before I came home. And this is us with a tour, we took a tour to Switzerland. And this is our Swiss guide. He later came and visited us here. This is, this is our Swiss guide. He was just a college student, but he spoke English. And, ah, he later became a, well, he got his law degree and became influe– , ah, an executive in Opal. Opal Motor Vehicle.

BT: Oh, okay.

JR: Opal is General Motors.

BT: Oh, oh, okay.

JR: General Motors in the United States, they have Opal over there, and they also had, there was also a Ford outfit going on, so you can imagine that these companies were
involved in Europe. This Opal was the General Motors from the way I understand it. And this is our, the group, that we... And this is a, I tried to visit cemeteries wherever I could. And this shows the crosses.

BT: Where are these at?

JR: That was in France. Luxembourg, I think. Luxembourg.

BT: Beautiful.

JR: And this is digging potatoes in Germany. That’s what their potato digger looks like.

BT: Wow.

JR: And this is my company commander. [Long pause.] More castles. And this is the Siegfried and the Maginot Line.

BT: How were the people there?

JR: Well, the people were great. The German people are wonderful people. We had, ah, some of them that took care of us. One elderly lady was our cook. We called her the “groß mother.” Groß mother? Grandmother. She took care of us.

BT: That’s right. German.

JR: They were very hospitable and very clean, and...

BT: Were there any prejudices there? Because I know, you know, that sometimes people see them all as just Nazis. Were there any things like that, racism there?

JR: There was. In fact, it was, it was a long haul. But the United States were very influential in helping to build back Germany. They had what they called the Marshall Plan. Have you heard of that?

BT: Yeah.

JR: And it was very effective. The people responded, and it was hard at first, because you were dealing with the Nazis. And when you think about it, see, the German people were, what, forty million?

BT: Something like...

JR: Something like forty million. And here, they were, conquered all of Europe, virtually conquered all of England. And here America, all these, you can imagine what kind of, ah, organization they had.
BT: Yeah.

JR: But, ah, it was kind of a, kind of a cool organization. If you couldn’t work, you didn’t have any… I mean, they never took care of their, their elderly. They just, they had their extermination camps that you heard about with the Jews, but they did the same thing with their own population. If people weren’t capable of working, they didn’t, they eliminated them. They also eliminated a lot of the, oh, I’m trying to think here. The Gypsies. Gypsies, and people like this.

BT: Yeah. I heard about that. I didn’t know about the ah, elderly.

JR: Oh, well, they did. The insane too. See, there was no room in their society for anybody that couldn’t produce.

BT: Yeah. That’s too bad.

JR: You can see a rodeo, they had, they got while I was in Germany, they got together this rodeo. The GI’s did.

BT: Oh, wow.

JR: And this, here are some German airplanes. There’s your, these are British Spitfires, and this is ME 109, and here is a Stuker bomber.

BT: Where they just sitting out there in the airfields, or just abandoned? Or did they have it like a museum type thing?

JR: Yeah.

JR: This is, this is one that has been shot up.

BT: Oh, okay, yeah, I see that.

JR: This is a picture of the Rhine River. This is how the locks work. It’s amazing; you had that river, the barge comes into the lock, the doors close here, the barge stops, the water is pumped in, the barge goes out and on up the river. The whole river from Switzerland clear to the ocean is all set up for water traffic.

BT: Did the, ah, the Europeans do that, or is that an American…?

JR: That’s Germans. The Europeans, you know, they had their… [long pause].

BT: Is that one you, here?

JR: Yeah, that was a picture…
BT: Wow. Good looking guy.

JR: Here is the Mannheim, that was Mannheim. Shows the confluence, the big industrial area. This city was just leveled. You know, it was just virtually leveled. It was really hit hard. And it wasn’t very far to Heidelberg. It was known, Heidelberg was known as a university town, and the only thing that they blew up there was this one bridge. It was virtually untouched. But Mannheim was hit pretty heavy.

BT: Did you... were you stationed here?

JR: I was stationed right here.

BT: Okay.

JR: I was stationed in a little place called Viernheim and another place called Wienheim, which was around in this area. And Viernheim and Wienheim and Heidelberg were virtually untouched, but Mannheim was just leveled. This is a map of Paris.

BT: Wow.

JR: I helped [undistinguishable] to take a convoy to Paris. We drove right down Champs Élysées.

BT: It’s big.

JR: Here’s, here’s another map of Mannheim. You get this, you can figure this, this deal here. Notice that on the one?

BT: Yeah! Yeah, I did. Is that a road?

JR: Yeah, yeah, these are streets. And here’s the bridge across. Big industrial area. This next one is Mannheim again, a different part of Mannheim. And this is the Rhine. Rhine river.

BT: Yeah. I see it.

JR: And this is Heidelberg. Heidelberg was on the neck of the river. And here’s the Neckar. It, it comes out of the mountains.

BT: Yeah.

JR: Goes, goes across the plain, and joins the Rhine over here at Mannheim.

BT: Okay. And where... did you get stationed in Heidelberg as well?
JR: I was never stationed there. Our army headquarters was in Heidelberg. Our army station was quite nearby. And I had a lot of occasions to go to Heidelberg on business. And this is Munich. Munich?

BT: Yeah.

JR: We got to Munich a little when we were out there. And ah, here is Basel. Basel? Basel? Mulhouse? That’s France.

BT: Oh, okay.

JR: Basel is just up in, I think, Switzerland. This is Zurich. We got an opportunity to take a leave down in Zurich.

BT: How was that?

JR: Oh, wonderful. That’s where that picture of the bus was.

BT: Oh, yeah.

JR: Our tour group and we met some wonderful people. Made friendships that we still have.

BT: Would you like these [the maps] stacked in this way?

JR: Whatever.

BT: Okay. I’ll do whatever you do. I have a roommate from Germany, so I get to hear...

JR: You have a roommate from Germany? What part of Germany?

BT: Dresden.

JR: Dresden? Okay. This shows [undistinguishable].

BT: Okay.

JR: There’s that... You can always tell Mannheim.

[undistinguishable]

JR: They dropped their bomb, because that place was just leveled. Yep.

BT: Yeah.

JR: Well, I have these souvenirs. This is a German army rifle that they carried.
BT: This is German?

JR: Yeah. It’s a German Army rifle. A Mauser?

BT: Wow.

JR: Nice gun. And this was a, a pistol that the police carried.

BT: The Germans?

JR: The German police carried this pistol. And this is a, a sword I picked up. And on it, I think it says 1902.

BT: Wow.

JR: They used to fence. I cannot understand why anybody would do this, but they had a.... In fact, they, the Germans, the military, the scars they received from fencing was considered, oh, you know, very...

BT: Honorable?

JR: Honorable. The scars they received from when they were fencing.

BT: Wow. Where did you find these things?

JR: Well, I don’t know. I can’t remember exactly. This was just in our outfit, and it just, in our billets where we stayed, and I picked it up.

BT: Cool.

JR: And this, I, I got this, this gun, we had lots of these. They were just all over.

BT: Yeah.

JR: The German armament. And then I had this, ah, made, this is a what they called a Bavarian coat.

BT: Okay.

JR: And I had this made. And this was made a German army blanket.

BT: So it’s wool, right?

JR: This, this was the color of their blankets. And this tailor made this coat for me.
BT: Oh, cool.

JR: And I had one made for Beverly [his wife]. We had twin coats.

BT: Nice. So this is warm, I take it.

JR: It’s very warm. It’s beautifully done.

BT: It is.

JR: The Germans some of the tailors, the tailoring, you know, can you imagine that?

BT: Is that all hand?

JR: Yeah, well.

BT: Wow.

JR: And that’s almost sixty years old.

BT: And it’s beautifully done.

JR: Yeah, and it’s almost sixty years old.

BT: Do you still wear it?

JR: Yeah, yeah. Do you want me to model it for you?

BT: Yeah! Absolutely!

JR: Okay. Yeah, I don’t wear it a lot. I never had. But, but it, it fits so good.

BT: It does.

JR: It fits, feels fine.

BT: Nice.

JR: Probably the only thing tailor made that I ever had. But they, they, I went several times, and they fitted me. And they make their adjustments, and they’re very... People, you know, are very skilled, the Germans.

BT: They are.
JR: I spent a year there, and at the end, I didn’t think they’d ever do much. It was, so little progress in that year. So I’ve always marveled how the German people came back in the, ah, the society they have now.

BT: Yeah.

JR: The democratic society. It’s just... I wonder if the same thing couldn’t happen in Iraq.

BT: It’s true.

JR: You know, when we look back. Hopefully...

BT: And then on the phone you had mentioned about the Japanese interment camps.

JR: Oh.

BT: So...

JR: Around here?

BT: Yeah. I wanted to get your thoughts on that, your remembrances. Memories, I guess.

JR: Well, what, after Pearl Harbor, they were very concerned that we could be invaded, and even sabotaged. So they took all the Japanese from around the coastal regions and moved them in and put them in camps. And Rexburg had one. They worked on the farms. And, ah, some of them are still living here. Some of the families, like, ah, I’m think of Albert Wada. His dad was in an interment camp. This Wada, is a big potato...

BT: Okay.

JR: Beverly will know. She’s so good.

BT: But you had mentioned that they were in your high school.

JR: Yeah, the students.

BT: Were there, were they, did they, how do I phrase it? Because I know that, was it a high prejudice thing? Again, like with lots of racism toward them? Did they...

JR: They were very accepted, I think. We, we were used to Japanese. You know, there’s always been Japanese in this community.

BT: Oh, really?

JR: Oh, yeah. In Beverly’s, she lived in a country ward, or a country school, and I think there was two or three in... I went to school with two or three Japanese, and they also
came in, they come in from... their families had come years ago. In fact, I think they came with the beet industry. With the sugar beets.

BT: Yeah, the sugar beets.

JR: Sugar beet industry, and they were very energetic people, and very good. Good citizens. And these people that came in during the war were the same. They were wonderful people. I don’t think there was any... In fact, you see, a lot of those served in the military. There was the Japanese unit in Italy. Fantastic unit.

BT: Really.

JR: It was, they were fantastic. The Japanese. I mean, they fought for this country.

BT: Yeah. Well, that’s... Did, did you have any really good friends that were Japanese?


BT: How did, did they ever tell you how they felt about the interment camps?

JR: It varied. I think some of them people, they accepted. They had to. But a lot of them, you know, felt like they were mistreated. And they were. They were. Yeah, they were mistreated. It was kind of, one of those things that... Ah, I think, ah, people realized, most of the people in the community, they accepted it, but, there were certain... they been taken, their property along the coast had been taken away from them. And so, this wasn’t right.

BT: Yeah.

JR: I don’t know. I think there’s ah, maybe a debt to repay them in some way, haven’t they? I think there’s some...

BT: They might have. They should. Personally, I think. Then, also talking about the Japanese, when the H-bomb was dropped, the atom bomb.

JR: In, ah, Hiroshima.

BT: Yeah.

JR: In, what was the other one? Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

BT: Yeah, I even did a report on these.
JR: Yeah, that ended the war, fortunately. It would have been a lot.... Truman made that decision to drop that, and it sure ended the war in a hurry, because we, we could see it going on for years.

BT: Were you, let’s see that was in ’45, right?

JR: Yes.

BT: So you would have been in Europe at that time?

JR: No. I was still training, in the United States, in August.

BT: Okay.

JR: I finished my training the eighth of August.

BT: And then he, ah, dropped it.

JR: The first part of August. The two bombs.

BT: How was the reaction at the, ah, place you were training at? At the fort? Was it Bennington?

JR: Benning. Fort Benning. Well, you see all the newsreels in Times Square, in New York. But, it was straight. It never changed anything. I mean, we still got up the next morning and went to work. But, it was great to know that the conflict was over, but we knew that there was a lot of work to do.

BT: So - and there are some other questions he just suggested on there I thought were good. Did you want to sit?

JR: Why don’t you sit down. Sit down. Relax.

BT: Let you get off your feet. Okay, so, in your training, what did they train you, or how did they train you? What kind of things did you learn?

JR: Well, I was trained in infantry. Infantry training, and with mortars and rifle. Trained for a rifle company and I never did serve in one. I served in motor, which I had very little training in. But I had a lot of farm experience. So, it kind of... I fit in pretty good there.

BT: Oh, good.

JR: And, I had very little training in the military. I trained in the infantry with machine guns and mortars, and, ah...
BT: Was there anything that you wish they had taught you? Snipers, or anything like that?

JR: Oh, when I was over there, I served in court martial. I served in a, in a court as an assistant trial judge advocate, which was prosecution. I served on that for years. Well, months, I should say. From the first occasion they have courts come up, and then we could be called to serve on those courts and prosecute, and I did a lot of investigating, getting evidence for those cases. So, it was a wonderful experience, doing that work. I didn’t feel qualified, but we had a lawyer that worked, and we assisted him as was needed. I didn’t, I hadn’t been qualified in anyway to do it. In fact, I found out most of the jobs I did in the service were jobs that I hadn’t been qualified to do. I was trained for the infantry, and there wasn’t the need for that after the war, and all those guns and stuff. All the need there was suddenly a no need, so we just fit in, and...

BT: Yeah, is this your certificate?

JR: This, well, this is my record, my war record, my record of service, service record?

BT: Oh, okay.

JR: And I served as an executive reinforcement, an executive officer and company commander in supply and motor officer. I served in those capacities. And those were the dates. I served in December of ’45, and...

BT: Neat. What was the highest rank you ever made?

JR: Second lieutenant. I think...

BT: Is that pretty good? I’m not up on my army ranks.

JR: It’s the bottom, of the officers.

BT: At least it’s not private. Aren’t those lower, the privates?

JR: Yeah, you have your enlisted men, and then you have your officers. And I served as a private, and then I went to what they called Fort Benning, which was, they called “121 day wonders.” They took 121 days, try to teach us enough to be officers.

BT: Wow. That would be a cram. A lot shoved in a little time. Oh, I wanted to ask you about - from 1941 to about ‘44, when you were in school about just like life here, you know, about... Did you see any propaganda? Posters? Because that’s a field of mine too.

JR: Propaganda.

BT: I love those posters.
JR: There was propaganda. That was a good word. Everything. I don’t know, you know. There was a lot of propaganda. The Germans had a, a propaganda system. They were the, they, mastered the art of propaganda. Black is white, and so on. And we changed, we changed every week. See, when we started in ‘41, ah, see, ah, Germany, was allied with Russia.

BT: That’s right.

JR: And they took Poland. And then they broke up, and we become allies with Russia. Now that’s a big change. It takes a lot of propaganda to do that. And at the end of the war, when we got there, Patton, he was ready to go fight the Russians. And it was just, Eisenhower was the brains that kept that thing... I mean, it was, this was, we think it’s tough now, and the way we’re fighting Iraq, but it’s always been that way. Now when I see the... Course, the thing about now, in Iraq, is those suicide, and they blow themselves up. When you got people like that, it’s, but they had the same thing with the kamikazes, in Japan. Those guys, but they give them an airplane, and, and, they kept it in the military. They didn’t fly into our cities. General Doolittle flew a bunch of bombers over Japan. Do you remember reading about this?

BT: I don’t know who...

JR: It was one of ours, I told you those days were tough, into the, the forties there. And we didn’t have any victories. So, one, this General Doolittle, he took off from, from, ah, ships, he took off from ships and bombed Japan and flew on to China. So...but, ah...

BT: Yeah. Were there any, like, propaganda, were there any messages, like on the radio you remember, posters you remember seeing, or anything like that?

JR: Say that again.

BT: Do you remember seeing any posters?

JR: Oh, posters.

BT: Or hearing them on the radio? Or maybe like the radio shows?

JR: Well, there was a lot of propaganda. In fact, they had individuals that would express themselves. In fact, now, you remember Lindbergh?

BT: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

JR: See, uh, Lindbergh, he went over and visited Germany, and he felt like that they had a very progressive society. And we all know what they did now, but a lot of this information wasn’t readily available. Ah, but he probably didn’t see it, but he saw a lot, and, and, but I think later he changed. Lindbergh, reversed himself. He was against war, and he tried to convince Roosevelt. Fortunately Roosevelt could see through it. But there
were some terrible things happen, like all these Jewish people from Europe, you know, these refugees came to the United States on that ship, and we turned them away. We turned a whole ship of those Jewish. We didn’t want to take them. And, you know, they sent them back to Europe, and they were probably exterminated in those camps. Most of them are, I’m sure. There’s things, I mean, when you’re, it’s easy to look back and see your mistakes.

BT: Yeah. Yeah. I think that was all the questions I had. If there’s anything else you wanted to tell me about?

JR: Paris was virtually untouched by bombs.

BT: Oh, I always thought it was bombed pretty bad too.

JR: What?

BT: I always thought it was bombed, too.

JR: I don’t think they were bombed, well, you know, there was some, but I recall that trip to Paris. I couldn’t believe it. We were just, we had been driving through landscape of bomb, trucks and stuff like that, and in the distance we could see all these lights. And, ah, the next day, we got there, and it was a beautiful city. And, but the only thing they had to eat was that American bread. That wheat you know the Americans gave?

BT: Yeah!

JR: They had wheat bread. And they carried their bread, if you noticed, if you know, they don’t wrap it or anything. They just...

BT: Yeah, they just... Big, long things.

JR: And, you know, as a kid, I had worked on the farms, and they told us we need wheat, but I couldn’t understand it. And here, today, I say they ought to, should give all those guys who grew wheat, they ought to give them a big medal.

BT: They should.

JR: But, you know what, in the, they got what they called the Harvest Brigade going, and they, they built combines, and they start those combines out in Texas, and they’d cut all the way to here. We’re the end of the... and get that wheat, they got that wheat, and provided a need that was just, the need was so great. There was actually cannibalism in Europe when I was there, that winter. That was one of the toughest winters.

BT: Wow.
JR: And they, the fellows from our outfit used to go to England on leave, spend a few days there, and they, and we were in Germany, and they said things were a lot better in Germany than in England. And the English was the victors. I don’t know how anyone ever survived. Hey, hey, this isn’t bad. I mean, we got all those in Iraq, and it’s terrible, but the British sure took theirs, and the Germans, they took all of them in the military and they sent them to the Russian front and the Russians killed them. They did the same thing with the Poles and those people. We used to get, in our labors, we had this labor supervision, which we supervised the Polish and we also guarded the Germans, and we did all this. There came the time when we were ready to send these Polish back to their homeland, and a lot of them, you know, they had left and gone to work for the Germans, and had been gone for years. They went back, and, and then the Polish killed their own people, because they considered them traitors. So then, we send some back, and pretty soon they would be back in our outfit. They told us what happened. They wouldn’t go back, and a lot of those people became Germans. You know, Germans kind of accepted everything, you know, they’ve been through everything. And a lot of them went to South America, as you well know.

BT: Yeah.

JR: But, ah...

BT: Wow. So many things they don’t tell us in history classes.

JR: Well, I think, you, you dig, you find it.

BT: Yeah.

JR: And like, we know the Jews were treated very inhumanly, but there were, and I like to see contrabase (?) of this maybe you know it, maybe you hear of it. But it wasn’t always the Jews. We know the Jews, but like I said, the, the Gypsies.

BT: Yeah, I heard about them.

JR: You heard about the Gypsies and then others people that couldn’t, couldn’t produce, they were eliminated. Well, you can imagine, they took that twenty million people that they had and built it into, ah, an enormous military. And it, it was kind of, after World War I, their whole economy just collapsed.

BT: Yeah. I heard that too.

JR: And their money just become worthless. You know, they tried to print it, and they were in a terrible thing. And that’s how Hitler got into power, and people, you know, they just, they were grasping at straws. But it’s a beautiful country, it’s a productive country, and the people over there were so wonderful.

BT: Oh, good.
JR: Yeah, they were, and they have proven themselves.

BT: I think so.

JR: I think Europe has. And the Polish, they, it was, you know. You know. Have you ever heard these Polish jokes?

BT: Yes.

JR: We used to have those going around when I was a kid. And I got over there to Germany, and I was in this unit where we had all these Polish, and I got invited to a Christmas party. We were invited to this Christmas party. And do you know who they make jokes about?

BT: Americans?

JR: No, about the Jewish. They made always the Jews, they, they were the butt of all their jokes. Everybody’s got to have somebody, haven’t they?

BT: Oh, yeah, I think so.

JR: Everybody’s got somebody. But the Jews, I couldn’t understand it. When all, all the Jews had been through, and everybody knew it, and yet those Polish, they hadn’t changed. They, all they’d been taught all their lives is to kind of hate the Jews. And hate is a funny thing. It just, it destroys you. The hater.

BT: But not the hated.

JR: Well, it destroys everything, both the hated, the hater and the hated.

BT: Yeah, it’s too bad.

JR: And it still goes on.

BT: It does. So much. I hear about it.

JR: It’s wonderful that, ah, Germany and Japan have become our staunchest allies, you know.

BT: Yeah.

JR: And even Russia. Oh, man, it’s. You know, I think we had an affinity for the Russian people. We always, kind of, I’ve always been interested in Russian life.

BT: Me too.
JR: I hate to see what’s going on. And you know, at the end of World War Two, when they wanted to keep on going, into Russia. And Russia, they don’t back down. They were doing some dumb things. And you know, they get a little bit trigger happy, and this what happened in Cuba. That could have led to a very serious thing. And then, to see, I never, I never thought though the Russian form of government could break down, you know. They had holes. Countries, enormous, a whole another hand, and for all those to break away. Russia started with Hungary. You know, they were always trying to break away. And for Poland to break away like that, and then for the Russians to say, hey, this thing is working, you know, this is history, and it’s fantastic.

BT: It is. Well, thank you. I appreciate it so much.

JR: Do you think we did okay?

BT: I think we did.

JR: I don’t know. If you have any questions, I would sure try to answer them.

BT: Oh, I don’t know...

JR: You ask good questions.

BT: Thank you. I try.

JR: You do. You have some...

BT: A lot of them came from Brother Walz, so, from, I guess you would know him as Eric, but...