

Jacob Pollack

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Interviewed by Edward Sanderson

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INTERVIEW STARTS at 1:43

Pollack: [00:01:43] Today is July 8th, 2015. I'm Edward Sanderson and the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. And today we have Mr. Jacob Pollack from the 10th Mountain Division. We're doing an oral history interview today. Thank you for coming out today.

Pollack: [00:02:00] You're most welcome.

Sanderson: [00:02:01] And, uh, so, um, definitely a very interesting story with a with yours when we were going through, um, kind of starting off, uh, you join the [US] Army two weeks after Roosevelt died in '45, correct?

Pollack: [00:02:20] No. Two days after Roosevelt.

Sanderson: [00:02:22] Two days. Okay.

Pollack: [00:02:23] Two days after he died, I was on the front.

Sanderson: [00:02:26] You're on the front two days after that. So when did you join the Army?

Pollack: [00:02:35] Well, I didn't join. I was drafted.

Sanderson: [00:02:38] I was drafted. [Laughs]

Pollack: [00:02:39] I graduated Elgin High School. I grew up in Downers [Grove, Illinois]. Still live in Downers. But during the war, I had a transfer to Elgin High School. And I graduated the 10th

of, the 10th of June of '44. And I think the 20th of June, thereabouts, I was in the Army. So I got my diploma and I got my induction notice.

Sanderson: [00:03:08] So what did you feel about that, you know? Well, how did it make you feel that the fact of basically...?

Pollack: [00:03:14] Well, I'm the youngest of eight children and...I already had four brothers in the service. And so I knew what was coming. And, I'm sure. I'm sure my mother was very, very nervous about her last of the children going into the service. But this is the way it was. And I knew I was going to go in because I was supposed to go in in March of '44. But the high school principal, Mr. Dixon, got me a deferment until I graduated. And they agreed. And so it wasn't long after I got my diploma, I got my induction notice.

Sanderson: [00:03:56] Oh, nice.

Pollack: [00:03:56] Went into Fort Sheridan Okay. When I got to ask a question, are you basically interested in me personally, or is it all-encompassing? Because everything that I did, my family was involved in some some respect.

Sanderson: [00:04:16] Actually, I would like to touch on the fact that, you know, knowing that you're that all that your four brothers, as well as yourself, served in the military. And if you can touch a little bit on that we can and but specifically yourself and the 10th Mountain and also your time at Fort Sheridan.

Pollack: [00:04:38] Okay.

Sanderson: [00:04:38] Especially considering that's a it's rare to talk to someone who was not only born and raised in the area, but actually was--

Pollack: [00:04:44] Well, I just figured out the other day, our family's been in Downers Grove for one-hundred years.

Sanderson: [00:04:49] Oh, nice.

Pollack: [00:04:51] Why a hundred years? Because I had one brother who was - my parents lived in the ghetto in Chicago. And apparently, he was very sickly. And the doctor told my parents, "If you want him to survive, you have to get out of the ghetto." And I assume the horse and buggy gave out in Downers Grove. And this was in 1915 and I was born '25. So so I figured out we're in our hundredth year in Downers Grove.

Sanderson: [00:05:18] Oh, nice.

Sanderson: [00:05:22] Now, uh, did your. Where did your family move?

Pollack: [00:05:27] They came from Russia. [Sanderson repeats: From Russia] in 1905. And apparently, they came over when the Russian-Japanese war was going on. And what I do remember my parents saying that they got permission to leave the country, but he was my father was supposed to go back into the Russian army, but that didn't happen. So I laugh: She had eight children on her honeymoon.

Sanderson: [00:05:55] Okay. And then, uh. And then you said you were born in, uh, 1925, right?

Pollack: [00:06:01] November 19th, 1925.

Sanderson: [00:06:03] And that was, uh, there in the there in Downers Grove?

Pollack: [00:06:07] Apparently in Chicago. But our home was in Downers Grove. [Sanderson inserts: Okay]. My mother said that she had me at the Chicago, lying in hospital, and of all her children, I was the only one that she had that she didn't feel any pain going through childbirth. So she went to a doctor, Delis, who apparently was instrumental in painless childbirth.

Sanderson: [00:06:32] Oh, nice.

Pollack: [00:06:38] Now, Yiddish was the language spoken in our house. I could understand Yiddish up to a point. And then it was all English. And then when I was in service and we started taking prisoners in the Po Valley, I could understand the German prisoners talking to each other

by them, talking German, and I could pick up some of their conversation, understanding Yiddish.

Sanderson: [00:07:05] Oh, I'll say. Now, did any of your family speak Russian in the house, or was that--

Pollack: [00:07:12] If my parents didn't want us to understand what they were talking about in Yiddish. All families have secrets. They would talk in Russian [Laughs] and we didn't. Now, my oldest sister, Eva, was the first-born, and she only spoke Yiddish until she went into school. But she was brilliant. And she. Brilliant to the point that they always they double-promoted her. So she was a misfit. She was too young for the kids. And then in grade she was and too old for the kids in their knowledge. And so she when we - she graduated high school in '26 and graduated Northwestern Law School in '32. And. Later on, when I was in high school and Sophie and I went to our 45th class reunion, the principal was the man who was principal then, I went up to say hello to him and I was just another, another face in the crowd, or so I thought. And I said, "Mr. Johnson, how are you? And he said, You know, your sister was the most brilliant student I ever had." And so I thought she must have really made a mark on him.

Sanderson: [00:08:30] Especially to be remembered.

Pollack: [00:08:32] Yes.

Sanderson: [00:08:32] That far down the road. Yeah.

Pollack: [00:08:35] And but anyhow, she was the first woman attorney in DuPage County.

Sanderson: [00:08:39] Oh, nice. How long did she practice law?

Pollack: [00:08:47] Well, she graduated in '32 and she practiced and she gave up her practice when the war broke out to write government contracts at Six Service Command Headquarters on the South Side, Chicago all during the war. And then when the war was ended in '46, she went back to her private practice until she contracted cancer and died.

Sanderson: [00:09:13] --Right here. So it seems like, uh, your family did a lot for the, you know, a lot for the war effort.

Pollack: [00:09:19] They did.

Sanderson: [00:09:21] The five of you plus your sister.

Pollack: [00:09:23] The next, the next one in line was my brother Reuben. And our family had an auto-wrecking yard in Downers Grove. Later on, the second one in Elgin. When the war broke out, the people in the power immediately contacted him to set up collections of scrap, scrap any type of scrap for the war effort. And so I was still in school then, and he would go from town to town to the American Legion and VFW and and the village halls to organize scrap drives for the people to start cleaning out their garage for [00:10:05] this to [00:10:06] turn into scrap for the war effort. And then he did that until he was inducted into the service. He was the fourth of five to go.

Sanderson: [00:10:16] Okay. And what service did he, uh, he.

Pollack: [00:10:20] We were all in the Army.

Sanderson: [00:10:21] All in the Army?

Pollack: [00:10:22] One brother was the Army Air Corps. Two of them were in the Air Corps. One was a flier; one was an instructor. And. My brother Ruben, he went-- He was, we had an auto wrecking yard. And guess what? They made him a parts clerk. He was in Army ordnance and he ended up in Hawaii, and, but I was the only one who saw combat.

Sanderson: [00:10:46] And that was, uh. And that brings us to '44 when you joined. Where did you go to, uh, boot camp at?

Pollack: [00:10:53] Pardon?

Sanderson: [00:10:54] Where did you go to your basic at?

Pollack: [00:10:56] I went to Camp Blanding [Florida]. I was inducted at Fort Sheridan. At that time. They were inducting people by the thousands. They had set up tents right on the shores of Lake Michigan. And I was one of the tents and then got on a troop train and ended up at Camp Blanding, Florida. And seventeen weeks of being basic. And what happened to me during basic training was the 15th week, the 15th week of basic, we went out on what they called a bivouac, two weeks of field problems away from Camp Blanding, and we were out there a couple of days and our squad was doing something and the trucks pulled up to our squad and said, "Everybody in the truck." And we hopped on the truck not knowing why, and they dumped us off on a plastic strip of roadway. Really wasn't a road. It was a landing strip where the [US] Navy pilots and training would come and touch down and go. And there we were for three days. We were in the midst of a hurricane and it was cold and miserable and the rain didn't come down. It came across. And one of the one of the people in in the group, maybe the truck driver, I don't know. But he found an old shanty, which he tore down for the wood and he had gasoline in the jerrycan and he poured it on the wood to build a fire.

Pollack: [00:12:37] And they built a raging fire out of all this wood. And I was so cold, I was facing the fire just for the warmth and. It felt good. Well, after three days when they came and picked us up. Went back into our barracks and took my boots off. Just to the height of my boots was right here. In between the straps, I had three huge blisters come out from burns standing too close to the fire. And so I had three on each leg and went to the dispensary. And I remember the doctor said, "Gee, those are pretty bad bites." And I said, "No, they're not bites at all. They're burns." And he made some some effort to put salve on it and and come back again because now basic training was over and it's coming back home for furlough. And in the interval between the time my furlough was over home on furlough and then going back to Fort Meade, Maryland, my burns became infected. Now, my souvenir World War II is I have no hair on my legs from here down. It burned all the roots. And so that came into play for the rest of my days in the Army, those those burns and the infection that I had. But it didn't it didn't prevent me from doing the duties that I had.

Sanderson: [00:14:12] What type of medications did they give you back in those days?

Pollack: [00:14:16] Originally, they put some salve on it and. And this is the way it was. And then we went to then from camp, from Fort Meade, we had orders to ship out and we went down to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. And that was our port of embarkation. And so we were in this huge barracks, usually a barrack is for a squad or a platoon, But this was a huge barrack, maybe had size, held a whole company. And on this particular day. Sergeant Major Major. That was his name, Major. Sergeant. Major Major came in and said, "Who knows how to type?" And I looked, I raised my hand. And out of all these people, my hand was the only one up. But but that's not the whole story. When I got the induction notice in March. And before I got my deferment until I graduated, I was one quarter credit of having an official diploma. I needed sixteen credits. I had fifteen and three-quarters and they had one typing class. So it was one semester, one quarter credit, and I decided to take that typing course. And the name of the teacher was Mr. Peck, like the hunt and peck system, right. That was really a name. The reason he wasn't in service because he had a clubfoot. And so I was in a class with almost all girls and their fingers would fly over the keyboards and I would go clunk, clunk, clunk. And so now we are having our final examination.

Pollack: [00:16:05] And I had eleven words a minute and Mr. Peck passed me and I went up to him and I said, "Mr. Peck, how could you pass me on eleven words a minute?" And he said, "Jake, you were showing improvement." And with this I knew the basic keyboard, but speed wasn't it? But when my hand went up in the barracks that day and Sergeant Major Major said, "You were my clerk typist." And he says, "I'll tell you one thing before we got back to the orderly room," he says, "If you make one mistake on any of my reports, you'll do it a second time. And if you make a mistake a second time, you'll do it a third time." Well, speed wasn't essential, so I was clunking along and apparently, it was satisfactory. And so down the road, when we we now we were I was a company runner at the port of embarkation. Then we boarded our troop ship to go overseas, which was the 10th of December in '44, I became his company runner aboard ship. And what I had to type up every day was the morning report. Now, where in the hell can people go aboard ship? They can't get lost. But I had a if somebody was in sick bay, that was on the morning report and for for wherever somebody was I had he had to account for them and I had to type it up.

Pollack: [00:17:28] And so this was my this is my job aboard ship until my burns became infected, severely infected. And I had to end up in sick bay aboard ship. Found out we were

going to Italy when they started out the Italian handbook how to speak Italian. So that was a clue. So I was aboard. Aboard. They put me in sickbay about halfway across the Atlantic, maybe a little bit further. And then we got a mimeographed sheet down in sickbay that a battle was taking place in Europe. It was the Battle of the Bulge. And of course, we didn't know they called it the Battle of the Bulge. But this is where the big the big battle was. And rumors were flying that our convoy is going to make a left turn and go to southern France rather than Italy. But that didn't happen. We went on to to Naples. And I was in sick bay until we landed at Naples Bay, and the medic aboard ship came to me and he said, "You can go to the hospital in Naples if you wish, or you can go with the rest of the troops." And I said, "Well, I know the...guys aboard ship, but I don't know anybody in a hospital. I think I would just as soon go to the replacement depot." And so they helped me get dressed and

Pollack: [00:19:00] they took me up to the deck. And it was an eye-opener because all this time I was below deck and didn't see what was happening when I got up to deck. I saw the devastation in Naples Bay and where bombers had bombed the ships. They were laying over there over on their sides in Naples Bay. And what what the Americans did is they built ramps from ship to ship to ship to the troop ships. So you went from from a troop ship onto a ramp over a sunken ship, over another sunken ship until you got on shore. And the and while we were standing there on the on the railing of the ship, we were all given oranges to eat. And and the megaphones were shouting out,

Pollack: [00:19:54] "Don't throw your orange peelings into the water because the kids on shore will jump in." And some of the kids have been crushed between the ships with the ships bouncing up against one another. So that was that was an eye-opener. And so then they took us from Naples Bay to Count Ciano's farm, which was outside of Caserta, Italy, and he had a huge dairy farm. And Count Ciano was Mussolini's son-in-law, also the foreign minister of Italy. And this, this main building in the dairy farm, that that's where we that's where everybody congregated when they're off time. And this particular night, after we got situated in our tents, we went to this huge building where they kept the cows, when the cows were there, nothing but mosaic floors. And it was absolutely gorgeous. And then the news bulletin were coming in about General McAuliffe saying, "Nuts" to the to the Nazi general, whether they were going to surrender Bastogne. And, of course, a great roar went up inside the building. And so this is this is where I was sent into in a tent. The squad tent. And I was there. I don't know how long I was

there in days. Quite a few. And then one morning, I got a an order to report to the orderly room. And I thought, 'What the hell did I do wrong now?' And I went to the first sergeant and said, "I'm Private Pollack reporting as ordered." And he said, "Well, I was going through. Your service records. And Sergeant Major Major left a note in it that you were a very efficient clerk typist for him". And he says, "I need a clerk typist and you're it." And I knew that was a good job because we landed the 23rd of December and it was cold and miserable. And what did they do to keep guys busy? They'd have marched through the mountain trails and I had a nice warm job in the orderly room doing whatever the sergeant told me to do, and it was good duty. And there I stayed for a long time getting along very, very well.

Pollack: [00:22:29] And then one day, it was already getting a little bit warm. This was in February, I think we heard in the orderly room that this was just before evening mess, mess call. And in orderly room, you always went to mess hall first that somebody had been caught stealing. Just so happened in person, happened to be in my squad tent. And so another clerk typist and myself said, "I think we should see what's going to go on." So we had our meal. We went back to our tent, and after everybody had their meal, they congregated back in their tent. They didn't go to an orderly room. They congregated in their tent. And all of a sudden, this one person came back. And people started to crowd. Soldiers started to crowd around him and he looked around and says, "What gives?" And another soldier went up to him and took his duffel bag and turned it upside down and shook it out. And everybody who reported something missing during the course of the time in the tent, there it, was in his duffel bag. And he had been caught quite by accident. A pair of gloves fell out of his duffel bag and had somebody else's last four digits of his serial number on it. And so also in his duffel bag were many United States postal money orders, he was shipping money home.

Pollack: [00:24:08] He was sending this out and they beat him up bloody. It was terrible. And and so with this, my my buddy and I went back to the orderly room. And it was very, very quiet and the commanding officer was there. And it was the the doctor at the base hospital, he said, "One of your people is here and he's been badly beaten up." And the commanding officer said, "The son of a bitch was caught stealing. You you patch him up and you send him back. He's going to the stockade." And the doctor patched him up and off he went to the stockade. And that was a learning experience. Keep your hands to yourself. I mean, they beat him up brutally. And, and that was that was an instance that was very enlightening. And then one day in the in

the orderly room, I was sitting behind the typewriter and who walked in, but Sophie's brother...who we grew up together. And he had been wounded at Anzio and he lost a kidney and they shipped him back to Caserta at Allied Force Headquarters to become a mess sergeant. And so he came through. The first sergeant told me to take off, and my brother-in-law, now my brother-in-law, took me back to his company area. And he had a he had an ice cream machine and a donut machine, my two favorites and I gorged myself that day [Laughs].

Sanderson: [00:25:56] And I spent the day with him and he said, "Jake, you only salute generals around here. Allied Force headquarters." That's all they had were generals, apparently but thousands of them were in [former King] Victor Emmanuel's palace. And then and then he brought me back to the to the post. And he picked me up one other time. And that was for Passover service in in I'm trying to think, was it late February or early March of '45? And the service was conducted in King Victor Emmanuel Palace was, it was really a beautiful, something I didn't expect to see when I was there.

Pollack: [00:26:37] I was brought back, brought back to the post and I was sitting behind a typewriter doing something. The sergeant came by and he put his hand on my shoulder and he said, "My God, you're burning up." And the same infection was taking over again. And he called the ambulance and he put me in the base hospital for six weeks. And when I got to the base hospital, they led me to my cot and and it had to be... Immediately I tried to put things back in place. Immediately after Saint Patrick's Day. Why? Because the sergeant in charge of the orderly room that night said, "Pollack, you know how to play cribbage?" I said, "No, I don't know." He says, "Sit down. I'll teach you." He says, "I shouldn't be here. It's Saint Patrick's Day and I should be in New York on Saint Patrick's Day, on Saint on March 17th."

Pollack: [00:27:35] So he started teaching me the basics on how to play cribbage. When I got to the hospital and got down in my cot, the guy in the bed next to me said, didn't ask me my name, didn't ask me what was wrong with me. He said, "Do you know how to play cribbage?" I said, "I'm just starting to learn." Well, after six weeks in a hospital of not getting out of bed because the infection in my feet, except to go to the latrine, we played cribbage from dawn to dusk. And then. They they were going to experiment. They did an experiment on me. They saw the infection that ... I had. And they tried something new. Infection to kill the new way to kill the infection. They brought an aerosol can and they sprayed both of my feet every day to

freeze the infection out. And it really did really did put a crust of foamy-like ice on my feet till the skin split, like wide open. I could see the flesh and. And so, of course, he didn't want me to walk around, which I didn't. Sat, sat and played cribbage. And then one day the doctor went through the ward and he said, "Back to duty. Back to duty. Back to duty." And I asked the nurse, after a while you get to know the nurses when you're there for six weeks.

Pollack: [00:29:06] I said, "Why yesterday - I'm not well, and today - I'm going back to duty?" And she said a new directive came out to Allied Force headquarters. If anybody was in a hospital eight weeks, they had to go back to the States for treatment. And so the doctor was taking he was getting rid of everybody before the eight weeks would come up. And so they sent me back to to my area where I still clerk typist. And I was there a short while and I got notice to be shipped up to another replacement depot just outside of Florence, between Florence and Pisa. I was there for a very short period of time. When President Roosevelt died and we served a formation in his honor and they blew Taps and two days later I got orders to bring my gear and report in and I didn't know where. But when I carried my duffle bag to the truck, I could see the 10th Mountain insignia on the bumper. And so. So we were all loaded up in the truck and we were going through the mountain trails, back and forth, switchback. And as you looked over the side of the truck, you could see the engineer's tape about this, this far next to the the wheels. And on the other side of the engineer's tape was mine minefields. So that was a hairy ride.

Sanderson: [00:30:46] And and that was when you were. Was that when you officially joined the 10th Mountain Division?

Pollack: [00:30:51] I was, I was going up to the front. And why was why at that time? A battle was raging so as I look back at it, basically we were cannon fodder. Our division, the 10th Mountain Division, was in combat from from February until the 2nd of May when the war ended. And we had 1000 killed, just under a thousand killed, and have no idea how many were wounded. And so they they needed bodies. And this is where I entered the picture. And so our truck brought us to a location. It was at dusk and eight of us had to jump off the truck at that time. And a 1st sergeant came out and said, "You were now in Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division." And he said to me and another guy, "You are going to be ammo bearers for a .50 caliber machine gun and a 37-

millimeter cannon". He never saw either one of those take all the time I was taking training. It didn't make any difference whether I saw it or not. All I had to do was carry the ammo and he says, "Dig in for the night"-- in this wherever we were. And he said, "Be very quiet because the Jerries are right over the top of the hill." And so we took out our shovels tried to shovel. And it was about this much dirt and about 500 feet of rock. We slept on top of the ground that night underneath a truck.

Pollack: [00:32:33] And he said, "Your sergeant will come and pick you up tomorrow morning." And so we were up at sunup. And a sergeant came up to me and another, another soldier who was walking with him. And the other soldier says, "Here comes our replacements. They're going to get us killed". That was not what I wanted to hear. We were all frightened to begin with. And so our sergeant said, "Go to the quartermaster and draw a weapon. Draw a carbine." Well, I never fired a carbine in basic training, but my rifle was the M1 rifle. Carbine was a lot lighter. It was a pleasure to have it at the time. And Sergeant said, "Go to the quartermaster" and he pointed to the direction to go. He says, "You got you got the carbine, but you don't have any cartridges for it." So we went and the quartermaster handed us two boxes of cartridge. And came back to the sergeant who was waiting for us. And he says, "Where your cartridges?" And we showed them the boxes. A little bit smaller than this, about this- so size. He said, "What the hell are you going to do with those? Load it up. Single shot at a time?! Go back to the quartermaster and get a clip." Well, we ended up getting a clip. I'm trying to think whether we had a 30, two 30 round clips or fifteen rounds, but they were taped together back to back.

Pollack: [00:34:12] So that's what they gave us and they gave us a couple of spare clips. And that was our weapon. And then,, we we had our first day, first day of combat. We had to load up. Now I knew one thing. Being a clerk typist, that if you were in headquarters company that was better than the line company. You knew, you knew more things about what were going on. That was a learning experience when I was a clerk typist and. So. I thought this is a good place to be. And so our very first day of combat, we had to load up our vehicles. At that time, we had the vehicles with us and with the 37 millimeter cannon or a .50 caliber machine gun, we were we were supporting the line companies who were the riflemen. And and I was in the 2nd Battalion, so that was E, F, G, and H company. So each day we were assigned to a different company depending upon what the orders were for the day. And so. Of course. Even though I was assigned to a squad, I didn't know who the hell was really in our squad because we were all

doing different duties. And so whoever told me to do something, I did it because I didn't know if I belonged to him or not. And and and little by little, little by little, things fell in place.

Pollack: [00:35:54] And there was one time we had a lull in combat where the company actually got together. At Headquarters Company, everybody was a corporal, a sergeant, higher, higher grades. But our platoon, we were the privates and PFCs. That was not good because you were either if combat wasn't going on, you were either doing guard duty or MP duty. But our platoon congregated, and with this, our sergeant started to introduce us to different people in our platoon. And then where we were, a couple of guys came in and he said, "These are litter bearers." And I didn't know litter bearers were assigned to headquarters companies. Or maybe every company had litter bearers. But he said, "These are litter bearers. And I noticed that they had a .45 strapped on her hip. And I said, "How come the litter bearers are carrying weapons?" And they said, "Well, when we first went into combat, the German snipers were using the Red Crosses on their helmet as targets." And so all of a sudden, the litter bearers became, for all intents and purposes, soldiers. And then by reputation, the 10th Mountain Division didn't take prisoners at this time. And so. As I say, this was my an opportunity to meet more people in my my platoon. And so. Uh, days went by and then the idea was everybody was dreaming to get to the Po Valley and get out of the mountains, get down in the flatland.

Pollack: [00:37:47] And one day we had to be in line of departure about 2:00 in the morning and we had to draw rations. Three rations or breakfast, K rations, breakfast, lunch and dinner. And I put them inside my field jacket and drew up the string because I had the carbine over my shoulder and had to carry whatever ammunition we had that particular night, whether the .50 caliber or the 37 millimeter. So so we had our hands full so we couldn't carry rations too. So it was stuffed in our in our in our jacket. And the very last night before we hit the Po Valley, we had to go through a village very quietly and we could hear the Nazi soldiers inside their billets talking. So this is how quiet we were. And we ended up in a great big concrete barn. And there we there we were very alert, but exhausted. We fell asleep, woke up at dusk [sic] at daybreak and looked down and went on the other side of the barn, looked down and there was the Po valley. And it was it was really, it was really nice, nice to see that flat land really flat. And but our vehicles couldn't catch up to us at this time. So everything that we had, we had to carry. And so when we we broke down our equipment, took a trail down to do the flatland. And as we were walking by, there was a jeep there.

Pollack: [00:39:27] And it had maps on on, on the hood. I didn't realize at the time that was the commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division, General Hays. And he had the maps on top of the hood of the of the Jeep. And apparently, we were we were exceeding what was on the map. We went further than the maps were. And. And he started out a task force and they told the task force to go as far and as fast as you can into the Po Valley and we'll catch up to you. And this is what they did. And and who was the assistant division commander at the time was Colonel Darby. Darby's Rangers. And this was Darby's task to go as fast as we could. So we broke out into the valley on the Po Valley, and we went beyond Bologna. And by this time we were, we were moving, Darby was ahead of us, and we were told a little by little, our vehicles were catching up to us so we could put our heavy equipment in the back of the weapons carrier and we formed a column at this time and we pulled to a stop, a rest area. And the word went out. Uh. The password tonight was Bronze Star. And the sergeant told me, "Pollack. Go to the next vehicle and tell them what the password is." I thought I went to the next vehicle and said, "Bronze Star." I didn't know what the hell Bronze Star is - it's this medal here.

Sanderson: [00:41:20] Mmm.

Pollack: [00:41:21] And so the idea is when you're on guard duty and somebody approaches your guard duty, you say, "Bronze." If they don't reply, "Star", you're supposed to shoot them. Well, we went as fast as we could short of the Po River. And by this time it was dark. We'd been on the go since daybreak and we set up at a crossroads. And. We were setting up the .37-millimeter cannon on two major roads, but they were two-lane highways, basically, and we were setting up our 37-millimeter cannon. And I hit my arm. They were in my arms like this, the shells and a firefight broke out. And what had happened was a patrol of 10th Mountain people went down the road this way and they saw soldiers. It was dark, dark enough. They couldn't distinguish who it was. They saw another group of soldiers coming up this way, and all of a sudden they realized that they were Nazi soldiers and a firefight broke out. And a person come running into our gun emplacement where we were setting up and he hollered, "Lieutenant So-and-So was killed" and I get his P-38. I didn't know who this person was. Not until the next day [that] I found out he was a platoon sergeant. I had a squad leader, a sergeant, platoon sergeant and a staff sergeant. And he had that P-38 on his hip the next day.

Pollack: [00:42:59] And I hated that guy from that point on. If he would talk to me, it was a yes or no and way I'd go. I couldn't stand to talk to him and think every time I saw that pistol, a P-38. And so. Oh. We pulled, we pulled into a barn, not into a barn. We pulled near a concrete barn and had to set up guard duty on this crossroad. And the sergeant said, "Pollack, you will stand first guard duty". And I kept thinking they called my name a lot of times. And, you know, hindsight tells me because I was a new kid on the block, if they lost me, it didn't make any difference. They wanted to protect their own. That was the only rationale for why did I have to send password to the next vehicle? Why did I have to stand in the first shift to guard duty? But this is the way it was. And this was about I'm trying to think ten, ten o'clock at night by the time we got and and guarding is supposed to do four, four hours of guard duty. And so, as it got dark, all of a sudden people were coming down the highway on bicycles with the Italian flag draped over their shoulder. And I hollered, "Bronze." And they kept saying, "Partizani. Partizani Partizani." They were fighting the Nazis, too. And they kept right on going. They knew where the hell they were going.

Pollack: [00:44:33] And I didn't know where we were at. But there was too many of them to do anything about it. And but I figured if they were after us, they would have shot us by now. And that wasn't the case. They were after the Nazis. And so. Uh, my four hours of guard duty was up. I went into the barn, laid down on some straw. And. I was really beat and I heard my name called out again. And was a squad leader. He says, "You got to stand guard duty." I said, "Sergeant, I just came off of four hours of guard duty." And he said, "Well, so and so." And he named me that name, the guy I know he was from Rome, Georg[ia] Rome, Georgia. He said, "He can't stay awake. And so you've got to stay on guard duty." Well, you're not going to tell the sergeant, "Go screw yourself. You go back on guard duty." So now it's got eight hours of guard duty by that time, already started at daybreak. Now, I was back on guard duty to daybreak again. And by this time, vehicles were going by with boats on top of them. They were getting ready to cross the Po River. And so now we're in a [00:45:55] con, Now [00:45:56] we're getting reorganized. Bringing putting our equipment on the weapons carriers. And. Uh, we're in the Po Valley and in the Po Valley. What the Nazi soldiers would do, every utility pole that had a wrapping of straw around it, they had a gun emplacement.

Pollack: [00:46:16] So they knew where they were going to go, and they knew what we had to go. We had to go to those by those utility poles and they would maybe set up a gun

emplacement there. But we were moving very, very fast. And as we were going in, our convoy was moving north. The same kid, uh from Rome, Georgia, he asked-- I was sitting on the back of the weapons carrier, the very back-- He was sitting on the very front of the trailer we were pulling. And he said, "Does anybody have any leftover rations?" And the guys who knew him said, "Well, what the hell did you do with your rations?" He said, "Well, I ate them". And so. Nobody offered him anything. And I had my breakfast rations and I said, "Well, I've got some hard candy if you'd like to have that. There were three or four pieces of hard candy to suck on." He said, "Yeah." So. I was leaning forward to the trailer and he was leaning forward to the truck. And with that instant, there was three shells that went off bang and bang and bang. We were approaching a bridge, was over a short bridge, but over a deep canal, a river, and those shells went off. And as I was reaching to give him the candy and he was reaching to get forward and all of a sudden, he started screaming and he jumped up in the trailer and we were moving and the people in the trailer pulled him down.

Pollack: [00:48:07] And he was gushing blood and gushing blood toward the back that there was this much room between the trailer...and the truck. And my uniform at that time got all bloody and the glasses that I was wearing at that time, shell-rimmed glasses were very popular in high school, so I always kept my shell-rimmed glasses, but I kept my GI glasses in my pocket. Well, they pulled us. They pulled a soldier down and he was screaming and bleeding and got across this bridge. And there was a Red Cross set up there where they had to set up an aid station. And we stopped long enough to drag this person into the aid station. And the sergeant asked me, "Pollack, are you hurt?" Because he saw my uniform. I said, "No, I don't think I'm hurt at all. No, I'm not hurt." And so on we went and left him behind and didn't know what happened to him until two or three weeks later, we got a letter from the General Hospital in Florence that a piece of shrapnel pulled his right eye right out of his head. Oh, it was terrible. And so. After we dropped him off, we pulled in. We pulled up to a concrete barn and we had a chance to get a rest because we would routine - some people would some outfits would spearhead,

Pollack: [00:49:36] The other ones would set, go to the side of the road and they would go through you. And so you had a chance to rest, to recuperate for a short while. And where we were was still short of the Po River. They had drainage canals, they had drainage canals where they had big wheels would dam up the water. And so some of the some of the GIs at that time

dropped the drop the gates and the water would fill up. And so we all stripped down. It was, it was warm enough, stripped down, and we swam out. The water was comparatively warm. And I took my uniform and kind of swished it around because we stripped down to our shorts anyhow. And and and it was better when after the uniform dried out a little bit that it was cleaned up a little bit. And so then we pulled up. A short while later we pulled up to the Po River. And the Po River had a huge embankment. I can't think of the word that they they used when they put up a huge embankment. So it had to go over that and come down to the river. So apparently it flooded and so we were sitting there and doing whatever we had to do. And then I got orders. Orders again.

Pollack: [00:51:08] They dropped off... Our company dropped off a lot of their equipment on our side of the pool, on our side of the embankment. And my job was to stand guard duty over the equipment until it was still was our time to cross the river. By this time, it was dusk. And about midnight we got orders to. To get ready to cross the Po River. Remember I told you earlier that. When it got daylight, I could see boats, bottomless boats based of flat-bottomed boats. And these were the assault boats across the river. The Po River is quite wide. It starts out narrow and it got deep. It got faster. The current was faster. And so it was very, very dark. And now we got orders to get into boats and we were going to go across the Po River. And what I did, I took my bootstraps and I unlaced my boots because at that night on that particular night, United States controlled the air. On this particular night, when the crossing when the troops were crossing the Po River, the Nazi planes did come over and you could tell they were Nazi planes because their engine went uu, uu, uu and American planes was always steady purr and so the Nazi planes were coming over. And on this particular night, this in my boat, a plane came over and I could hear one of the boats that toppled over and I could hear the guys hollering for help and the current was taking them away.

Pollack: [00:53:00] And what happened to them, I have no idea. But we got to the other side and set up an area to a beachhead, so to speak, on the north side of the Po River. And as time progressed, it expanded, expanded, expanded until until the engineers could build a bridge across. So so our jeeps and that could catch up to us. And so this is this is what happened. And then. Some of the soldiers went beyond the the bridgehead, and they came to a horse farm and all of a sudden they came back. They came back with horses. They were riding horses. Saddle or no saddle. Apparently, there were many guys in the 10th Mountain Division who

knew how to ride, and they had the last cavalry charge the United States Army, I think with those horses.[Sanderson laughs] And the Nazi soldiers either ran out of gas or abandoned their equipment, but they left a lot of their vehicles. Volkswagen, and that on the south side of the Po River and the American soldiers, they picked up the hoods and they got those damn things going. And they had jerry cans. They put gas in the tanks and a lot of guys were crossing after the bridges were built, the pontoon bridges, they were driving Volkswagens across, across the Po River. And of course. In order to not be strafed by our own planes, they had certain pieces of tarp that they put over the hoods that indicate they were American vehicles.

Pollack: [00:54:43] And so our planes, like those in the pictures, they never did attack us. But I saw one P-47 in a Po Valley buried right to the cockpit in the flatlands. And so now now we were in the Po Valley, still going very, very fast, still trying to catch up with Colonel Darby and his and his force. And then. Uh, I'm trying to think. We spent one night, one night in the valley after we crossed the Po River, before we got to Lake Garda and how things would work. Our regiment and our battalion was the spearhead on this particular night. And we were going up the east side of Lake Garda and had and as I say, our regiment, our battalion, our company was the lead company. And as we were going up the east side of the lake - by this time was dark and cold and rainy and the tanks were behind us, so the guys were walking behind the tank. They were warming, keeping warm with the exhaust. But we approached the tunnels on the east side of Lake Garda. And we came to the tunnels and our regiment was no longer the spearhead. We pulled to the side of the road and the 86th Regiment pulled through us and went into these tunnels and the Nazis blew up the tunnels. And I don't know how many people were killed in the tunnels.

Sanderson: [00:56:37] Hmm.

Pollack: [00:56:37] And with this, we pulled back. We were at Malcesine, which is now very much a resort area in Italy, and we took over a hotel. Uh, and while the tunnels were blown up and the engineers were trying to clear out the tunnels. Uh, as I say, I don't know what the casualties were when the 86th [Regiment] hit the tunnel. Uh, the. We took over a hotel was overlooking Lake Garda. And the tanks, the tanks stationed themselves behind his billet. And they were lobbing shells across on the west side of the lake. And Lake Garda, the very deep Glacier Lake and when we woke up in the morning with no longer rainier, rainy and cold. It was

bright and sunny. And so we weren't going any place. They set up places for us to guard, and tanks were lobbing shells on the other side of the lake. On the other side of the lake, directly across from ... is where Mussolini had his summer villa. And so, we woke up and there were a bunch of GIs and they...There was a dock right there on the lake and the guys were jumping into the lake. And I thought, 'Gee, that looks pretty nice.' And I stripped down to my shorts, jumped into the lake. You had never felt anything so cold in your life.

Pollack: [00:58:10] That glacier lake. I got the hell out of there as fast as I could. In the meanwhile, there were some guys got some of the rowboats that were tied up along the dock. There was rowing in circles and dropping hand grenades in the lake, and the fish would come floating up and we didn't have to eat K-rations that night. Everybody had fish. [Sanderson inserts: Fish] and it tasted pretty good. And so then, as I say, this the road on the east side. The tunnels had been blown up. And what was in those tunnels were factories. They set up factories inside the tunnels. There was no way the bombers could to locate what was inside the mountain tunnels. And this is where they were building parts for the jet planes, I assume. And so so the engineers were trying to clear out the tunnels. In the meanwhile, Colonel Darby had had orders to bypass the highway and go bypass all the tunnels and go up to La Garda up in the north end of the lake. And they loaded in them in ducks and they went, bypassed the tunnels and the Nazi soldiers artillery opened up and they blew up one of the ducks, twenty-six men, including Colonel Darby, was killed on that. This is two days before the war ended. And he was a colonel at the time. They gave him a star posthumously. And they made a they made a monument for him in Lake Garda. By the American soldiers taking over Garda on the north end of the lake, they prevented the Nazis from knocking out a hydroelectric plant.

Pollack: [01:00:10] This is where they were getting their power. And so. Uh. This is what happened. They're still trying to dig up that to this day. They're still trying to get money enough to dig up that duck that was shot that was sunk. This is many years later, seventy-some years later now. [Sanderson inserts: Right.] And so I don't know what's ever going to come of that in our lifetime. But the thought is there. They want to get that duck. Now, I'm trying to think the time frame. But we were having our evening meals and word came out that the war in Italy was over. Uh, May 2nd.

Sanderson: [01:00:57] May 2nd?

Pollack: [01:00:59] So. The celebration. We were in this nice billet and. So the guys on the east side, [autocorrects] the west side of the lake. They were shooting across to the east side of the lake and vice versa. And the guys in my platoon said, "The war is over. We don't want to get killed, get killed by our own people, celebrating, having a celebration. We're going to get killed by our own fire." And so we're all sitting below the window sills so we couldn't get hit and, eventually the shooting stopped. And so then things would have it, we were stationed at Malcesine on Lake Garda, and we were there quite some time and we as soldiers got acquainted with the people in town.

Pollack: [01:01:52] And when we were off duty at night in the town square, we would talk to the, talk to the people in town. And, and I would. I would talk to the people. And whenever I said something, they would laugh and I'd said, "Well, what did I say that was so funny?" And they said, "You talk just like a Siciliano!" Up in northern Italy, they're nothing but blue-eyed blonds. [Sanderson inserts: Right] Because that was a part of Austria at one time. And so it was it was a very nice duty now that the shooting was over. And then we got orders to ship out. We didn't know where. And. And. All this time that this was going on, every day I would change my socks because my the infection was still there, but I could still walk. And so, I always had a pair of socks hanging from my cartridge belt and the socks would be dry and I'd change, put on dry socks in the morning. And so now we got orders to ship out somewhere else, but we didn't know where. And our first billet was we had to set up our tents on top right beside a mountain stream outside of Treviso and Tarcento and Tarvisio near above...What the hell was the name of the city? Was an open city. My mind is a blank all of a sudden.

Pollack: [01:03:39] But anyhow, this is where, this is where we were billeted. But when we wake up in the morning, we'd have to do our washing, our face, brush our teeth. You had to mount a -- Trieste was the name of the city. We would wade into the into the river and brush our teeth and that. And we were there several days. And the amazing thing was by walking into this very, very cold, clear water, it killed all the infection in my feet. That was the end of my infection. This was from October until this is almost July.

Sanderson: [01:04:21] Right.

Pollack: [01:04:22] I thought all the things I went through in in the base hospital back in in Caserta. That was, that was amazing to me, but very happy that it happened. And so our next duty was while we were on Occupation duty was to disarm the Yugoslavian partisans. We sent them all this guns and ammunition, and Tito was the man in charge. And it was going from, I would probably say distance-wise from here to my daughter's condominium on East Randolph. That was Yugoslavia. And a little further north was Austria. And so. Uh, this was the intent. We were going to take our weapons back. The Partisans were never, never even gave a thought of giving that thing back. They were not happy to see us there. At nighttime when everybody was off duty, they would have dances right in the town square and the partisans, the Yugoslavian partisans -- borders didn't mean anything, they would would come with frowns on our faces and the guys were dancing with all the young girls in the town.

Pollack: [01:05:36] They were having a ball. And I wrote in a letter home back then, I said, "Down the road, we're going to have a lot of trouble with these people." I didn't know that that's the way things turned out. And so this is the duty that we had, Occupation duty. Later on, I saw a movie, a documentary about, the Jews who had been liberated from the concentration camps and were telling their travels, how they went on foot through the mountains right down to Trieste. And it mentioned the two towns that our division was on Occupation duty, Tarvisio and Tarcento. And I thought I'm thinking to myself, 'These were the two towns that that we were, our division was located, [so] why didn't we see those people?' And then it occurred to me we'd already shipped out to Florence, Italy when the migration started from the concentration camps. And so that that bothered me. 'Why didn't I see that?' Until I looked at the calendar. You could see what the story was. And so then we we got orders that we were going to ship out somewhere and didn't know where. And we got into a convoy one day, load up. Where we were going, we didn't know. We got in a convoy and we were in the last three trucks in this convoy going to-- One other thing before this happened while we were on Occupation duty, my newest platoon leader, Lieutenant Cook, who was a student at...The University of California, I think. He became the, he became the battalion recreation officer.

Pollack: [01:07:36] It was my job every day to to get in touch with all the line companies. If there were going to have baseball that day, I had to tell them where they were going to meet. And this is my duty. And how did, how did that happen? Lieutenant Cook came into platoon area and he said, "Who knows how to type?" [Sanderson makes a comment and Pollack

chuckles] You're like, he said, "You're my clerk typist." And but we had confiscated German typewriters. Didn't make any difference for speed. And the German keyboard was a little bit different, you know, than the American keyboard but it worked. And that was that was my job. And so then Lieutenant Cook came up to me one day and he said, "Pollack, they need a clerk typist down at Division headquarters in Cividale, would you like to go and be a clerk typist?" And I said, "Lieutenant Cook". I said, "I know these guys now. I'd prefer to stay with them if you don't mind." He said, "No, that's okay, I'll find somebody else to go." So when I got down to the platoon, because I they set me up in a school building and that was my office.

Pollack: [01:08:42] And when I got back to the platoon area that night, I told them that Lieutenant Cook wanted, asked me if I wanted to go to platoon [i.e.] Division headquarters to be a clerk typist, and I said no. And they said, "You stupid fool, you never turn down an opportunity to go to division headquarters." Well, I did. And so I stayed right, right with them. And then then we got orders to ship out. And of course, United States Army is a rumor factory. And so the convoy was going and how three trucks could get lost on a mountain trail going south, I have no idea, but we ended up in a little, a little town that had lights hanging, electric lights hanging from bare wires. And there had a vino joint in it and three truckloads of GIs cleaned out that vino joint. [Laughter] And and so we get back in our truck and and they said, "We are going to play Chug-a-lug." I said, "What the hell is Chug-a-lug?" Just pay attention. Well, I played Chug-a-lug and we did this until we got into Florence. And when it came time to get off of the back of the truck, I didn't, I didn't get off, I fell off. I had the worst hangover the next day. And so with this, we had, we had duties. We were at this time down in Florence and we were there a short while.

Pollack: [01:10:16] I don't know how long in days and they send us out. Now, this tent was for two squads. They sent several of us out on some detail. Came back and everybody was gone. And I said, "Where is everybody?" And they said, "Well." What happened was they went to the hospitals in the area and picked up the soldiers, the walking wounded, and they were going to a troopship out of Livorno [or] Leghorn, Italy. They were going by troopship home. They left us behind. I sat down in my bunk, my cot, and I cried. I figured I'm an orphan again. And then the word was that we were going to rejoin the division in the States. And so what could we do? We were there. And then a short while later, talking about a matter of a few days, they organized a troop movement and they took us to the rail yard. And they had so many rail cars and they

were cleaning out all the soldiers and putting them in the rail cars. And and I always. think about the little the little railroad car that the 'engine that couldn't'. Well, that could and couldn't. Well they had so many train carloads of soldiers and our and our duffel bags were all piled up in one end of this cart, that rail car that I was in and the engine didn't have enough power to get over the top of the mountain.

Pollack: [01:11:56] So we'd all have to get out of the rail cars, literally push the engine. So the engine, the rail, the railroad train so the engine could get over the top and start facing down again. We jumped in and away we go. And this is the way we went until we got to Florence. When we got to Florence, Italy, by this time we were filthy dirty. This took about two, maybe three nights of traveling in this railroad car. We were all sleeping on the floor of the car. We woke up in the morning and every duffel bag that was piled up in the end of that cart was gone. Quote unquote, "The MPs were on duty guarding the rail yards." The MPs probably had the biggest black market in Naples of anybody in the whole wide world. They were getting rich because it couldn't have been anybody else. And so they issued all I had. Everything that I owned was in that duffel bag. And so they issued me a change of clothing and a change of underwear. And the only thing I had was my wallet and my pen and pencil in my pocket. And so now we were there in a big fortress overlooking Naples Bay, where we landed in December. And we were trying to trying to figure out what was what. And rumors were we were going to go through the Suez Canal. We're going to go to the Pacific.

Pollack: [01:13:24] We didn't know what the hell was going to happen to us. And then every day we'd get orders. More and more guys were getting orders to report to such and such a place, and they'd pick us up. And I had, I was in this one group. They took us to the airfield and there they had B-17 bombers. They took the bomb racks out of the bombers and they put a canvas seat running where the bomb racks were along either side of the the bomber. And there were twenty guys on each each load of B-17. And they flew us from Naples Bay to Port Lyautey where they invaded North Africa originally. That was one of the landing points. And so when we were on the flight going across the Mediterranean, the flight engineer said, "If you want to see something nice, go into the nose of the bomber." At that time, it was all plexiglass, absolutely clear. You felt like you were sitting on top of nothing. And so I was in there watching the plane hit the African coast. I could see us coming into Port Lyautey. It was really very, very nice. And so they had a tent city set up there to handle all these troops that they were shipping

somewhere. And that was the first time I saw a C-54 plane. Four engine plane. And so we were in these tents and word was out.

Pollack: [01:15:01] No, not everybody leave the tent at one time because the Arabs were going to clean clean it out before you get back. So somebody had to be on guard duty in a tent at all times. When we were there just a few days, our turn was to load onto the C-54. And. And. We were flying from Port Lyautey to Dakar, North Africa. The narrowest point between the Atlantic and as we were approaching the airfield at Dakar, the plane never...Normal flight. You just come in, you come in. But the plane circled and circled and circled. And as it come over, we could look down at the landing strip, at the runway. And we could see crash equipment there. And finally, we were starting to descend and the pilot touched down in the very end of the runway and we coasted to the other end of the runway and he came out of the cockpit and he was drenched in perspiration. What had happened to him was to the plan, the hydraulic system went out and he was circling just to use up the fuel that he had. So then we had a layover in Dakar until they got that corrected. But before we got out of the plane, somebody came into the plane with something. They started spraying -[that] was our first our first experience with DDT. They were cleaning the bugs. So then got going again. We flew across, flew across the Atlantic to Natal, Brazil.

Pollack: [01:16:43] We were there a few days and then we were calling up different groups and they shipped us in separate plane in the C-47 plane, the twin engines. And so we started island hopping from then through the Caribbean to Miami, which was going through the islands. And on one of the planes, I talked to one of the crew members of the plane and I said, "My brother flies C-47s." And he said, "Oh, is that right?" He said, "Go ahead and talk to the pilot." So I went up to him and I told him that my brother was a C-47 pilot. And he said, and I said, "He graduated from Baer Field, Indiana", And he said, "Oh, I graduated from Baer Field, Indiana." So he says, "What's your name?" And I said, "Pollack". He says, "He was in my graduating class." And so that was a small world. And so then the flight continued on and on. One of the flights, one of the islands we were flying to, we got a print-out that a bomb had been dropped, 20,000 tons of TNT. That didn't mean a hell of a lot to me. I'm looking at 37-meter cannon, not much bigger than my arm and so anyhow, that was that was the big news. So we landed at Miami, took a troop train right back to Camp Blanding, where I took my basic training. They issued me another uniform, put us, and then they shipped us on a troop train back to Fort Sheridan and

Pollack: [01:18:23] And by this time would have got to Fort Sheridan. Just before it got to Fort Sheridan the day before the second bomb had been dropped. And so I called my parents in Downers [Grove], said, that I'm in Fort Sheridan and my parents came to Fort Sheridan that night and picked me up. I got permission to leave the post and I drove back to Fort Sheridan the next morning I got my furlough papers and with this, with my furlough papers, came home. Was upstairs shaving and had the radio on because we knew something good was going to happen. And as I was shaving, the announcement came in that August 14th, the war was over. And so finished shaving, went to Sophie's house and they didn't know I was back until then. And. And so then the big celebration was going on in in the Loop in Chicago. And my sister said, "Jake, let's go into the Loop tonight." And I said, "Eva, I'm not going into that city anywhere tonight." And so. Everything from V-J Day for three solid days ,it was one big party and Sophie and I were going. There was no restaurants that had any food to sell. There was one truck, Truckers Lodge on Joliet Road, which was U.S.-66. They pulled in there and they said, "We've got white bread and we got ham if that's what you like. If you don't like that, you're not going to get anything." [Laughter]

Pollack: [01:20:09] And so and so then, then they asked me my furlough was over. And they asked me what post would I like to be stationed closest to home? And I said, "Well, there are six service command headquarters in Chicago." And they said, "Well, we don't need a PFC telling us what to do." "Six service command headquarters. Where's the next closest post?" And I said, "Fort Sheridan". And so then my job, they transferred me there and my job because I knew how to type. I had to type up new dog tags for all the soldiers that were coming back by the thousands. And I worked the night shift. I was typing up new dog tags for all the soldiers coming in, and then they transferred me to the discharge center and now I was working on filling out discharge papers for the soldiers coming back from overseas. And my job was to determine how many days the soldiers were in the States, how many days they were overseas. And I knew that was second nature after doing this hour after hour after hour, I was in one year, eleven months, and eighteen days. And that was my job. And so this is what I did until I got discharged. And I was glad to get out. It was it, was a learning experience.

Pollack: [01:21:36] I saw combat. I saw what I didn't like. And I decided this was something that I wouldn't want to do a second time. But there was one incident. You always, you always

remember the humorous things that happened to you. When we're on occupation duty, Sophie sent me a care package and they had specific size sizes on the box. And so mail call was just before, just before, right after supper meal. And so, I had they had guard duty. And I opened up this care package that she sent me. And inside of it, she sent a kosher salami that fit into this thing. And so we were billeted in this in this building. And so. And the second floor is where we had our bedrolls put up. And so I asked the sergeant, I'll take good first shift for guard duty. And it's closer and closer and closer to the four hours, I'm thinking, 'Well, this is about thinking nine o'clock subtract... about four o'clock, I went on guard duty. As closer to 9:00 o'clock, the more I could taste that salami and went up to the room. And at 9:00 o'clock in the evening, guys were not quiet. I mean, they're bullshitting.[Sanderson inserts: Mmhm.] And so I'm wondering, 'What gives? Why are they so quiet?' Went to this box of K-rations. They ate the whole salami and left me the two ends. [Laughs] And? And so, of course, I was ready to kill. But of course, you didn't. Because everybody who had anything or got anything, they shared it alike.

Sanderson: [01:23:26] Right.

Pollack: [01:23:26] But I love kosher salami then. And I still do today. And now when I want when I go to Costco and get it. But I spent the rest of my service time at Fort Sheridan and. I made one mistake. Uh, I looked at before. Before I got separated from the 10th Mountain Division, they had a list of casualties, and I went down the list of casualties. And there was one person from Division Ordnance who had been killed. And I said, you know, if I were going to go in the Army again, I'd want to go in Ordnance. [Laughter]

Pollack: [01:24:06] And so they had the spiel about joining the Reserve. And I thought, 'Well, okay, I'm going to join the Reserve in Ordnance'. And I signed my name to the signature card and went past the door and made an about-face and went right back in. I says, "Captain", "I want my card back". He says, "You signed it and you're in Reserve." Well, I was the most inactive Reserve member he ever wanted to see. And then I was very, very concerned because the Korean War broke out and they were talking that -- by this time, Sophie and I were married. We already had two children. And they said that they were going to make enlistments retroactive to go into back into service during Korean War. But that didn't happen to me. So I was very glad when my enlistment was up and that was the end of my military experience.

Sanderson: [01:25:01] What year was, let's see--

Pollack: [01:25:04] I got out June. June of '46.

Sanderson: [01:25:06] June of '46 was when you left?

Pollack: [01:25:07] One year, eleven months and eighteen days.

Sanderson: [01:25:11] Then when did they-- When were you out of the Reserves?

Pollack: [01:25:16] Uh, the Reserves were three years. I'm trying to think. Forty-six. The war in Korea broke out in '50.

Sanderson: [01:25:25] Okay.

Pollack: [01:25:26] So I got out [of the Reserves] in '49. But I was concerned that the rumors were that they would make enlistments retroactive. And the last thing I wanted to do was go into another war.

Sanderson: [01:25:38] Amen to that one, especially, uh, especially, uh, with everything that you saw when you was over there. Kind of going back on a couple of those, what unit were you initially assigned to before you got to the 10th?

Pollack: [01:25:56] Before?

Sanderson: [01:25:57] Mmm hmm.

Pollack: [01:25:57] It was a replacement company.

Sanderson: [01:25:58] Replacement company?

Pollack: [01:25:59] Yeah. That's why I say when the division pulled out of Florence and left me behind, I felt like it was an orphan again. It's nothing worse than being a replacement because

you belong to nobody and everybody that might have come into your tent, you didn't know if he was going to rob you blind or just what I mean... When I was still still in Southern Italy at Count Ciano's Farm, the Air Force had ran out of bombing targets. So they had all these surplus fliers and crewmen, and all of a sudden they were going through the replacement depot. Now they were going to be infantry and they were not happy campers because they had their flight suits on. But this is the way it was. I mean, they just didn't need fliers anymore because there was nothing for them to bomb. And so.

Sanderson: [01:26:55] And they had bombed, they bombed Italy pretty good.

Pollack: [01:26:58] Yes, they did. They knocked out a lot of stuff. Um, one of the things with, uh, you know. Kind of going back with, uh, with you being part of the Jewish community, um, during that time frame, did you get to have, uh, services when you were going through basic or was it one of those where they just--?

Pollack: [01:27:21] You're talking about religious services?

Sanderson: [01:27:24] Mmmhmm.

Pollack: [01:27:25] When we were taking basic training in the fall, just before we finished our seventeen-week basic, there was on two occasions that the trucks would come out to where we were doing training any one of the Jewish faith they picked up and they took us to a synagogue in Saint Augustine, Florida, both for New Year's and Yom Kippur. So those were two occasions. And then, of course, then the next thing was when I observed the Passover service at Caserta Allied Force Headquarters at King Emmanuel Palace.

Sanderson: [01:28:03] And the reason why I asked that it was--

Pollack: [01:28:07] Let me tell you. Uh, soldiers were bigoted then. But in the 10th Mountain Division, there were many, many German refugees. And of course, they were very vital. Very vital to the American [US] Army because they needed interpreters and people who escaped Nazi Germany. Members of the 10th Mountain Division were very, very valuable to the division.

Sanderson: [01:28:35] Outstanding. Because I know, especially during that timeframe, it was, uh, a lot of Jewish, you know, a lot of the Jewish people were not looked [at] very favorable on. And even in a couple of situations where-- in a previous interview, we had a gentleman that, you know, when he was going through Marine, was with the Marines, they basically said, "Hey, well, you go clean the latrines while everybody was doing their religious services." So he never really got to participate in anything until he got out to the Pacific.

Pollack: [01:29:09] You know, I had more than one occasion, people mentioned about the Jews. I said, "I'm Jewish and I have four other brothers in service with me." So I said, "We're doing our part." And so.

Sanderson: [01:29:26] Outstanding. Um, when you, uh, kind of going back to the, uh, when you were flying. You know, it seems like everybody else got to go on ship, you got to fly everywhere back home. What was it like being in the bomb bay of a B-17?

Pollack: [01:29:45] Well, you know, it was a little bit cramped until the engineer said, "Why don't you take a look up in the nose of the plane?" It was absolutely wonderful. I felt like I was floating in air. I mean, it was a gorgeous feeling.

Sanderson: [01:29:59] What was it? What was the thought going through your head the first time you peered out the Plexiglas? You know, especially considering the entire front end of that plane was nothing but Plexiglas, Plexiglas and walking out and just you know.

Pollack: [01:30:14] You never thought of the dangers, you know, that somebody, somebody in combat was flying in the nose of that plane at one time, you know, So I figured it was safe. But it was a very nice feeling. And the C-54, when we were circling around that [01:30:29] car [01:30:30] and looking down at the crash equipment along the runway, that was, that was a little disturbing, you know! [Laughter]

Sanderson: [01:30:37] Especially when you land and the pilot comes walking out soaked with sweat. You're like, Yeah, uh, yeah. Can I have that definite, uh, you know, pucker factor, so to speak, as we like to call it?

Pollack: [01:30:51] The worst, my worst experience in all the combat was when this, when this guy that I was given a candy to, got the shrapnel, tore his eye out. That, I'll never forget, you know.

Sanderson: [01:31:03] Did you ever find out anything about him or?

Pollack: [01:31:07] I knew he was from Rome, Georgia, because our particular platoon, the division, came out of the mountains of their training, but they picked up additional infantrymen, and a whole contingent of them came from Rome, Georgia, Rome and Macon. So they, they were all they all knew each other. And this kid was from Rome, Georgia.

Sanderson: [01:31:30] Okay. And, uh, one of the things on with...basically, going through the mountains, how you're kind of walking all over the place down there and even going from area to area in the mountains and with the infection at any time, did it get too bad to where, as you were, just in severe pain or just--?

Pollack: [01:31:55] Well, my first experience in combat was when I was an ammo bearer. And some of the guys in my squad, they were digging foxholes. And they were cutting down limbs of trees and putting them over the foxholes. And I was as novice as anybody could be. This is Day One or Day Two, whatever. And I said, "What are you doing?" And they said, "Well, the Jerries shoot artillery shells into the trees and the shrapnel and the branches come down and the branches are like spears coming down." And so they put trees, they put branches of trees over their foxhole as a shelter for, the for the shrapnel or the branches coming down. And that was that was very common then. So. Mm hm. You know, every day I learned one thing when I was there. I learned to ask questions and uh, I think I still ask questions. My wife's shaking her head - Yes. [Both laugh]

Sanderson: [01:33:09] There's nothing wrong with that. It's always good to ask those questions.

Pollack: [01:33:13] Now, this one person who came up with this the very first day we joined the company and he said, "They're going to get us killed." This kid was from Boston. I don't remember his name. And I don't know if you ever had the Italian drink grappa. It's like it looks like, as peaceful as this, but it's liquid dynamite. When we were on Occupation duty, he would

drink Grappa and he would be in a drunken stupor. And he was the one who said, "We're going to get him killed." I was the one who put him in his pup tent every night and thinking, 'He'll never make it the next day.' And reveille would come and there he was, ready for duty. And it was mind-boggling. But all the time that I was with the division, I never saw him get one letter from home. He was a very bitter kid, but we were all kids. But he was extremely bitter.

Sanderson: [01:34:15] And how old when you were drafted? How old were you? Eighteen?

Pollack: [01:34:20] Eighteen.

Sanderson: [01:34:21] Eighteen, okay. So you're roughly about twenty, about the time you came out?

Pollack: [01:34:25] Yeah. Think I celebrated my 20th birthday in, still, still at Fort Meade, Maryland.

Sanderson: [01:34:32] Oh. Now on how long were you at Fort Sheridan when you came off active? After?

Pollack: [01:34:40] Active? Uh, well, my furlough started on V-J Day. I had a thirty-day furlough that brought me to the middle of September. From the middle of September until the middle of June, I had a job making new dog tags and then working around the clock filling out discharge papers.

Sanderson: [01:35:05] All right. Now, I know looking back at the base's history, they had a large contingent of German POWs there. Did you have any interactions with the POWs there?

Pollack: [01:35:18] At Fort Sheridan?

Sanderson: [01:35:20] Well, the POWs - their job was to pin...setters at the at the bowling alley on the base. No, we never had any. Well, and they were the ones who had to maintain the fires in the barracks. They had duties. The big scandal was one of the prisoners, and one of the lady

civilian workers fell in love. And apparently, that was against regulations. But how do you fight that, you know?

Sanderson: [01:35:51] Right.

Pollack: [01:35:51] But there was there were a lot of POWs there.

Sanderson: [01:35:55] Okay.

Pollack: [01:35:55] And you didn't other than just in passing, no contact.

Sanderson: [01:36:01] Our duties, such as we were, we had no reason to get in touch with them.

Sanderson: [01:36:05] Okay. And also, during that time, they had employed a lot of the Women Army Auxiliary for the base. Did you, uh, especially with the discharging, a lot of people...?

Pollack: [01:36:20] When I worked at the discharge center. Not not where I typing up dog tags, but when I was working in the discharge center, there was a lot of civilian women also doing this. As a matter of fact, there was one instance where the person who was in charge of my unit was civil service. And I was up for promotion. I was a PFC and I was up for promotion and he stopped me from getting a promotion. Another stripe, a big deal, didn't make that much difference to me. I was, I I knew eventually I was going to get out anyhow. But I said, "You know, this guy went above and beyond what he was responsible for because as a civilian, he shouldn't have had anything to do with a promotion of a military person."

Sanderson: [01:37:19] Mmhm. When you came-- What rank were you when you came out of the Reserves in '49?

Pollack: [01:37:24] Pardon?

Sanderson: [01:37:25] Were you. What rank were you?

Pollack: [01:37:27] Still, still a PFC?

Sanderson: [01:37:29] Still PFC. Apparently, there must have been some written law that if you went into combat, you have to have at least one stripe on your arm. I don't know. I was surprised that I got the stripe. I was surprised when I was issued a Combat Infantry Badge. I was more surprised when I got a Bronze Star Medal. What in hell did I do to deserve that? But I think the correlation was if you got shot at, I guess you deserved a Bronze Star. I don't know. It had my name on it.

Sanderson: [01:37:56] Now, when did you get your combat? What year did you get your Combat Infantry Badge?

Pollack: [01:38:03] Oh. Probably from Day One when I was in combat.

Sanderson: [01:38:07] Okay.

Pollack: [01:38:09] If they paid you \$10 a month extra, if you break that down by thirty days, getting shot at, that was very cheap, very cheap pay.

Sanderson: [01:38:21] Oh, definitely. Nowadays it's, "Ay! Yeah." Nowadays you get it regardless. But even then, ay, that's...Yeah, that's a yeah, that's pretty--

Pollack: [01:38:34] But I guess at that, at that time, \$10 was a lot of money.

Sanderson: [01:38:39] Mmm. Beside, let's see, because you have, uh, you've got the Bronze Star, then of course the, uh, Army Good Conduct [medal] Conduct. Correct?

Pollack: [01:38:48] Conduct and the American theater and European theater with one battle star. Then Victory medal. Occupation duty.

Sanderson: [01:39:00] Oh, my God. With the occupation duty. What was some of the fun other than having to pour the guy from Boston into the pup tent?

Pollack: [01:39:12] Well, an Occupation duty. Supposedly our duty was to disarm the Yugoslavian partisans. That didn't happen. There was no fighting going on. The people, the people were very glad to see, The Italian people were very glad to see us. And so, there was there, was really no problem doing Occupation duty when the war ended and we were up in the mountains, still. One of the things that the Division said they wanted to do was 20% of every outfit was going to go up into the Austrian Alps for ski training. The skiers were going to get their legs back. The non-skiers such as myself were going to learn the basics of skiing. And the fellas-- Now, this is warm weather already. They were skiing in T-shirts. When they were coming back, they were talking about how great it was, Austrian beer, how good it was. I'm not a beer drinker, so I couldn't swear to that. But they were saying how great it was. And I know that I was in the next contingent to go to Austria to ski, to get basic ski lessons. When we got word that we were going to ship out and we were. That's when we went to Florence, Italy.

Pollack: [01:40:33] Okay. And because I know during that timeframe, you know, roughly around that timeframe, that's when, you know, looking back through the 10th Mountain's history, that that was when they had the call that they were going to come back to the States, regroup and then go to Japan.

Pollack: [01:40:49] We were, we were scheduled to go into Japan, north of Tokyo in March, March of '46.

Sanderson: [01:41:00] Oh, what were you thinking? Well, what was your thoughts of, you know, if they wouldn't have dropped the bomb, would you guys would have had to go into Japan?

Pollack: [01:41:09] You know, I couldn't even think that far [in] advance. When the war ended, I was first in Europe. That was a big plus. And coming home on V-J and my furlough starting on V-J Day, that was Utopia. I mean, no matter where they wanted to send me afterward, I didn't, I wouldn't care because it was going to be strictly stateside duty or Occupation duty, you know.

Sanderson: [01:41:37] ...I'm kind of going back. You said you're, uh, all four of your brothers were in the Army. When did. When was the first time that all , all of you guys were able--All four, all five of you were able to get back together?

Pollack: [01:41:54] Okay. When I came back from Italy, my one brother who was a lieutenant, he went, he went to Officer's Training school. Got a commission. Uh, he happened to be home on furlough when I was home, and so we had time to spend together. He was at Fort Rucker, Alabama, which is now the helicopter school. Still a major school. Then my other brother, who was a C-47 pilot. Now, his experience in the Air Corps was very, very... unique because before he went into service, he joined the Civil Air Patrol and he was taking flying lessons, Piper Cubs. And he hadn't received his license at that time. But apparently when he was at in Indiana taking flight school, apparently, he was a very excellent pilot. And they give at that time either flight officer's honor insignia on their shoulder or second lieutenant, and they were having a night problem. And apparently, the control tower gave my brother a signal that it was okay to take off, not knowing that a plane stalled at the end of the runway. And he went down the runway and didn't have time to lift the plane off. And his plane cartwheeled down the runway and he showed me pictures of the plane. He had he was home on recuperation leave. This was before I was inducted. And I saw a picture of his plane. The only thing that stayed intact was the cockpit. And so he had his injuries and he wanted to get out of flight training when he went back to Baer Field. And they said, "No, you were too good, too good of a pilot, you were going to stay in it."

Pollack: [01:43:54] And he finished as a second lieutenant and then C-47 pilot. So he was doing transport work within the country. My other brother who graduated high school in '32. [autocorrects] '34, he took flight training on the QT when he was a sophomore in high school in the old biplanes and he was a very accomplished flier. And then he went into twin engines. He knew how to fly twin-engine planes. But when war broke out... If you enlisted before you were drafted, you could pick your own branch of service. And my brother Bill applied for to be a pilot at that time. At that time, his vision was 20-30, which wasn't acceptable. They wanted only fliers with 20-20. At the end of the war, they just wanted bodies. But he said that he never left the States, but he became an instructor at the gunnery school, engine thing. Engine flying. And many times he said the pilots in the plane, they were B-25s, the state he was discharged out of, was Denver [Colorado]. He said they got the okay from the control towers to take off and they would have a big night before they'd fly and they say they'd be up in the air flying over Grand Canyon or into Grand Canyon. And they say, "Pollack take over for me." And he would he would do the flying. And he never got credit for it because he wasn't a credited pilot, but he was able to fly a B-25 without any problems.

Sanderson: [01:45:46] Oh, nice. Did he ever eventually, uh. Did he continue flying after the war?

Pollack: [01:45:53] No, no. He had a business. They had a business before. All my brothers were in business in one form or another. We had a second auto wrecking yard in Elgin, and that was the reason that I had to transfer from Downers High School to Elgin, because the two brothers, the one who was in the Civil Air Patrol and my other brother, they were going in very shortly after Pearl Harbor. And I was a. When the war broke out, I was getting ready to finish my first semester of the sophomore year in high school, they were going into service. So they told me that I had to come up to Elgin and take care of the wrecking yard. And so I transferred high school at that time. And when the war broke out, schools were different then. All of a sudden, Elgin, they had the Elgin Watch Company there. They had many manufacturing businesses that were switching over to war production. And so when I transferred high schools, one of the courses I took was general bookkeeping. And little did I know that I was going to run this company, be the bookkeeper of the company. As a sophomore in high school, I learned how to take an acetylene torch and cut cars up for scrap iron. And then I dealt with the War Production Board.

Pollack: [01:47:21] People were coming out and telling us how many on five acres of cars, how many we had to cut up for scrap iron for war production to melt down for steel. And he would give me, he the the man from the War Production Board gave me a form to fill out. How many cars I had, were required to cut up. And then he would come back thirty days later and check to see if they were cut up. And we had several employees at the time, and one by one, these employees were getting notices from the draft board. They either had to get into actual war production work or be drafted. So one by one by one, I had fewer employees. Then my brothers had already gone into service. And and so I was trying to meet government regulations and still run an auto-wrecking yard because people were going to work and they had to keep their cars going because they weren't making cars anymore. And it was imperative that they had to get transportation going. And so with this, it got down to one other person and myself. And my mother always made Friday night dinners at her house in in Downers Grove. That was a ritual Friday night in a Jewish household.

Pollack: [01:48:48] And I told my parents that I said I'd already dropped out of school to do to do this work. And I told my parents, "I can't go any further with this. I think we have to put the key in the door and let things ride and just forget about it" because I couldn't do it with just one person. And so this is what I did. And so then that summer, I went back to Elgin Academy and picked up the credits I lost from high school and re-enrolled at Elgin High in '44 [autocorrects] '43, and I graduated '44 with my class. But it was hectic. But then after a while, the War Production Board all of a sudden realized we were cutting up these cars for scrap iron. And all of a sudden the people didn't have any place to go to buy parts for their cars. And so I had to cut back on the number of cars they required. One of the things I learned how to do, I knew how to take a regrouping tool and and cut grooves in the tire to make the tires last longer. I mean, these are things that the typical high school kid didn't know how to do. And they they couldn't do it today if they had to.

Sanderson: [01:50:10] Yeah, definitely. That'd be something I'd be like, "Aah, you want me to do what?!" Um, and, uh, after you guys, well, after you got out of the military, when did you and your wife get married?

Pollack: [01:50:25] Well, so Sophie and I, we grew up together, right? Literally grew up together. One time she was driving, she had to drive her sister, whose husband was in the MPs in South Carolina. So I think so. But anyhow, so Sophie met my sister on [background indistinct talk] the Georgian Sophie met my sister on the train because Sophie worked at the Union Station during World War II. And So- said, "Soph, why don't you write to Jake?" And my sister said to Sophe, "Sophe, why don't you write to Jake?" And she gave Sophie my address and Sophie writes me a letter and says, "Jake, I'm going to be in Macon, Georgia. Why don't you come up to visit Pauline and her sister and I." And I wrote back. I said, "Sophie, it doesn't exactly work that way", that if I went to the C.O. and told them, "My friend is going to Georgia, I want to go see her." [Laughter] And so with this, even though we knew each other, then we started corresponding. And when I came home on my furlough from overseas and we started dating, then we started dating. My furlough, I remember, was the day that President elected Roosevelt was elected to his fourth term. And then by correspondence, we started getting more and more serious. And when I came out, I think I was hooked. So, so, so anyhow. No, we, she liked my brother, but because he was older but she ended up with me. They said it would never last.

Sanderson: [01:52:01] Well I think you had think you proved him wrong quite a few years ago, sixty-eight years, correct?

Pollack: [01:52:07] Yeah.

Sanderson: [01:52:09] Then, um. What did you do once you got out of the Army?

Pollack: [01:52:14] I went to work in a family business immediately. My my brothers said,...I don't think any of them went to school under the GI Bill because they all had businesses. I was the only one still in school when the war broke out. So they wanted me to go to to school under the GI Bill. And our family had this auto wrecking yard. And I said, "You know, if I went to school under the G.I. Bill, I might come out an educated auto wrecker." And this time, Sophie and I were getting serious and decided I was just going to work in the family business and this is what I did. And then that was in the auto wrecking business and that developed into auto glass business and. Then Sophie and I started a glass company that we had until we retired in '91. We got married in '47.

Sanderson: [01:53:17] Forty-seven?

Pollack: [01:53:20] So I was one of the people who didn't take advantage of the G.I. Bill. But a lot of people did.

Sanderson: [01:53:28] Uh, didn't, uh, have. Have any of your children joined the military or--?

Pollack: [01:53:33] No, no. But our -- we have three children. The youngest one is our son, who's now sixty and he worked for the Department of the Army in logistics. And when he got the job, he didn't know the difference between a private or a four-star general. But now he tells privates and four-star generals things that they have to do. [Laughter] He loves... He was in quality control first, and then he was transferred into logistics and he loves it. As a matter of fact, he's in Michigan now doing something at some warehouse that he controls.

Sanderson: [01:54:13] Okay. Outstanding. Um. So.

Sanderson: [01:54:22] What's it been like? What was it like, you know, getting into the veterans organizations and when did you decide to start getting in the organization?

Pollack: [01:54:31] I joined the local American Legion post as soon as I got my discharge in Downers Grove. I think I'm the oldest in age, in longevity in the post right now. But I knew that somewhere along the line, the 10th Mountain Division would have an organization because those guys, the original division, they were all intellectual. They had to be. They had to have three letters of recommendation to get in the division to begin with, mostly Ivy Leaguers. And so one day I was going out to do an estimate and a car pulls in front of a stoplight in front of me. And I pull up behind him and I see the 10th Mountain Division Association bumper sticker...on his bumper. And I pulled around him and rolled down the window and I said I was a member of the 10th and by the light, by the time the light changed, I said, I have a glass company in Westmont, Illinois. And two days later I had an application to the Association. This was in '88, and it was really it was really a big plus. We met a lot of friends over the period of years. We made two trips back to Italy with the division. And we've had a lot of warm friends. But we had, but we had the Midwest Chapter and it's down to four veterans now of World War II. And of the four, I'm the only one still playing golf. Shot my age two years ago and got my second hole in-one same year.

Sanderson: [01:56:21] Oh, nice.

Pollack: [01:56:23] Then two days later, I shot my real age a hundred and three. So but they're getting old. As I say, I'm ninety, and I think that I'm probably the youngest person in the Division [Association] right now. But it's very sad to see them fading away the way - they're having health problems. Um, but the clock is ticking. That's the reason I'm here, I guess.

Sanderson: [01:56:51] Well, we definitely appreciate you coming out for that. Um, one of the things when I know they had the newsletter called, *The Blizzard* for the 10th Mountain.

Pollack: [01:57:00] Exactly.

Sanderson: [01:57:00] And it listed you as a, you know, head of the Midwest chapter.

Pollack: [01:57:05] I was at one time. Yes.

Sanderson: [01:57:07] And then also had a Florida address.

Pollack: [01:57:09] Yes.

Sanderson: [01:57:10] Are you what are you, a snowbird? You'd like to go and hang out in Florida?

Pollack: [01:57:13] Sophie and I spent six months in both places. We have a place in Longboat Key in Florida. And we like. We. We feel, without being complacent, we like what we have in both places.

Sanderson: [01:57:25] There's nothing wrong with that. Especially, you know, I grew up in the South. I can handle the...I can handle the winters down there, but can't handle the summers.

Pollack: [01:57:36] Yeah. Well, I took basic training from

[01:57:40] July until October down in Florida, and it was hot.

Sanderson: [01:57:44] Yes! It's not a...

Pollack: [01:57:46] They didn't have air conditioning like they do now.

Sanderson: [01:57:49] Gotta hate that 98 degrees, 100% humidity.

Pollack: [01:57:52] Yes, exactly.

Sanderson: [01:57:52] Walk outside five minutes and look like the pilot from, uh, when he landed in Africa. Um, a couple of more questions. Uh, what, uh, what is it? What does being a veteran mean to you?

Pollack: [01:58:10] Uh. I think I'm patriotic. Like I say, I had an experience in the war. I wouldn't want to do it twice. Uh. The people that we've met in the Association, there's a lot of camaraderie that you have. We've, we've made a lot of... I didn't know a lot of people when I was in the Division but over since 1988, we've made a lot of acquaintances and we look forward when they have a national reunion. We look forward to seeing those people. We look forward and hopefully cross our fingers that they're still there, you know? But. It's a terrible learning experiences. And I talk to a sixth-grade class. I've been doing it now for fifteen years. I didn't realize it was that long, but I stress to these people, these kids, war is not glamorous. It's...bad and it's dirty and and things could change in a blink of an eye. And so I stress to them not what you see in the movies is like [that] at all. It's... If somebody told you and they did tell us this is the way you've got to live, this is the way you got to live, but it's not a lifestyle that you would pick.

Sanderson: [01:59:34] Hmm. Then, uh, besides, uh, well, the. The 10th Mountain Association, you're also in the American Legion. You're also part of the Jewish War Veterans Association.

Pollack: [01:59:46] And in the VFW.

Sanderson: [01:59:48] And the VFW.

Pollack: [01:59:49] I belong to the Jewish War Veterans down in Sarasota, Florida. And they just opened the Association, the group in Lombard, which I never thought that I'd see in my lifetime.

Sanderson: [02:00:01] What was it? What? Well, what did you feel about-- Well, what were the thoughts going through your mind when you heard about that being opened up in Lombard?

Pollack: [02:00:13] Well, first was disbelief, you know. But then when I found out that they were having... I inquired at the temple and they said, "Yes, we are a chapter." And then I get the newspaper from the Jewish War Veterans. And sure enough, there was a listing of the new chapter and new, new, new members and all of our friends, all those names in that group are people that were very, very close to. And I said, "Well, I'm going to join that chapter." So of

course, I had to pay dues again, but I figured it was money well spent because and of course, I'm the old guy in the group too, you know. No, I was very happy to see that.

Sanderson: [02:00:57] That's good to hear.

Pollack: [02:01:01] People think that Jewish people don't fight in the wars, but. Uh, they do fight and they're very serious about it.

Sanderson: [02:01:10] And that's one of the things. A lot of people don't realize how much the Jewish community has actually contributed not only to World War II, but all the subsequent war since then.

Pollack: [02:01:20] They're not aware that the Jewish War Veterans is the oldest veterans group in the United States. Started right after the Civil War when people said Jews don't fight.

Sanderson: [02:01:31] Yeah, definitely. That's one of the things that we definitely like to educate people and be like [saying to naysayers], "Nope, not necessarily."

Pollack: [02:01:42] We. I tried to get back to Sarasota because they have a huge Veterans Day parade, and I marched in it, and. And the guys naturally are younger than me, and they're quite surprised that I marched. I don't ride in the car and I carry a flag and they said, I can't believe you do that. Well, as long as I'm capable, I'm going to do it.

Sanderson: [02:02:04] Outstanding. Are you going, are you going back this year?

Pollack: [02:02:06] Oh, yeah.

Sanderson: [02:02:08] Outstanding. All right. Well, um. I've actually started to run out of questions. Um, was there anything else that you would like to cover that we haven't covered at this point? Or.

Pollack: [02:02:26] You know, I think you know about as much about me as I know about myself.

Sanderson: [02:02:33] Well, I mean, I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation, and especially I loved the stories. I mean, it's one of the few times where, you know, I enjoy these kind of interviews where I ask a question and then, you know, you just kind of went through the timeline. And that was one of the things that--

Pollack: [02:02:52] I knew that you wouldn't you wouldn't be looking for a yes or no answer, and you wanted it expanded upon, you know.

Sanderson: [02:02:59] And we appreciate that because, I mean, this really gives us a good idea when, you know, it gives people, when they read this interview are actually, you know, listen to the interview in itself. It's a very good broad spectrum. But also the fact of, you know, basically from beginning to end and really shows that what all you saw while you were there, but also your experiences and the fact that, you know, you get to have Passover service in a king's palace, you know, and hung out at a Mussolini's son in law's farm. So.

Pollack: [02:03:39] But one of the things -- and you talk about a small world, we have a tennis court in our condominium association. And one of the condo owners and I were sitting waiting our turn to play tennis. And he asked, "Were you in service?" And I said, "Yes, I was in service." And and I said, "I went to Italy." And he said, he went to Italy. And then then I said, "Well, I was with the 10th Mountain Division." And he said, well, he ended up in the 88th Division in Italy. And so then all of a sudden, uh, he said, "Well, I went to Officers Training School and my roommate was Bob Dole", and I said, "Bob Dole was with the 10th Mountain Division." And he said, "We were on the board. We were roommates aboard a troop ship going over, and we were in the same troop ship going over". And they got separated in Italy after we landed. And he had he heard that that Bob Dole had been killed. And he was quite shocked when he read in the paper about this congressman from Kansas, did something, and he thought it was Bob Dole. And so he got immediately got in touch with them. And then shortly after that, Bob Dole became a senator. And they had conversations going back and forth. And this man, our neighbor, had a son in college at the time, and Bob Dole wanted the son to be an intern for him in Washington, DC.

Pollack: [02:05:21] And the boy said, "No." He said, "I think some boys from Kansas should get the job". And Bob Dole said, "Okay, I'll get somebody from Kansas the next summer." He said, "I'm not going to take no for an answer. You're going to be an intern for me." And at this time, he said, "Say yes." And so as things would have it, one of the past president of the Association was a medic who treated Bob Dole on the battlefield. And he said and so he said, "I remember Bob Dole very vividly because he says medics have lipstick containers in their pocket. And when they give a wounded soldier morphine, they put take the lipstick and put an M on their forehead." And he said, with Bob Dole, we had casualty so heavy they ran out of lipstick. So we took his own blood and made an M on his forehead. And so he said this is what he did before we can get him to a field hospital and then a general hospital. But he remembered he was he was remembered, Bob Dole, very vividly. So. So we met Bob Dole in Italy on our second trip back to Italy.

Pollack: [02:06:40] We were on a tour every three years. The division goes on a tour and we're in a tour bus getting ready to go back to where... to where we were staying. And and all of a sudden, "Everybody out of the bus. Everybody out of the bus." And why was everybody out of the bus? Because Bob Dole was coming to join us and Bob Dole and President Clinton had gone to Nettuno to the military cemetery there. And then they were going on to Anzio where they were having the 50th-anniversary celebration. And Bob Dole broke away from the from the group from Washington, DC, to join us. And so we were laughing about it. Everybody was tired at that time. But all of a sudden, Elizabeth Dole was coming and all the guys had like a shot in their arm. Elizabeth Dole was coming in. She was a very gracious lady. And and they spent, they spent a short period of time with us. And then they went on to Omaha. And so anyhow, a big banner came on a roll with Dole in '96 and so [autocorrects] '94. So anyhow, that was our experience with Bob Dole. He never showed up at a national convention unless he was running for something. Uh, but now, now, of course, he was instrumental in getting the World War II monument built.

Sanderson: [02:08:04] So have you been to, uh, DC for that, or.

Pollack: [02:08:08] Yes, I was. I was there twice before with our son who lives in Washington, DC area. But I went on Honor Flight three years ago.

Sanderson: [02:08:15] How was that?

Pollack: [02:08:17] Uh, it was very enlightening. Uh, there were 93 veterans and their guardians. Fifty-five of them were in wheelchairs. And our son met our bus, and the bus pulled up to the monument. Actually, fourth time, I should say, we were there the last reunion but our son met the bus. When we pulled into the monument and I got off the bus and I said, "Ron, I will never bitch and moan about missing another [02:08:48] putt [02:08:48] in my life because some of these guys will never see the top of a putting green". But I do bitch and moan.

Sanderson: [02:08:55] Well, you you definitely have deserved it and earned it.

Pollack: [02:08:59] Yeah. So it was a very, very enlightening thing. And then, of course, got on a plane and then they were having the thing, the ritual about mail call. And I said, "That doesn't affect me at all because nobody knows I'm here." And I didn't know that my son went through our email list and said all these people notes that I was going to be on Honor Flight. And so all of a sudden I had two packages of mail and I cried when I saw them.

Sanderson: [02:09:35] Was it, uh, people that you knew or just.

Speaker3: [02:09:38] Oh, yeah.

Pollack: [02:09:38] I mean, these are all acquaintances. Then Sophie's letter said these are the best forty, forty-five years I ever spent. And I said, So what about the other twenty years? What happened? She said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, read your letter." And she said, So she she laughed when she saw it.

Sanderson: [02:09:59] Yeah.

Pollack: [02:10:00] So anyhow, that's that's my story.

Sanderson: [02:10:04] Well, we greatly appreciate you coming out and talking to us about it.

Pollack: [02:10:07] You're most welcome.

Sanderson: [02:10:07] And one of the things that we like to do, uh, we're real big on the challenge coins. Uh, definitely something, uh, I've been with being Navy. We're pretty huge on it, but we'd like to give you this as a token of, uh, coming out and thank you--

Pollack: [02:10:22] Thank you so much.

Sanderson: [02:10:23] For everything. Thoroughly enjoyed being, having you out today.

Pollack: [02:10:27] Thank you. All right.

Pollack: [02:10:29] I'm going to put this down in my collection down in Florida. Thank you.

Sanderson: [02:10:34] No problem. Thank you for coming out. Okay. We'll go ahead and call them in now.

Pollack: [02:10:38] Okay.

Sanderson: [02:10:41] So it doesn't.