

# Gerald Goodman

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Interviewed by Leah Cohen

Transcribed by YouTube with corrections by Maria Planansky

Edited by Leah Cohen, Gerald Goodman, and Janet Goodman

Web Biography by Maria Planansky

Production by Brad Guidera and Angel Melendez

Cohen: Today is August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, and name is Leah Cohen and on behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, I have the pleasure of interviewing Captain Gerald Goodman who served in the U.S. Army from 1940 until 1946. He was initially part of the National Guard, the 110th Engineers 35th Division and later served with the 20<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineer Regiment 2nd Battalion where he was part of campaigns in Africa, Sicily, and Europe including D-Day. <sup>1</sup>So welcome Mr. Goodman and also welcome uh the children Allan, Jordan, Janet, and Steve or Steven, excuse me. But I thought we begin the beginning um and I'll ask you: where and where were you born?

Goodman: I was born in Kansas City, Missouri and my birth date is July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1921.

Cohen: Wow, so what was it like growing up in Kansas City?

Goodman: I enjoyed a nice, very nice childhood. Early in my life my parents bought a house and so I don't remember living in anything but a house and with a yard and with a neighborhood there. I played with some of the children there.

Cohen: What were your parents' occupation?

Goodman: My father was a tailor and originally made clothes until the Depression forced him to compete with prices and so he opened a tailor shop where he took in cleaning and pressing and did alterations. My mother was a housewife.

Cohen: Um so in spite of the Depression it sounds like he found a way to keep the family going well.

Goodman: Yes, yes.

Cohen: Which languages did you speak growing up?

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to D-Day, the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Regiment ceased to exist as an entity and was reorganized into the Headquarters -1171<sup>st</sup> Engineer Group, 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion and 1340<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. Mr Goodman was part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion.

Goodman: My parents spoke Yiddish at home, but they also made an effort to learn English and became relatively proficient in English. But I learned Yiddish because that's the first language that I heard.

Cohen: Did you learn Hebrew, as well?

Goodman: Not until I went into Hebrew school at about six or seven.

Cohen: Okay and, um, what interested you in school as a young person? What type of subjects?

Goodman: I was interested in math and science.

Cohen: And, um, what type of activities did you do when you were not in school or what type of hobbies did you have?

Goodman: I didn't have a specific hobby, uh, just engaged in sports—baseball, board games. Some—some board games but very, very few specific activities in my childhood. I did enjoy building with my erector set. I liked to take things apart and put them back together.]

Cohen: Did you have any siblings?

Goodman: No siblings. Not during my lifetime. My mother had the child before I was born, but he didn't live long enough for me to know him.

Cohen: Okay. Could you describe Jewish life at the time in Kansas City?

Goodman: Oh, we were very active. My parents belonged to a synagogue and I went to Hebrew school and got a Jewish education. I was Bar Mitzvahed. We were very active as far as Judaism was concerned. And got a fairly good education, my father was very learned. He was a “Yeshiva Bucher” practicing to be a rabbi. He studied in a yeshiva in Poland prior to coming to the United States as part an arranged marriage. My dad was my mentor in all things.

Cohen: How did he help you?

Goodman: In explaining various questions in Judaism and religion in general. He was a living example of how to lead a Jewish life.

Cohen: Had anyone in your family served in the military?

Goodman: Not in my immediate family, but one of my first cousins served in the military. I know for sure he did because I was fortunate enough to meet him in Europe.

Cohen: Where did you meet him?

Goodman: I don't remember the exact location, but it was some place in Europe. He found me and then we communicated by letters, and he travelled to meet me, and we got together for several hours. It was amazing.

Cohen: It is amazing, yes. Uh, when you were growing up did your—did you and your parents talk about the rise of Hitler or Nazism in Germany?

Goodman: Not particularly. They were interested in what was going on in the world as far as what was happening to the Jews, and so we talked about it when it became newsworthy.

Cohen: When did it become newsworthy, to you?

Goodman: Well, my mother had family in Europe, and my father also and many were lost in the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup>

Cohen: So you mentioned as well that you decided to study at junior college. Do you want to talk about where you studied and what program you chose?

Goodman: Well, junior college in Kansas City. Immediately after I graduated from high school I enrolled there. I was taking a course in general engineering, math, and science and, uh, did that for two years. It was a two-year curriculum. I managed to graduate from that prior to being, going into the service.

Cohen: So this is something I'm not totally clear about. I think you had written that you had signed up for the National Guard, the 110<sup>th</sup> Engineer's 35<sup>th</sup> Division. Was this, um, were you involved in the National Guard at the same time that you were studying in college or was this—?

Goodman: No, I enlisted in the—yes, I—you're correct. I enlisted in the National Guard in the, uh, fall of 1938 just prior to going to junior college. So I was in the National Guard during the time I was in junior college.

Cohen: So what, what motivated you to join the National Guard?

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<sup>2</sup> Janet Goodman explained that their father could not remember the timing of their relatives' fate in Europe probably because the news of the camps and the personal stories were only beginning to emerge while he was still in the service. Mr Goodman's father may also have chosen not to relay the specifics.

Goodman: Well, I had been in ROTC in high school, so I enjoyed the military aspect, but I also wanted to use the income from being in the National Guard to help pay for my tuition at junior college.

Cohen: Were you, um, living at your parents' home or did you have to live in a particular area, like a base?

Goodman: No, no, no, no. I—I, the during junior college—I lived at home during all that time. I attended weekly drills in Kansas City and summer camp at a military camp in Missouri as part of my duties in the guard.

Cohen: Um, okay, so I was reading that in the '20s and '30s the National Guard, which was comprised of troops from Missouri and Kansas, had two main roles: policing labor troubles, as well as providing relief in the event of natural disasters. Did any of those things come up at the time that you were in the National Guard?

Goodman: No. Fortunately, we never had, we were never called any service during the time I was in the Guard.

Cohen: What type of training did that require from you?

Goodman: Was military training, learning the various engineering requirements. The engineers did construction work and so we had to learn how to handle certain equipment and, uh, how to make maximum use of ropes and pulleys and then the military training and just drill and rifle marksmanship.

Cohen: So when the 35th Division was called into federal service on December 23, 1940 was that the point that you, uh, enlisted? Like once it became federal? Like how did that transition work?

Goodman: Well, I was enlisted in the National Guard in September '38, so I had been in the National Guard more than two years when we were called into active duty.

Cohen: Okay.

Goodman: I was, had been serving in the National Guard since September of '38. So, in December, when the order was issued, our unit was called into active duty.

Cohen: So, what happened after your call to active duty? Was that the point where you had to report to Camp Robinson?

Goodman: We, we, we were—yes. We were transported by train to Camp Robinson [Arkansas] which is a, was built near the city of Little Rock<sup>3</sup>.

Cohen: And what, what, what type of training did you do at Camp Robinson and how did it differ from your previous training with the National Guard and with ROTC?

Goodman: Was more extensive. We had more use of equipment that was provided for us and we were also engaged in training draftees who were being inducted into the service beginning in October of '41. So, we, our unit, was brought up to strength with people who were drafted into the service who had to be trained. So part of what we were doing, we're training new recruits in addition to learning to use more of the engineering equipment that we would be required to use.

Cohen: What was an example of an important piece of engineering equipment that you were learning to use there?

Goodman: One of the things that we were developing were portable bridges that could be constructed over a stream or, or a small river, if necessary, because the enemy had destroyed the bridge that was there. So it was a mobile steel bridge in sections that could be erected and projected across a stream, so we learned to use that.

Cohen: Did you find that your previous, um, engineering studies helped you with the actual hands-on work?

Goodman: Not specifically.<sup>4</sup>

Cohen: Um, and the other thing is what was it like training the draftees and was there a difference in attitude between those who had enlisted as opposed to those who were drafted?

Goodman: I, I don't think so. I, I personally didn't see that. Of course the draftees didn't have the experience, and like anything they were new, and they were clumsier at learning to do the things that the people who were enlisted in the Guard had been doing for maybe several years. Specifically, uh, handling the arms and engaging in the military drills that were, that we did. That was all new to the draftees.

Cohen: So how did you and the others that teach and train them?

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<sup>3</sup> Janet Goodman noted that Mr. Goodman made a distinction between service in the National Guard versus active-duty military service. He also emphasized the fact that his unit from the National Guard was called into active duty rather than him as an individual.

<sup>4</sup> Janet Goodman suggested that his work with erector sets as a child was more informative to handling engineering equipment in the forces.

Goodman: Just by, uh, showing how to do it and telling how to do it and they're seeing how it's done.

Cohen: Okay, I was reading that there had been large-scale military maneuvers both in Arkansas and in Louisiana in the fall of 1941. Had you participated in either or both and could you describe them, please?

Goodman: Well, they were trying to do exercises that simulated what might actually happen in a real engagement. Going out and working on a road or laying mines or using rope and tackle to move heavy objects out of the way, clearing debris. And that's what we did. Taking hikes, march—simulated marches over a long period of time. Various things that simulate what might happen during real wartime engagement.

Cohen: Um, in retrospect do you think this was a good preparation?

Goodman: Oh, yes. It gave people experience and how things might be, which otherwise would never have experienced.

Cohen: Yeah, um, so in most of the interviews that I've done with World War II veterans, the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, came as a shock, but I can't, I was wondering, in light of the fact that you were already in the Army for over a year and had been in the National Guard for one year, was this less surprising for you than, let's say, for a typical civilian?

Goodman: I think it was less surprising. Uh, we've been in the service, in active U.S. Army service for almost a year when Pearl Harbor occurred, and it was—we—I don't think we were as surprised.

Cohen: So, you mentioned in your interview with David Jacob that subsequent to Pearl Harbor, “I decided that if I was going to be in service for the duration of the war I might as well advance as much as I could”—

Goodman: This occurred uh shortly after Pearl Harbor when uh the president announced that uh everybody's enlistment in the National Guard was extended for the duration of the war and I thought that, “Gee, I might as well try to do the best I can and, and raise myself up as much as I could in the military”, and that's when I decided to apply for officer candidate school.

Cohen: What did your application entail?

Goodman: I merely had to have approval of my commanding officer and I had to have a certain grade level on the Army general classification test in order to apply, and

it was submitted to the engineer school, and it was relatively easy to apply, and I was accepted in March of '42.

Cohen: Oh, so what was your new rank once you were accepted?

Goodman: Well, I, at the time I was accepted, I was a sergeant in the 110th Engineers. And in officer candidate school, there is no rank. You're in the school for ninety days and at the end of ninety days you're commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. And in those days, they call us ninety-day wonders.

Cohen: Okay [laughs], so what did you learn during those ninety days and was the Engineering School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia?

Goodman: Yes, school was at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Every branch of the service had a similar school. Similar school, for example, the [United States Army] Infantry School infantry school was in Fort Benning, Georgia. We learned how to, uh, do the various, uh, things that any engineering unit would do. We learned to understand how to command, and we had practice in leading troops. We took turns leading the rest of the corps. The [US Army] Engineer School had worked was, uh, organized in units just like the Army, so we drilled, and we participated in various exercises as engineer units, and we took turns commanding those to learn how to do that.

Cohen: What were some of the challenges in learning how to command?

Goodman: Well, I know for me it was a challenge because I was short and young, and that's not a good place to be when you're in command of troops who are older and bigger. [[Laughter]] That was my major challenge.

Cohen: So what was a typical day like when you're within those, within that ninety-day period?

Goodman: Oh and it was very structured. It was a scheduled where you had to be someplace at every time doing some specific activity. Either a drill formation or a class in a specific engineering job. It was very structured. One of the things that we, was very challenging was this was the forty hour, uh, march, which was a forty, it was a duration of forty hours where you were out away from the camp and hiking, marching, and living on the ground in a small pup, what we call pup tents, simulating what might be the case if you were in service and you were out on a march, and you had to go someplace and do something. Very challenging. No rest, no sleep and, of course, you were being graded all the time by technical officers who were watching what you were doing.

Cohen: What were some of the things the technical officers were looking out for?

Goodman: Your ability to comply with orders. Uh, your ability to have your uniform and equipment in an exact order that's required. Your ability to respond properly to questions, to orders.

Cohen: When were you assigned your military occupation specialty of supply officer?

Goodman: Uh, after the—in, in England, after we were reorganized into the 20th Engineer Battalion, that's when I was designated supply officer.

Cohen: Okay, so at a later point. Okay, so you're off, you finish, uh, Officer Candidate School. What happens next? Is this the point where you're slated to go to England?

Goodman: No. Uh, when I graduated from Officer Candidate School, I was just scheduled to go to a new engineer company. It was a depot company. I was sent there and was there for several months, until the order came down that that unit had to supply one officer to go to the 20th Engineers who needed to be brought up to strength. Our commander had us draw straws for this request and I drew the short straw. The depot company of course was safer than the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineers assignment. So I was in some other place prior to joining the 20<sup>th</sup>, was extended period.

Cohen: What were you doing there over those few months before you were assigned to the 20<sup>th</sup>?

Goodman: Waiting to get people to build up the company, the, this engineer depot company. Some small amount of training, but primarily waiting for the unit to be formed. And when I was selected to go to the 20<sup>th</sup>, I left this unit and joined the 20<sup>th</sup> in Camp Blanding Florida in, I believe it was in July or August of '42.

Cohen: What happens next?

Goodman: Well, I was with the 20th and assigned to a company and the 20th was doing some training there. We're always doing some sort of training. You're not just sitting around eating your three meals a day and, and, uh, doing some sort of training. But finally, the 20th was ordered to go north to Fort Dix [New Jersey] to get ready to disembark to go to Europe. That occurred over the fall, probably into October of '42.

Cohen: So what was the nature of your training, you know, prior to going to leaving to Fort Dix? Like how did it compare to the other periods of training--?

Goodman: Similar training. It was always something to do with an engineer specialty. Uh, minefield removal, road repair, bridge construction and repair, and rifle marksmanship.

Cohen: Okay, do you want to describe any of these duties in detail now?

Goodman: Well, they're hard to describe. It's a routine sort of thing. You practice using the equipment, you march, you practice a forced march of ten miles or twenty miles with the full equipment. It's doing things that you might have to be doing in actual practice.

Cohen: Okay, so I believe you had mentioned that your unit was slated to go to England, but the entire convoy sank while still in U.S waters. Can you talk about that, please?

Goodman: I just heard about it. That the equipment that the unit loaded up, all of the heavy military equipment, not individual personal equipment, but military equipment, (bulldozers, road graders, trucks, jeeps, machine guns) was scheduled to go to England. And on the way, that was lost. We found that out, at least I found that out, just by word of mouth after I got up to Fort Dix when we were getting ready to go someplace. We didn't know where we were going when we got on board ship, no.

Cohen: No. Out of curiosity, did people suspect there was a U-boat attack on these ships that were carrying the heavy equipment?

Goodman: Well, I said well they got lost somehow or other you thought it probably a U-boat attack. Was all sorts of rumors. Nobody ever really knew what happened there. Was soon forgotten when we got on board ship, and, after we went to sea, we're told we're going to North Africa,

Cohen: You only found out when you were aboard the ship?

Goodman: We didn't know until we were on board ship, out in this, out at sea.

Cohen: Wow, what was it like being on the ship and were you seasick? And how did people use their time?

Goodman: Well, I don't remember how long the journey was. It was several days, and I was bunked in a room, with four or five other officers, with several bunk beds. The enlisted men were below decks—where the ships carried cargo. I don't know how they were quartered, but the officers were quartered in a state room, where they erected bunk beds, triple decker bunk beds. So I was in a room with three or four other officers. We had three meals a day and tried to keep from

being bored during the tour. We had some small classes that talked about where we were going but we were, we only knew we were going to Morocco.

Cohen: What did you think about that? Like were you surprised? Were you following a campaign in Africa through the news?

Goodman: No, well, I'm speaking for myself personally.

Cohen: Yeah.

Goodman: We had trained in the States before going, how to disembark from a troop ship into a landing craft. So we knew we were going to be taking part in some kind of a water invasion, because we had practiced disembarking from a ship down a rope ladder into a small landing craft.

Cohen: Okay, so it was not a surprise, as such.

Goodman: It wasn't a surprise that, what, that we were going to be doing something like that.

Cohen: Okay, how did you get information, like were you receiving the *Stars and Stripes* and other sources of news?

Goodman: We got information regular bulletins that were issued, sometimes daily, but as often as necessary. I don't remember getting the *Stars and Stripes* until some longer time later. That was a later, uh, "goodie," so to speak.

Cohen: So you're on the ship, you're informed you're about to be part of the allied invasion of Morocco, then controlled by Vichy France. Um, what happens?

Goodman: Well, fortunately the beach was not defended very well. There was hardly any opposition to our landing in Morocco. Any in the, we were, we landed on a beach that was near Casablanca. Not too far away. And we landed with hardly any casualties.

Cohen: What was your role as a combat engineer once you landed at Fedala near Casablanca?

Goodman: Well, we had to get off the beach and go to some designated point for assembly. So it wasn't anything specific except to get off the beach, and go to the assembly point, where the unit got, was got together, and was able to function as a unit, which took a day or two. I don't remember exactly how that happened, but we didn't stay on the beach. We marched away from the beach and went to this

assembly area and were ultimately, uh, went into Casablanca. And I don't remember whether it was by vehicle or by foot.

Cohen: Oh wow. So you didn't encounter like obstacles or mines as you would later on?

Goodman: I'm sorry I didn't hear you.

Cohen: Sorry—can I assume that you did not encounter obstacles or mines on the beaches?

Goodman: No, it was hardly any kind of defense on the beach when we, where we landed.

Cohen: Okay, so you're in Casablanca and what responsibilities was your unit given?

Goodman: When we were in Casablanca, we were bivouacked in what was once a hippodrome, and the regiment was used to unload cargo from the ships. We provided labor to unload ships in the port of Casablanca. We did that for several months.

Cohen: I was also reading that the 20th was involved in clearing up the Hotel D'anfa for the Casablanca Conference where Roosevelt and Churchill were meeting up with the Russians to plan for the allied invasion of Europe. Were you involved in this mission to clear up the hotel or had you heard about it?

Goodman: I, I—we heard about it. I don't think we were involved.

Cohen: Okay, um, what type of contact did you have with the Casablanca Jewish community?

Goodman: Very little. We didn't get much leave time to leave the unit. There was very little interaction between troops and civilians.

Cohen: I believe you mentioned in the interview with David Jacob that during Hannukah you had the opportunity to go to a synagogue there. A synagogue in Casablanca.

Goodman: I, I don't remember. I don't remember even what I told David.

Cohen: It's okay. It's been— even that was twenty years ago, I think so. So my understanding is that in March there begins the motor march over the Atlas Mountains. Like over a thousand miles. Um, what was your unit's role in that or what are your recollections of the march over the Atlantic, this Atlantic, excuse me, over the Atlas Mountains toward the Mediterranean?

Goodman: Are we still in North Africa?

Cohen: Yeah, yeah. Like, here, when you're leaving Morocco and going through Tunisia, I know, Algeria or Algerian Tunisia.

Goodman: Yes, we went through. We were motor transport, and we went through Morocco, north up towards the coast, uh, northern coast and through Algeria and ultimately into Tunisia. We moved by motor transport and every night we stopped and bivouacked in in the local field. And of course had to dig foxholes every night.

Cohen: Was it difficult to dig foxholes? Was the earth hard?

Goodman: It was difficult, but every, everyone had an entrenching tool, which is a little shovel that folded up, and you carry it on your back. For—just to learn that this is the only way you spent the night was in a hole in the ground.

Cohen: Yeah, so when you were in North Africa were you always attached to U.S. forces or were you ever attached to any of the other Allies, such as the free French?

Goodman: I don't believe we were ever attached to any other command. We were always under U.S. command throughout the activities, even until the end of the combat in North Africa, when the Afrika Korps surrendered.

Cohen: So what were your main priorities or missions? [Coughing] Are you okay? Sorry, what were your main priorities during this time? Like when you were going through the motor march?

Goodman: Uh, well, we—trying to recall. I can't recall doing anything except being sure that everybody was together, and the unit was able to board transport and move successfully. We didn't have any particular mission en route.

Cohen: Okay, so did you have a mission once you reached, um I think it's called Bizerte, like when is there anything?

Goodman: Bizerte. That was in Tunisia.

Cohen: Okay.

Goodman: I don't remember having any specific mission. We were, uh, I just don't remember.

Cohen: Okay, that's okay. Out of curiosity, how did the 20th Engineers get the insignia of the wavy arrow?

Goodman: Someone in the unit decided that we wanted to place a special mark on our vehicles—normally, you have your unit designation, so that, for example, on vehicles we would have “20 E,” which designated 20th Engineers and then we decided that for security purposes, in case any of the vehicles were captured, we would not want them to know that that was the unit. So we replaced that designation with a red wavy arrow.

Cohen: Something clear. Was your unit involved at all with the removal of mines?

Goodman: Yes. On occasion, we had to remove the mines in the roads and the roadbeds, road shoulders. On one of these occasions, the platoon which I commanded suffered casualties when one of the mines, one of the anti-personnel mines was detonated, and I lost my platoon sergeant and several other men. A number of, a number of casualties. Fortunately, I was not at the site at the time, so I came back to find that casualty list and loss, and we were in the process of working on removing anti-tank mines and anti-personnel mines on a roadway. I think on the way, on the, somewhere on the northern coast.

Cohen: Could you explain to the uninitiated how a person could avoid being, you know, blown up? Or was this more a matter of luck, like were there any precautions at all that one could take when trying to remove mines?

Goodman: Well, we had mine detectors, but the mine detectors only detected metal. So if the mine was metal, then it was detected. Uh and you used the minesweeper, so-called, as, in front of you, as you walked and hoped that you detected the metal before you stepped on the detonator. This worked pretty well with the anti-tank mines, because those were laid in the road, and it was almost obvious where they were, because they were dug into the pavement or the roadbed. But on the shoulders of the road where you were dirt and grass, it was more difficult to determine where the mine was so, uh, unfortunately, if you didn't see it, and the mine detector failed to pick it up, you detonated one. By stepping on it. The anti-tank mines were easier to find because they were large. They were more than a foot in diameter. The German anti-tank mines. They were called Teller mines [teller in German means plate or dish] because they represented a big dish.

Cohen: So at what point do you board LCIs [Landing Craft Infantry] to leave to Sicily?

Goodman: We, sometime in July, after the German surrendered in North Africa, we got word that we were designated to take part in the invasion of Sicily. Again, this involved getting into some kind of landing craft and we, this time, were in what was called an LCI, landing craft infantry. It held about 150 men and there were ramps on either side of the bow. And the ship moved to the beach and when it

grounded it, it down ramps on either side of the bow, and troops disembarked from the LCI to the beach, and that was the way we went into Sicily.

Cohen: I was reading that there was, um, there was a lot of enemy artillery coming from Sicily toward the boats. Did that affect you, your LCI?

Goodman: Uh, we personally did not suffer any artillery damage in Sicily. We did later in France, but that's a different story, which I'll get to later.

Cohen: Okay. The other thing I was reading was that the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Regiment was attached to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne for the attack on Palermo. So I was wondering, were your preparations different for the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne versus being attached to infantry?

Goodman: I can't answer. I don't know. I don't know that there'd be any difference, but I really can't answer that question, because I don't know.

Cohen: Okay, um, the other thing I was wondering about was whether your unit was involved in improving the Coast Road Highway 113, like this very narrow ridge in preparation for Patton's attack. Was that something your unit was involved in, improving the coast road Highway 113 in Sicily?

Goodman: Yes, we worked on the coast road.

Cohen: So, how were you improving it?

Goodman: I don't specifically know. At that time, I was not active in a company that was doing the work. I was temporarily assigned to regimental headquarters and so I can't answer that question, truthfully.

Cohen: So, that's okay. But going back to yourself: what were you doing when you were assigned to the regimental headquarters?

Goodman: The regiment decided to establish a forward command post, was near the action than where the regimental headquarters had been put, which were probably in near Palermo. So I was made detachment commander of this small group of people who set up communications and a small organization that was near the point of action. And I did that for several weeks or I don't recall exactly the time.

Cohen: Pardon my ignorance, but what does it mean to open up lines of communication?

Goodman: Well, normally, uh, the Signal Corps laid lines between units, where you were able to use your telephones. But otherwise there was radio communication, and

it was quite, quite difficult. But Signal Corps provided telephone lines from between units and whenever possible.

Cohen: So, were you working in conjunction with the Signal Corps?

Goodman: No. We did—they were independent. They knew that they had to lay these lines, but fortunately, in most cases, I think it was primarily radio communication and not telephone communication.

Cohen: So you're, you're in the forward headquarters, closer to the front. And what happens to you next?

Goodman: I'm sorry, I didn't hear that.

Cohen: What happens next? You're based in the forward base, closer to the battle.

Goodman: We stayed there until the battle finally closed down, in which case, uh, the regimental headquarters moved, moved to forward, so that we no longer -- Our regimental headquarters, we moved. This continued the operation because no longer—when the action stopped in Sicily, uh we were no longer needed to be up that close to the action and so we returned to the regiment for further orders.

Cohen: Was your unit involved in repairing the rail lines between Palermo and Santa Stefano or involved in opening up the port at Palermo?

Goodman: I don't think we were involved in either of those, but I was too far down the chain of command to remember whether or not parts of the regiment of 800 to 1000 men, were doing certain jobs. I was merely a lieutenant in one of the companies and so if some other company in the regiment got assigned to do something, I might not know anything about it.

Cohen: Okay, so what were, what were your, let's say, responsibilities toward the end of the campaign at Sicily?

Goodman: Getting ready to move to our next port and we, we found out that we were not going to go to Italy. Some of the units in North Africa were scheduled to go to Italy, but we were scheduled. We, we found out we were not scheduled to go to Italy. At some point in time, I don't know exactly when it was, we knew that we were going to go to England, go back to England to get ready to invade France. I think this was around August or September of '42.

Cohen: ...I think that it might have been '43?

Goodman: Right, '43. Because we were on board ship in November to go from Sicily back to England. I remember that. Near Thanksgiving time.

Cohen: Do you remember hearing about Rommel pulling out the last of the German troops from Sicily in August 1943? Do you, do you remember hearing about Rommel's surrender, you know, of Sicily in 1943,

Goodman: The surrender of Sicily? Yes, faintly.

Cohen: Um, the other thing I was wondering is that it seems to me that you're serving at an, at an auspicious time when the war seems to be turning around a little bit. Did you have a sense of that at the time?

Goodman: I don't think so. I don't think we thought the war was getting any, uh, closer to our side. Although we were successful in getting through North Africa and getting rid of the Afrika Korps and capturing Sicily. But we thought there was still a lot ahead. We knew that France, Europe had to be invaded and we were going to be part of it, so there was a lot of work ahead.

Cohen: Yeah. So, um, when were you shipped to, to—was it, was it to England, or to Scotland at first?

Goodman: Well, I think it was, well, I don't remember where we landed. It might have been Scotland. But I don't remember where we landed, because at that particular time, I was in the hospital. I had contracted hepatitis and during part of the trip, on board ship, I was in ship sick bay. I was ill and when we got to Scotland, I did not go with my unit to wherever they went. I went to a hospital.

Cohen: How were you treated? Like where did you get proper medical care? Like what was it like?

Goodman: Oh, excellent care on board ship. I was put on a special diet and when I got to Scotland, I was in a hospital for about a month. And excellent treatment. American hospital in Scotland.

Cohen: So how long was it, um, to take for you to recover and when did you rejoin your unit?

Goodman: It took—I was in the hospital a month. So, I re—I came to my unit late December. I was in the hospital from the time we, uh, landed in Scotland, which I believe was late November or early December. Late November and I was, I know I was in the hospital for at least a month. I didn't reach my unit until just before Christmas of '43.

Cohen: And where was your unit located?

Goodman: They were in Wales. And I tried to recall the name of the little town. I thought I'd never forget it. But I joined them, and they had been in this place.

Cohen: Uh was it, was it Wellington or was that—

Goodman: Wellington, Wellington, Somerset.

Cohen: Okay.

Goodman: We were in Wellington, Somerset. The—my unit was there, and I joined them there after being in the hospital for over a month.

Cohen: So how was your unit training in Wellington?

Goodman: I don't recall, uh, what training was available in England. Uh I know we were; we knew that we were going to be reorganized and that occurred in January, I believe, of '44. Am I correct, and that's that assumption?

Cohen: Yes, according to the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineers' website, they also say, um, or maybe a bit later in June. Maybe June 1944? I'm not sure.

Goodman: We were reorganized in England. The regiment was reorganized in England into two battalions and a headquarters, a engineers group headquarters. And at that point in time, I was reassigned to uh the 1st, what was the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion—was called the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer [Battalion], and the 2nd battalion was called the 1340<sup>th</sup> [i.e., 1340<sup>th</sup>] Engineer [Battalion] and there was also a group headquarters. That occurred in January, I believe of '44.

Cohen: Okay, were you explained, um, as to why there was a decision to reorganize?

Goodman: Well, the Army generally reorganized entirely. They reorganized all the divisions, all of the units and they, among the decisions, was the decision to, uh, reduce engineer combat units to battalions [three companies and a headquarters approximately 500] instead of regiments [two or three battalions]. But divisions were reorganized also, so it was a general Army relocate, redistribution of how the Army decided they wanted to organize their divisions. They, in Army parlance, the square division was reorganized into a triangular division.

Cohen: When you were in England or before that in Sicily and North Africa, did you have any downtime? Any possibility to visit towns or were you always on the go or always training?

Goodman: We did very little, there was very little time for extracurricular activities. I know the army made a real stance in setting up high holiday exercise, high holiday get-togethers, uh, services for Jewish soldiers, and this happened in Sicily, as well as, uh well, it didn't happen in North Africa during the high holiday period. I think it happened in North Africa as well as in Sicily. Uh no, not in Sicily. North, it was North Africa. We actually had high holiday services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the Jewish soldiers were, every unit, was notified that was in the area where this service was going to be held. And it was set up, I'm sure it was, we, it happened once in North Africa, of course it didn't happen in Sicily. We weren't there in September. It was, uh, but in September of '42 and in September of '43, we had high holiday services in North Africa.

Cohen: Wow. So the Army went to great lengths to—

Goodman: The Army went to great lengths. They went even further.

Cohen: You also mentioned, I think in the previous interview, that Jewish soldiers were given matzah and wine for Passover. Was this when you were in state or also when you were overseas?

Goodman: During Passover, I'm trying to remember, in March of '45. I'm having trouble, uh, organizing my time frame. I remember one Passover that occurred all of the Jewish soldiers received a box of matzah, and every ten soldiers received a bottle of wine.

Cohen: Well.

Goodman: So we, so the bottle of wine would have to be shared, but every soldier got a box of matzah.

Cohen: Oh my goodness.

Goodman: Army went to great lengths, I thought, to, uh, deal with the Jewish troops because we didn't exceed, at least in my unit, I don't think there were any more than the general percentage of Jews in the population of two percent. So, uh, in my unit we had, I think, three Jewish officers and maybe twenty Jews, enlisted men. Roughly two percent of what, what the total unit's registration was. But we did celebrate Passover at least once, I remember - got matzah and wine.

Cohen: Did you feel a special kinship with other Jewish GIs or and just in general, was there camaraderie in the units you were in?

Goodman: Well the officers didn't, uh, we, generally, officers didn't associate with enlisted men, even though there were some Jewish enlisted men. But there were two Jewish officers in my unit, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineers, one was in headquarters, and we were together. And another one was one of the companies, so I know that there were at least three Jewish officers in the 20th Engineer Battalion.

Cohen: So you're in England and when do you get the orders that you're going to be crossing the English Channel and the orders of the invasion?

Goodman: Yes, we received those. We received orders that we were going to be part of the invasion force. We were selected because, probably because of our previous experience with two amphibious invasions prior to that, so this would be our third amphibious invasion. That and very there just weren't that many units that had that experience, so we were selected, and we began practicing invasion ordeals. This time we would be coming in on LCIs and so we wouldn't have to climb down rope ladders out of a troop ship. We boarded LCIs in England prior to D-Day. And all we knew, we didn't know what day, D-Day was, and the reason they use this designation was to avoid telling anybody what, when D-Day was. But was D-Day was the day that we would invade. Just like H-hour was the hour we would invade. So everything was D-Day "minus so many days" or D-Day plus so many days." Similarly with the H-Hour. All we knew was that we were going to be in the invasion, and it was going to be early in the invasion, not late in the invasion.

Cohen: What time were you slated to land?

Goodman: I don't know. I don't remember the exact time, but I think it was around seven or eight o'clock in the morning.

Cohen: And from our knowledge of history, we know that it was very stormy weather. Do you remember what it was like when you were on the LCI?

Goodman: Well, we later learned that D-Day was supposed to occur the day before we actually did. It was postponed because the weather was bad. I don't recall the weather being, the seas being so rough the day we took off which, was June the 6<sup>th</sup>. Originally, we heard later that D-Day was scheduled for June the 5<sup>th</sup>, but the weather was too bad, so it was postponed until June the 6<sup>th</sup>. We left England, I don't remember whether it was on the 5th or early on the 6<sup>th</sup>, because we left England and crossed the English Channel during the night of or the early morning of June the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Cohen: So you were supposed to land at Omaha Beach, Easy Red, near Vierville-sur-Mer, around Colleville-sur-Mer. Do you want to describe the landing and did the boat approach the shore and what was the tide like at that point?

Goodman: [Laughs] Seventy-five years ago.

Cohen: [Laughs] Don't ask so much. [Laughter]

Goodman: We were supposed to land on Omaha, Easy Red. Just to clarify, there were two beaches—there were two American beaches and at least one English beach. The American beaches were Omaha and Utah. We were supposed to land on Omaha. Omaha was further subdivided into A, B, C, D, and E and then each of those sections were subdivided into red, white, and blue, so that we were designated a specific location: Omaha Easy “E” Red. I don't know whether we actually landed at that location, because I wasn't guiding the LCI that we were on, but that was the location we were supposed to land at.

Cohen: You know the museum here had an exhibit on D-Day, and you have pictures of soldiers who are wading through, you know, water like up to their necks. So I guess I was wondering: what was it like when you had to disembark?

Goodman: We, uh, disembarked from an LCI, as I mentioned before. There was, uh, the LCI grounded and let down the ramps and technically you were supposed to be in water that was no more than knee-deep. That's about what it was when we got off, but on the way in, we were hit by German artillery and we suffered casualties, so we had to delay our landing. Fortunately, I was twenty feet away, approximately, from where the shell hit our LCI. But we suffered casualties and so we had to delay our landing until we could take care of the casualties that we suffered because of this artillery hit. We finally got off and the water was maybe knee deep and it wasn't too, too long a stretch to get to, out of the water and onto the sand.

Cohen: Okay, before we go on how did you take care of the people who were hit like was there a hospital ship nearby or—

Goodman: No, no. There was a— we had a medic. We are had our own medical officer, so our own wounded were taken care of by our own medical officer and several of his, several assistants. There was no hospital ship available that I know of or maybe, several days. What I observed was our medical officer took care of our wounded, and I don't know, I presume that other units had similar setup.

Cohen: Okay. So you see the water was not deep by the time you got off, but what do you see at the beaches? After all, it was so close to H-Hour. I think each H-Hour was six o'clock. So what did you encounter?

Goodman: We didn't get off, the H-Hour was I think was six. We weren't—that was when the first infantry landed and other engineer units that were there before us to

remove obstacles. We didn't land until eight or nine o'clock, maybe even ten. We were delayed. We got onto the beach and there were some high ridges that we hid behind, so that we weren't in direct view of the enemy, but we were subject to mortar fire and artillery fire, but we were on the beach. We were out of the water.

Cohen: Well, I noticed that the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineers got a presidential citation and I'll just read a little bit of it: "the 20th Engineer Combat Battalion was attached to the 16th Infantry with the mission of clearing the beach obstacles within the tidal range of the beach from the vicinity of Vierville-sur-Mer to Colleville-sur-Mer. Under savage artillery, mortar, rifle, grenade, machine gun, and small arms fire. Despite persistent enemy activity, the 20th Engineer Combat Battalion, with courageous determination and tenacity of purpose, cleared gaps in barbed wire and minefields to gain the beach." So I guess, do you want to elaborate on that?

Goodman: Well, I personally didn't take charge of any of that. I was being a supply officer. I stayed with the battalion headquarters unit and so I wasn't involved in actually doing any of that work. But the unit got the citation. Every—almost everybody who was involved in the D-Day invasion got a unit citation, presidential unit citation, which was a special purple bar that you wore on your breast, over your breast pocket.

Cohen: So, where was the headquarters set up? Or what was it? Or was it just more of the time to dig fox holes? What was going on?

Goodman: Oh, we weren't able to dig foxholes. We were on the beach approximately thirty hours. We were on the beach until the afternoon of the June the 7th because there wasn't, we weren't able to move off the beach because the infantry hadn't cleared enough way into the enemy territory to remove, uh, mortar fire and artillery fire. We didn't get off the beach until the afternoon of June the 7<sup>th</sup>. And during that time, we were just lying on the beach, trying to keep out of the high tide when it came in, and trying, just trying, to stay alive.

Cohen: So after this was over, do you climb up the cliffs? Is that the next step?

Goodman: We went through a, again, I don't remember but we were able to assemble and march to Colleville-sur-Mer, which is where we established our unit. Place, outside of a little town called Colleville-sur-Mer.

Cohen: So, I think you told me earlier that you were assigned the MOS of supply officer right before D-Day, so what is your function or role as a supply officer once you are based near Colleville?

Goodman: I'm in charge of getting all the food and equipment to the unit from the supply depots. The unit submits requisitions to my little unit. I had four or five men that worked with me in the supply section of battalion headquarters. Units supplied requisitions as to what they needed in the way of military equipment and we went to the depots and procured the food, the water, and the military equipment that was requisitioned. My function was to supervise that procedure.

Cohen: Where were the depots early on? Were the depots on the ships early on? Where would they, where would people under your command go to procure the--?

Goodman: Originally, all of the depots were on the beach. So our trucks would go back to the beach to pick up food and ammunition, weapons, not much engineering equipment yet, but that—we had to depend upon getting that as it was unloaded from transports. We didn't have all of our military equipment, immediately. We had to wait until it got unloaded on transports, but food and ammunition we went back to the beach to get.

Cohen: What was your means of communication? Did you have access to a radio or?

Goodman: We had access to a radio. We established, at first, it was totally radio, because it wasn't until much later in the game that the Signal Corps was able to come in and lay lines between all the units, so that we had telephone communication. But that was much later. Radio.

Cohen: Okay. Can you tell me what it was like for your unit during the race across France and do any particular incidents stand out in your mind?

Goodman: Well, we moved, as in time, as the infantry advanced, we advanced. But at some point, early in the game we stayed at our location and in Colleville for some months, before the infantry was able to move enough that we could afford to move. But once the breakthrough occurred then we moved to new locations. And you might say, as time went on, we were chasing the Germans. It was slow at first, because it took a long time to break out of the locations in western France. Wasn't until after the Battle of the Bulge that we were able to advance eastward through Germany.

Cohen: Do you—sorry, sorry. Go on.

Goodman: The Battle of the Bulge was a big event. It was a master plan by the Germans to try to cut through and divide the forces between the British forces and the American forces, to drive a wedge through there to the coast. They almost succeeded. They didn't quite. And during the Battle of the Bulge, that was the time when we finally stopped the western movement of German troops and started moving east.

Cohen: Just to back up a little bit, were you present at any of the liberation of French towns or the liberation of Paris on August 26, 1944?

Goodman: We were part of the troops that went through Paris during the liberation. And I remember riding in a Jeep and women holding up their babies for us to kiss, so that they could say that a liberator kissed their baby. That was an unbelievable experience, going through Paris on a, in a Jeep, with all the crowds and the people and the adulation.

Cohen: Wow, it's really something.

Goodman: That was really something.

Cohen: Did you have any chance to spend any time there at all or no?

Goodman: No, we went through: bingo! We didn't stop there. There were some units that actually paraded in France, in Paris. They marched through Paris. We were on board, on the way through and, fortunately, at the time of the liberation, so we were close behind the people who liberated Paris.

Cohen: Wow. So I was reading that the 20th Engineers, and I don't know if, again, it applies to your unit or not, had already crossed into Luxembourg by September 11<sup>th</sup>, but at that point there was a need to wait for the supplies and the gas and ammunition to catch up. Do you remember this period, and would you have been involved in it being a supply officer?

Goodman: I remember being in Luxembourg. We were quartered in a church. I remember we waited there for some time, but I can't tell you anything more specific than that. We were in Luxembourg for a little while before we moved on and I don't remember any more detail.

Cohen: The other thing I was wondering about is whether you had contact with the Red Ball Express. I hope I remember the name correctly, this kind of continuous trucking of supplies non-stop to the front. Whether you were in touch with those troops?

Goodman: I don't think so. I don't remember being in touch.

Cohen: Okay. So, at this point, you're already approaching, I think Germany, itself, right and um there's the fighting around the Siegfried line. Do you remember that and what were your responsibilities at that point?

Goodman: Well, I remember we crossed into Germany at Remagen, over the bridge there, [Laughter] famous Remagen Bridge, and I remember, trying to recall. Now the Siegfried Line was a major breakthrough, but I don't recall exactly when, what was going on and what happened and how we got through that, but that was the last big obstacle before we were really chasing, literally chasing the Germans.

Cohen: Okay, so something you talked about earlier, I think was you said that—sorry, I'll start again. I think in the previous interview you talked about what it was like being in the defensive during the Battle of the Bulge versus being in the attack mode. Do you want to talk about that, you know, as well?

Goodman: Well, I wished I had that information in front of my face. [Laughs]

Cohen: I'm sorry [Laughs]

Goodman: I don't remember what I told David.

Cohen: I believe it was more to the effect of setting up obstacles and setting up mines, you know, rather than being part of the attack mode and clearing out mines and obstacles.

Goodman: Yes, we laid a lot of mines prior to that breakthrough. Generally, that was around the time of the Battle of the Bulge. I just don't recall what it was that that I told David about that. Defense mode is much different than the attack mode, because you're literally trying to set up obstacles and to prevent the attacker from gaining advantage. Attack mode is exactly the opposite so, but I can't be specific. I don't remember.

Cohen: Yeah, that's okay. So when do—when did you reach Leipzig, but like when do you reach Central Europe?

Goodman: I remember, I think it was when we reached Leipzig that I, we were in the city proper and our headquarters was inside the city proper, and I met a man on the street, a German citizen who told me that Roosevelt is *gestorben*<sup>5</sup>, Roosevelt had died. And I couldn't believe it. I was angry. You know, it wasn't until I got back to headquarters that I found out that he spoke the truth.

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that the president had died. And I don't recall when that was. Was that it in, uh, April, April or May of '44?

Cohen: I don't remember offhand. I'm sorry. Had you had contact with any prisoners of war? Any German or other prisoners of war?

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<sup>5</sup> Gestorben means died in German.

Goodman: No, no. I don't remember having any contact with German prisoners of war. I'm trying to remember whether I had any contact with American prisoners of war. I can't remember.

Cohen: Okay, so I think there's some point where the 2nd Battalion that constructs a bridge that basically links up the Allies with the Russian forces. Were you involved in that or had you heard about that at the time?

Goodman: Well, I know we met the Russians in Czechoslovakia, what was then the capital of Czechoslovakia. That's where we met the Russians. I'm right now having a memory problem. I can't recall the capital of what was Czechoslovakia—

Cohen: I think Prague.

Goodman: Prague. That's correct. I was, I met the Russians in Prague and I had to avoid drinking too much vodka, which they drank like water. I just remember that we met the Russians in Prague and at that point in time we were quartered in southern, a little south of Prague, in a little town called Sucitze [sounds like shoe-sea-tsa], which is south of Pilsen. I remember that.

Cohen: What was your impression of the Russians?

Goodman: Well, we weren't around them long enough, but they were rough and tough.

Cohen: Did you, were the others, have a sense that there would be hostilities? You know, you know that there might be a Cold War was there any—

Goodman: Didn't enter my mind.

Cohen: Yeah.

Goodman: Me, personally. I don't know about others, but I had no thought of that.

Cohen: Yeah, when you were advancing throughout, through Europe, had you gone through any concentration camps?

Goodman: No. We personally didn't get into any concentration camps, but we went close enough that we could smell the odor of decaying bodies. We were never involved in actually being in one or liberating one. We passed them en route.

Cohen: And had you met any survivors of concentration camps in those areas?

Goodman: I have in my lifetime, but of course way after the war ended, in the United States.

Cohen: Did you know at the time what was happening or at least, well, you know, what after you went through camps that had been recently liberated? Had you or the others heard about, for example, Eisenhower's visit to Ohrdruf?

Goodman: Yes, yes. We heard about it. We didn't, I—my unit or I—did not see it personally, but we heard about the atrocities and the fact that Eisenhower required all the mayors of the towns near the concentration camps to be forced to go through them to see them with their own eyes. He required all of the German officials to go through those camps.

Cohen: How did your fellow Christian soldiers relate to you as a Jew?

Goodman: They knew I was a Jew. I didn't hide it and my sergeant who was under me in the supply section often made jokes about it when we were required to go into a local lumber yard to get lumber to, for construction purposes, he would tell the German in the lumber yard, "He's a Jew!" [Laughs]. He thought that was funny. That was, we had—he respected me. He knew I was a Jew and was probably the only Jew that he had ever met in his life, because he was a southerner, my sergeant, and he was—I had a good relationship with my fellow officers, as well. They all knew I was Jewish and joked with me during Passover when I had matzah and everybody else was eating bread, and joked to me that, well, I was eating bread. I was eating matzah, but not bread, but I couldn't abide with all the other restrictions, dietary restrictions.

Cohen: Oh, that's true. There's only so much that was possible, I would guess.

Goodman: Yes.

Cohen: Did you listen to Access Sally and—?

Goodman: Yes, we heard Access Sally, yes.

Cohen: So, what one veteran who I interviewed said, he and some of his friends found her voice very attractive. Did you feel that way? Did she talk about anti, did she have antisemitic messages? What was your perception?

Goodman: Well, I felt she was, it was, a propaganda tool. They were trying to influence people and I was never fooled by it. I sort of thought it was on the strange side and marveled at how she talked about various things that were not true, but that she was saying were happening and—for example, "All of the Jews were in the

quartermaster back in the States, taking care of your girlfriends and wives”, things like that. I thought it was strange.

Cohen: Did you ever have an opportunity to talk to any of the chaplains, such as the ones who led religious services during the High Holidays?

Goodman: Not very much. I met them and they conducted the services that we had in France, uh and wherever it was, I can't remember now what where the certain holiday services were. I think it was in—boy, just don't remember. But I talked to them, yeah, the chaplain they usually conducted service to a large group, many units, not just ours, hundreds of troops, not just twenty or thirty. And so I said, “hello” and that I was in the 20th Engineers.

Cohen: Were you able to write letters to your parents when you were in any of the campaigns, come to think of it?

Goodman: I wrote letters regularly. I sent V-mail and my father corresponded with me almost once a week or once every other week. I got a lot of communication from my family throughout the war. In fact, we have all of those were saved and my father made copies. He had someone, he dictated a letter to someone who typed it, and he kept a copy, and I got a copy, so we have actual records of all of those letters that he wrote to me during the war. And I corresponded regularly with him, not every week, but often enough to tell them that I was okay.

Cohen: That's what I was wondering, aside from the censorship issues, what were you able to share with them to reassure them?

Goodman: You talking about censorship as a lieutenant—pardon me—as a lieutenant and with—in the company? When I was in a company and a lieutenant, I was a censor. All the officers were censors of the enlisted men's mail. I had to censor a certain number of letters, and I had to remove all mentions of locations or units. And ultimately the men learned to avoid using those in the letters, because I'd have to block it out. We had, all of the letters that I wrote, I could never say where I was or what particular action had taken place. I could only generalize that we were in Germany or we were in France and I was doing okay, I was well, and that I was receiving their mail.

Cohen: Did you have to confiscate any letter altogether? You mentioned not, you know, that it was censored for mentioning locations or units, but were there, was there any very problematic letters that couldn't be sent at all?

Goodman: No, it was never that bad. The people after a while learned after... Sometimes, if you had to censor a lot of information out of a letter, you'd talk to the individual, you call him in and talk to him about not saying those kinds of things, and so he

improved and changed. And so it was only on occasion that someone would forget and say that they were in Paris, France or that they fought in the Battle of the Bulge or something like that.

Cohen: Okay, I believe in the previous interview you mentioned that you obtained an SS ceremonial dagger.

Goodman: Yes, yes.

Cohen: Do you want to talk about that?

Goodman: On the way across Germany, our troops would occasionally encounter a German supply depot. When time permitted, they would raid that depot and collect souvenirs of whatever they thought was a good thing for the battalion. So on one occasion, they came across German, these SS daggers, sometimes a Signal Corps knife, sometimes glass, Swiss glass, emblazoned with swastikas that the officers used to drink. And so what they would collect these things and bring them back to the unit and distribute them to the unit. That's how I got the dagger.

Cohen: Okay and you also mentioned the Czechoslovakian crystal stemware? How did you—

Goodman: That's how I got the crystal stemware and I brought them. I got them and I immediately decided that what we were going to do with those is break them at Jewish weddings and that's what we have done.

Cohen: Wow, mazel tov. So I don't think I asked you this, but do you recall VE day, you know, May 7, 1945 and where were you at that point?

Goodman: We were in—I'm trying to remember. That was in June of '45. I don't remember where we were at that place, but I remember later on VJ Day, which was in August. We originally, when the war ended, I remember that, we were in Czechoslovakia. I don't remember where we were on VE Day, but we all felt that—it was shortly after VE Day that the Army came out with its criterion for when you would be able to separate from the service. A program. So we felt and that turned into some other things, but I can't remember exactly where I was on VE Day.

Cohen: Well, that's okay. So, did you have enough points to be shipped back to the United States, I guess, shortly after--?

Goodman: More than enough, and so I knew that I would not go to Japan, which was everybody's concern that, well, the war is over in Europe but, Japan. We're still

fighting Japan and there were some people who knew that when they went back to the States, it was only to go further west to Japan. But we knew on this program, I knew that I had way more points necessary than to be discharged from the service when the war ended. I would say.

Cohen: Sorry.

Goodman: I'm done.

Cohen: So when did you take the ship back to the United States?

Goodman: Well, VE day was with, nothing we, not. We were being transferred out of our units. The Army was reorganizing the units and deciding on all the people who had points to go home would be reassigned to a unit that would ultimately be sent home and so I was reassigned to an armored division and just counting time until VJ Day. When VJ Day occurred in August, then we knew we would be getting orders to return home. And I think it was later in August that we got orders, but we didn't get on board ship until sometime in September. In fact, we had Rosh Hashanah services on board ship.

Cohen: Oh my.

Goodman: In September of '45.

Cohen: Were those special in that it was after, you know, after you separated from the service?

Goodman: Well, I wasn't out of the service yet. I was still in the service. I hadn't been discharged—

Cohen: That's true.

Goodman: I was still in the service and I would be in the service for several more months. That's another story. But on board ship we had services and ultimately, I was sent back to Missouri to be discharged from the state where I was entered the service, which turned out to be a discharge camp in St. Louis Missouri and that was in September.

Cohen: How long were you at the camp in Missouri before you could separate from the service?

Goodman: Two or three days to go through the procedure. I think it was only a maybe a day. I don't recall exactly, but it wasn't more than a day or two that we went through the process of being released from the service. I wasn't out of the

service because during the war an officer accumulates thirty days leave every year of service. Well, I had three years of service and no leave, so I had ninety days leave coming. So when I left the camp in St. Louis, I was still being paid by Uncle Sam until January of '46. Okay, so I was not out of there. I was not discharged. Now, I just left the center, on leave, I went home to Kansas City and drew pay October, November, and December and finally received discharge papers in January of '46.

Cohen: Okay. Before we go on, did you have any leave that you used to visit your family before you were shipped out to Morocco?

Goodman: No, I would—there were no leaves granted. The last time I saw my family was sometime in '41.

Cohen: Wow.

Goodman: In 1941 I was able to get leave to return to Kansas City, but after that, I no longer was able to get leave and I didn't see my family again until September '45.

Cohen: So what did you do when you returned to the U.S or at least after your discharge took place?

Goodman: Kissed the ground. I, when I went back, got home in September, I tried to get accustomed to civilian life again and decide what I was going to do and ultimately decided I would enroll in the University of Illinois in the spring semester of '47, I guess it was.

Cohen: Did you decide--

Goodman: '46

Cohen: --to pursue your ambition of studying engineering?

Goodman: Yes, I decided to continue that, but it was, excuse me, it was too late to enroll in the fall of '45 because this was September. It had already started, so I decided I would enroll in the spring semester at the University of Illinois because it had a better engineering school than the University of Missouri. So it was an out-of-state school, but Uncle Sam was going to pay my way on the GI bill.

Cohen: Yeah, so I was just about to ask you. And how did you cope with adjusting back to civilian life, like was your family understanding? Were people appreciative of your service?

Goodman: My mother never really fully understood. Her comment was, "It's a different Gerry." Uh yeah, I was different. I remember that at the sound of a loud noise, I would hit the ground, because when you heard loud noises, you knew you were being shelled and so the safest place was the ground. So I did that for a little while, before I became accustomed to loud noises. But other than that, it was nice to be a civilian again and not to have people shooting at you or worrying about what's going to happen next, when am I going to get hurt, generally question-mark, living where you have no control over your future. I'm—I was re-learning how to have some control over my future.

Cohen: So did you like being in Chicago and when did you meet your wife?

Goodman: Oh, when—Chicago was much later, much. At the time, I returned from the service, I had no idea I was going to end up in Chicago. I just knew I had to go to University of Illinois and get my degree in chemical engineering there but had no idea what the future held.

Cohen: Did you end up settling in Chicago after you graduated?

Goodman: I'm sorry I didn't hear that.

Cohen: Do you land up living in Chicago ever since you graduated from the University of Illinois?

Goodman: I lived in Chicago. For a very short time, I lived in Whiting, Indiana.

Cohen: Okay.

Goodman: But that was because, I'm trying to recall what was going on. I graduated from the university in the fall of 1947. I had stayed for the summer semester and I graduated in September or October of '47. At that time, I had already interviewed and knew I was going to have a job in with a Standard Oil Company of Indiana. I had interviewed prior to graduation and accepted a job there, so I knew I would be living someplace in the Chicago area, but didn't know exactly where. I ended up so, in fact, I got married before I went to work. Got married in October of '47. Am I having the right year? Yeah '47. So I graduated in the fall of '47, but I didn't attend my graduation because I was getting ready to get married. I met my wife at the university earlier in in the previous year, and so we got married in October and I went to work and shortly thereafter and we—the job was the Whiting Refinery of Standard Oil Company of Indiana, so we, that's where we lived first for a couple of months before we found a place in Chicago.

Cohen: Ah. And do you think that being in the military helped contribute to your civilian life after the war?

Goodman: Yes. My father used this description, and I will use it also. It's like, yes, you do get a benefit, just like spreading manure on a garden benefits the garden. That's the way the military benefited my civilian life. Was like manure, but it benefited.

Cohen: [Laughs] That's a good analogy. What would you like young people to learn from your service and from your story?

Goodman: Maintaining the proper attitude no matter what you have to endure. That's about the way I put it. Whatever is, you don't help it any by having a negative attitude. Positive attitude supersedes and assists you in enduring whatever you have to endure whether it's good or bad.

Cohen: Is there a particular moment of which you are the most proud?

Goodman: Hard to say. I never thought about that. I remember being extremely proud at military assemblies where you were standing at attention and the band was playing the *Star-Spangled Banner*. It always touched me. It always got to me. That what you were doing was worthwhile and what you were preserving was worth preserving.

Cohen: Had you gone back to visit Omaha Beach later on?

Goodman: Yes, yes, I went back in 1993, which was the 49th anniversary. I and several of my unit fellows, about twenty of us, scheduled a tour and we returned to Europe specifically to see a number of places where we were involved in action, but specifically, to see the beach and the battlefield museum that was set up there. And so I visited that in 1993 and then later, several years later, my wife and I returned to Europe and we visited it again and I signed a book that was reserved only for members who were veterans of the invasion. At the museum in the Omaha Beach setup that the—it's—which is now U.S. territory. France ceded that to the United States and its U.S. territory. Memorable occasion.

Cohen: Was this also part of the cemetery from the American Battle Monuments Commission?

Goodman: Oh yes. There's a cemetery there that's part of part of the beach museum where a number of troops, some of our, my unit's troops were buried. A number. And of course, there are crosses and six pointed stars that commemorates the grave sites.

Cohen: So the Pritzker Military Museum and Library is devoted to collecting artifacts or sharing soldiers [i.e. stories] of the quote-unquote "Citizen Soldier." Does the term "Citizen Soldier" mean something to you?

Goodman: Only to my own personal feelings. That's the kind that the United States has always had and prior to World War II. Well, since World War II, of course, we discontinued the draft, but prior to that, men were drafted to serve, but now it's all voluntary so it's, it means a little more citizen soldier than prior to the World War II, where people were drafted.

Cohen: Is there something that we did not talk about and this may be a question to everybody here: is there something that you would like to talk about or something your father shared that we didn't touch upon today?

Goodman: Is there something that you want to share that we didn't talk about? She's asking you and you too.

Jordan: This has been a real revelation for me. I've never heard it all in a row like this you know, Dad's narrative like that, and it's just marvelous and I thank you so much for doing what you're doing there.

Cohen: Oh I thank you so much for the kind remark.

Goodman: Do Allan and Janet have any comments?

Janet: Dad, I'm just so proud of you and honestly, I can't, I can't— You know, yes, your service was incredible, but I can't believe your memory! I know, I don't think that was April and I had Jim sitting here at the table, “Yeah that's right it was April,” so Dad you just you just blow us away and I'm so proud of you, Dad. and everything you did and you're so modest and humble about what you did and it's a big deal. So yes. Love you, Daddy.

Goodman: Love you, too.

Steven: Okay, I'll add something. My father has a diary that he started at the beginning of the war. It's every day for five years and he wrote in it and, Jordan, it's somewhere, I don't know where he put it, but I gave it back to him, so it's definitely in the apartment. And you know he wrote three or four sentences every day and what he might not have told you, too, is that my brother has some artifacts that—you know, my grandfather, my father's father, had a stenographer and basically, he recited letters and he mailed. And whenever he sent my father a letter, he typed it out, so he had his own copy. So now I have, you know, I have letters every day that he sent my father and I have the stuff that my father sent him. It's really hard. He sent it on this, on these tiny little pieces. I don't know what you call that. What kind of mail was that that you sent?

Cohen: V-mail?

Goodman: V-mail.

Steven: There what kind of mail was that that you sent mail. I have thousands of those [V-mails]<sup>6</sup> I can't it—his handwriting today. Unbelievable. At ninety-nine you see; you can't discern the difference. It's just those, so small and I'm, maybe I'm old. I can't read them. But this diary, though, my father and I have gone over some of that. He started asking me some of these questions about when he was on the boat and when he was sick, and so we did a couple of those things and it was interesting, how going through some of that helped jog his memory on some of this stuff and it's just, you know, he has that book and, uh, I don't know what he's gonna do with it, but like I said it's there. You know I'm proud of you, too, Dad and I know Mom would be very proud of you, too. It's just like, it's an amazing thing. I called the National [WWII] Museum. I, my brothers and sisters know, and I tried to get a figure about how many people might even be alive and they said four percent of the people are elected fought in the war and then my brother Allan reminded me, "But yeah. But how many, what percentage of those people were in active duty in the place they had the most casualties? So he probably extrapolated it out." My dad is one. We're talking about extinction. It's just not that far away that simply either can't tell you the story. I looked at, like I said, I looked up that other guy in your unit, dad. That guy, the major. That guy McDonald. I don't know if you remember the guy.

Goodman: He died.

Steven: He died. He died a couple years back, so you're the, you seem to be the last guy, so.

Allan: I just want to say, I would like to just say how proud I am of you, Dad, and absolutely—you are amazing, just amazing. I mean, if you sit with your eyes closed, to realize that—well, even with your eyes open—but to realize that a ninety-nine-year-old person could speak—I could not speak so eloquently—your thoughts were so put together. I mean so composed as if you had a script, I mean no "uhs". You know, it was just amazing. You are amazing. Thank you.

Goodman: Thank you, thank you.

Cohen: You are amazing and very impressive, and I also feel like you're a very structured person, which for me is a personal challenge, so I admire that characteristic. And

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<sup>6</sup> Vmail or Victory mail was intended to be a secure form of communication between servicemen and their families during WWII. A written letter was reproduced on microfilm and forwarded to its destination. It would then be printed in an enlarged format for delivery.

on behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, we will be sending you a challenge coin as a token of our appreciation for sharing your story and of course, your amazing service. Thank you.

Goodman: Leah, thank you for being so patient. I appreciate all that you have done. I really appreciated getting that map and that newsletter. We're working describing everything that the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineers did.

Cohen: I found they had, it seems like the 20th Engineer formed an association that at some point in time created a website and within the website there's, like, you're saying that map that shows the whole route of the, you know, where the 20<sup>th</sup> was. And they also list some other events and show other maps as well. Oh I hear dinging. I don't know if this means that our time is up or not...If the heads up... I'm happy to send any other information that comes my way, and yeah.

Goodman: Thank you so much. I really appreciate your conduction of the interview. The questions that you asked, the memories that you prompted. I really appreciate that.

Cohen: Oh I really appreciate your generosity and spirit, really.

Goodman: Thank you,

Janet: Thank you!

Cohen: Thanks everybody!

Janet: Thanks Leah.

Cohen: Bye take care!

Steven(?): Bye bye!

Janet: Bye, daddy, bye!

Allan: Bye!

Goodman: Bye Allan!

Steven: Bye!

[[Lots of byes]]

