

# John Storcel

February 21, 2019

Interviewed by Leah Cohen

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Cohen: Today is February 21, 2019, and I have the pleasure of meeting with Mr. John Storcel... I hope I pronounced your name correctly. Mr. Storcel was in the 783rd Military Police, serving from 1943 to 1945. He landed on Normandy Beach on D-Day plus three.<sup>1</sup>

Storcel: Well, it was...

Susan Storcel: Wait, wait. Let her finish. This is just the introduction. Then you can explain later, okay?<sup>2</sup>

Storcel: All right, I'm sorry. But I want to explain the D3.

Cohen: D3, and we look forward to hearing your story. We'll start off with your background. When and where were you born?

Storcel: Pardon?

Cohen: When and where were you born?

Storcel: Oh, born. I thought you said boarded. [Laughter] I have a little bit of a hearing problem, so if you could speak a little louder, I'd appreciate it.

Cohen: I will. Also, I'm from Canada, so maybe it's... [Laughter]

Storcel: I was born in Czechoslovakia, in Europe.

Susan Storcel: In Kos.<sup>3</sup> [Kosice?]

Storcel: Kos, Czechoslovakia. Actually, it was on the Slovakia part of Czechoslovakia.

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<sup>1</sup> John Storcel had printed a memoir, "A Lifetime of Memories" in book format for his family and friends in the 1970s. Several of the questions in this interview were based on Chapter 9, "In the Army during WWII". It was erroneously referred to as a publication, later in the interview.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the quiet voice of Leah Cohen and the hearing threshold of John Storcel, daughter, Susan Storcel, agreed to facilitate this interview.

<sup>3</sup> Kos' is a small village, not be confused with Kosice, a large city in that area.

Cohen: How old were you when your family immigrated?

Storcel: I was six years of age.

Cohen: Wow. And how many siblings do you have?

Storcel: So... three, actually.

Cohen: Three.

Susan Storcel: They were actually four, but one of them was a baby when he passed away. It was about a year... eighteen months, something like that. And he and his sister Marge are, now, the only ones left.

Storcel: Well, Marge was born after Anton died. I had a one-year-old brother that passed away about a year after we arrived.

Cohen: Oh, my. So, Marge was born in the United States, already?

Storcel: No, he was...

Susan Storcel: No, Marge. Marge was born in the United States.

Storcel: Marge! Marge was born in the United States. Yes.

Cohen: And which languages did you speak? Which languages did you speak growing up?

Storcel: Languages, which languages did I speak when?

Cohen: As a child...

Susan Storcel: When you were growing up. At home. What did you speak at home?

Storcel: Oh. Well, naturally English. Not too well but... [Laughter] We were in a Czech Slovak neighborhood. We were in a Polish neighborhood. So, you pick up a little bit of each. I spoke a little bit of each. Yeah, which helped me in the [United States] Army.

Cohen: Did you pick up some Russian as well?

Storcel: Oh, yes. When we landed, I'd like to clarify that...June the 9<sup>th</sup>, after we landed in Normandy, I listened to the prisoners that were being brought in from the front lines, and they were speaking Czech, most of them were speaking Polish. And

that was sort of confusing because I was like, "Wait a minute! Are we fighting the Germans? Because there's few Germans." [Laughter] So I became an interpreter 'cause I spoke, I understood not all of it, not well, but I understood enough to get along with these prisoners. So, I became an interpreter, more or less, while doing my other duties. (3:52)

Cohen: Were they surprised to meet an American soldier speaking Czech and Slovak etc.?

Storcel: Oh, yes. One fellow died, cried so bad one night. He had children, small children. It was cold, rainy. He cried so bad he wanted a blanket. I said, "Hey, if I could find a blanket, I'd put it on me, not on you." [Laughter]

Susan Storcel: He spoke to them in Czech.

Storcel: Yeah, well, I spoke to them Polish, I mixed it all up and act like I knew what I was doing.

Cohen: Still in all, it sounds like you have a good ear for language.

Storcel: Yes. Oh, yes. I think I could... more or less get along in a conversation. But yes, it helped me quite a bit all my life in business and others.

Cohen: That's true. Later in life as well.

Susan Storcel: His first caregiver when mom got sick was a Polish lady and it was quite surprising, surprised my sisters and I how he could just communicate with her. And we were like frustrated... It really just amazed. Something about the Slavic languages [interrupted].

Storcel: Yeah, more or less.

Susan Storcel: But he's pretty good.

Storcel: It depends on what part of the world you're in, like Russia, and if you're on the northern end, or southern end, the dialect is different.

Cohen: Out of curiosity, were the prisoners that you mentioned, were they in fact German citizens or were they mercenaries?

Storcel: No. No. they were prisoners from Poland. German prisoners.

Cohen: Oh, I see. I see. Got you. They were conscripted into the German Army.

Susan Storcel: Conscripts.

Storcel: They were German prisoners and then became our prisoners when they were captured. In fact, I will mention the landing....

Cohen: D-Day?

Storcel: Yeah. Where we landed in the...

Cohen: Normandy?

Storcel: Normandy, the part of Normandy where the Germans were having a practice run.

Cohen: Omaha Beach?

Susan Storcel: Like maneuvers?

Storcel: Maneuvers. The Germans were having maneuvers in a portion that we landed. Now you don't hear much about that.

Susan Storcel: So that's why there were so many, more Germans than was expected when the allies landed because they were doing maneuvers there?

Storcel: No. No. That was just a coincidence. That's how we became, got involved with more prisoners than normal.

Cohen: Because the Germans were still doing maneuvers on the beach after the Americans had landed?

Storcel: No, no, no. Before.

Cohen: Oh, okay. I see. So, they were captured right away.

Susan Storcel: That's how there were so many conscripted prisoners were there because they were doing training and maneuvers when....

Storcel: When the invasion started.

Cohen: When the invasion started, interesting. In your memoir, you mentioned that your father had been a soldier in World War I. Was that for the Austro-Hungarian Army?

Storcel: I guess it would be, yes.

Cohen: What was his role?

Storcel: What was his what?

Cohen: What type of job in the Army?

Storcel: I'm sorry, I didn't get that.

Susan Storcel: What was his position in the Army? What was his job?

Storcel: Marge keeps saying sergeant. He was a sergeant in the.... what army, German?

Susan Storcel: It would have been the Austro-Hungarian Army. That's what the...

Storcel: It would be on the Russian, the other side. That's what I'm talking about...

Susan Storcel: It's hard to figure that out. He talked about it before.

Storcel: He didn't... he did not want to speak about it. In our place of business, you were not allowed to speak anything about the war. It was because he was so against it.

Cohen: Because he was against it?

Storcel: He was injured very bad. He had no bones in his chest so he was lucky to be alive, so he would not allow anybody because... you see, Hines Hospital [[i.e. Edward Hines Jr. VA [Veterans Administration] Hospital]] was just a hop, skip and jump from here. So people used to visit there and then stop at our place of business. He would not allow any discussion or anything like that.

Cohen: What was his business and where was it?

Storcel: Pardon?

Cohen: What was his business?

Storcel: It was a tavern business in... the 23rd Ward.

Susan Storcel: Lawndale. It used to be the Lawndale Crawford area So, it was like around 26th Street and Pulaski [Road]. Would it be around there?

Storcel: Yeah. Right at 26th Street and Pulaski, that would be, you could say the headquarters of the... which is now the headquarters of the...What's the name of it? Who's running it now?

Susan Storcel: You mean the Ward? Well, it doesn't matter anyway.

Storcel: Well, anyways, the Mexican portion of our citizenship.

Susan Storcel: So, it's around Little Village?

Storcel: It is in Little Village. It's the headquarters of Little Village.

Cohen: So did you grow up in Little Village, too? Where in Chicago...

Susan Storcel: Yeah. It wasn't called that at the time, though.

Storcel: No. Very popular. At that time there was Czech... what would you call it? The Czech...?

Cohen: Community?

Susan Storcel: The whole area was predominantly Czechs and Slovaks and...

Storcel: Polish.

Susan Storcel: Yeah. So, Pilsen and Little Village at that time were really all Czech and then it wasn't until they started to move into the suburbs and the Latino started coming in and was renamed Little Village.

Storcel: After the war.

Susan Storcel: Quite after the war.

Storcel: Not too much after. '44...

Cohen: Which high school did you go to?

Storcel: Oh, University of Farragut [Farragut Career Academy] Well, at the club, a lot of times people would ask me that question. And it's always, "I went to Yale or I went to..." and they ask what university I went to. I'd say the University of Farragut. [laughter] The school was not much bigger than this room. It was very... what do you call it? Not too much... sports, very important sports. It was only one block square. Not like schools are today with two blocks and they'd have a sports section. It'd be like...

Susan Storcel: So, you were just there to learn?

Storcel: To learn. Then I'd play football.

Cohen: Oh, football. Was that something you liked?

Storcel: Liked, but they, it did not like me. [Laughter] I played one year and that was it.

Cohen: [Laughter] Were the teachers good?

Storcel: Oh, yeah.

Cohen: And what did you do after high school?

Storcel: What did I do after high school? Well, I should mention that Dad died in 1940, so my mother and I were running the tavern, so I was the youngest bartender in the University of Farragut. So, I was running the tavern with my mother.

Cohen: Had your mother worked in the tavern when your father was alive, too?

Storcel: Yeah. Well, I was only in high school and she was running the business. Dad passed in 1940. So, we had that year and the year after for our... our license and then that was... that was it... So, well, and then I went to work at the... I ended up at the Crane Company and worked there for nearly a year.

Cohen: So, what did they produce?

Storcel: Oh, I was out on the valve section, Navy valves. Oh, they made everything there, and I worked on the Navy valve portion of the project.

Susan Storcel: Were those valves for ships?

Storcel: Ships, yeah.

Cohen: And was that considered an essential for the war?

Storcel: Yeah, this was for the war.

Cohen: So...

Storcel: What do they call when you're working for the war project? What's that terminology?

Susan Storcel: It's funny that you would ask that 'cause just as you asked that, I was just trying to think of it in my head. So, I'll keep trying to think and we'll go back to that.

Cohen: [Laughter] One thing I meant to ask you was as you said you're making a living in the Czech community in the Chicago area. How did people react to Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia? Like the Sudetenland?

Storcel: I'm sorry?

Susan Storcel: You know, the part in Czechoslovakia? The Sudetenland, which Germany took over? So, I think Leah wants to know how people in the community react to that, when they heard the news that the Germans had started to move into Czechoslovakia.

Storcel: Oh, naturally, they were upset. We had anti-marches, but very small... Our section.... The Germans were more - more on that than the Czechs and Slovaks. That's about it there.

Cohen: Did people... how did you or your family react when you heard the bombing at Pearl Harbor?

Storcel: I'll never forget. I was sitting down, it was eight o'clock, Sunday morning, sitting in the 1939 Cadillac that my neighbors... it was sort of an adopted son, was sitting in it. It was eight o'clock and the news came on that Pearl Harbor had been... bombed by the Japanese planes. I'll never forget that day. But we didn't know too much about politics in those days, excuse me, about politics at that time. We were... I was in high school, I guess, yeah. That was about... about it in politics, other than the... the... trying to think of how to say it. There were people... my age that were being - should be drafted, the same as I. But being that they were a nephew of the aldermen or something like that, why, they kept their war time job with one of... what did they call it at that time? They were making big money In fact, I had that job for a short time. It was forty dollars and something an hour, which was big money in those days.

Susan Storcel: Not an hour. A week.

Storcel: A week, I mean, which is big money in those days. And I was offered the job at the second shift, but that I was running the tavern with my mother, so I just couldn't do it, 'cause those hours were the same. So then the foreman came to me and said, "Well, either you take the third shift or you don't get the job." So, naturally, with that kind of money, I took the third shift. But I couldn't do it too long because... it got to me, because the hours. I couldn't sleep. It was more or less around the clock. And then I went to a different department for half the pay. And then... but it was in a different hours where I could work both the tavern and the....

Cohen: Wow.



Storcel: And the regular job. Then I became an inspector, a valve inspector for twenty-three dollars an hour [ i.e. a week, as stated above] instead of the forty. Or twenty-nine dollars an hour instead of the forty-three.

Cohen: Sounds like it was normal hours.

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: You mentioned, I think in the book that you were drafted, and it was surprising because you were the breadwinner for your mother and your sister and maybe your brother.

Storcel: That's politics. The guys that have the good jobs, they were relatives of this and this guy. Their uncle was a foreman, I mean a relative was in politics. So, we suckers, we got the good stuff, you know. So anyway, we filled... when we got called for duty, why we poor guys ended up filling the order. And then the alderman's son or cousin, he got deferred.

Cohen: When did you get the draft notice?

Storcel: Oh, God. I don't know. I don't remember. What years was it?

Cohen: Yeah. I think it was in '43 right before?

Storcel: Oh, '41 or '40... '41. Yeah, '41.

Susan Storcel: So, you got the notice in '41 but you weren't actually...

Storcel: Yeah. I went in January of '41.

Susan Storcel: No. '43.

Storcel: No, '41. '43 I went... I was coming home already.

Susan Storcel: No. No. '44 was the invasion.

Storcel: Oh, wait a minute, I'm sorry. Yeah. [Laughter]

Susan Storcel: He's still better with numbers than I am. [Laughter]

Cohen: I would imagine, if you ran your own business.

Susan Storcel: I was looking at your discharge papers. So, it was January of '43. And just to clarify the question, how long after you got notice, did you have until you had to report?

Storcel: Oh, I don't remember.

Cohen: Okay. So, do you want to talk about your one day at the induction center at Camp Grant? Like how did you get there? What was it like?

Storcel: Oh, Camp Grant was the... enlistment for the whole area, I guess the state of Illinois. From downtown, they sent us down to Camp Grant to register and from there we were assigned to the various... and I went to Michigan, Fort Niagara.

Cohen: So, before Michigan, I think you mentioned you went to Fort Custer in Michigan?

Storcel: Yes.

Cohen: So, what was the basic training like at Fort Custer? What did you have to do?

Storcel: It was normal.

Cohen: Did you learn how to shoot a gun?

Storcel: Yes. Yes.

Cohen: What type of equipment...

Storcel: Yes. Yes.

Susan Storcel: What kind of things... Go into detail... You get up in the morning, you're in basic training; what do you do?

Cohen: Exercise and more exercise and push-ups--[Laughter].

Storcel: 'at the Colonel...May I have a Kleenex?

Susan Storcel: So, you'd get up in the morning and you'd start out with calisthenics?

Storcel: And then breakfast and then at eight o'clock, we started... doing whatever training was listed for that particular day. That was in Michigan.

Cohen: And you're already assigned to the 783rd Military Police?

Storcel: Yeah. Yes. Well, I went to Michigan to be assigned to the 783rd. I guess whatever they--whoever needed personnel, well, that's who gets appointed. I don't think they used any system of any kind of any kind. But that's my opinion. How they picked me as a military policeman... But people don't understand that the work that the military police do. You're walking around like officers... walking the

streets of Chicago. So many different duties that the...MPs [Military Police] do. It's amazing.

Cohen: It is amazing. Do you want to talk about the different duties that MPs do?

Storcel: Well, all right. What did I do? When I first came in, I was... doing KP [Kitchen police] most of the time. I got this souvenir by the way... [i.e., respiratory condition] right at this time, every year, the Battle of the Bulge is going on at this time. All right, what was the question now?

Cohen: What are the duties of the Military Police?

Storcel: Oh, God, everything. You got traffic, you have patrol in... in the evenings, you have the street, controlling the guys on leave for the night. You have... well, I think, and I'm very positive of that, we actually... I'm getting way ahead of myself now. I think that they were preparing us to protect the eastern coast of America. They figured there might be an invasion, and we would be the ones holding the enemy back.

Susan Storcel: So, you were doing in addition to patrol, you were also being trained do to combat?

Storcel: Combat. Oh, yes. We had... we had tanks, we had scout cars - scout cars - we had like any military infantry personnel.

Cohen: What is a scout car? You mentioned it in the book? What is a scout car?

Storcel: What?

Cohen: Scout car?

Susan Storcel: Scout car? What is a scout car?

Storcel: Oh, scout car. Trying to... visualize to what I could compare it with. It would be like a... open truck with 50 caliber machine gun, a 30 caliber machine gun. I think one of them, we had a 20-millimeter cannon. It was...

Susan Storcel: It's almost like pick-up truck but with a gun?

Storcel: Oh, yeah. It was, you know, a pick-up truck with guns attached to it. You're right. I think that would be a good explanation.

Cohen: You mentioned that after Fort Custer, you were sent to Pine Camp in New York and you mentioned there were these mock battles, so that the officers would

understand what to do in a real battle. Could you give an example of what that was like? Like of a mock battle.

Storcel: At Pine Camp, we were going on with normal training as I presume it was. And then they brought in the personnel that were promoted, officers mostly, and they would--we would be assigned to their portion of what was called a platoon, and they would form a... battle. They would....

Cohen: Like one platoon would be here and another, the enemy, so to speak, [would be there]?

Storcel: Yeah. So then there were two organization--opposition, one is--more like a regular battle. You know, we're chasing you down the street--shooting at you and you shooting at me and so forth. And we -- privates, PFCs, everything--we were actually training these officers. We were training them and when they made a mistake, we'd say, "Hey! You don't want to do that. Half of your platoon would be killed. This is what you have to do." We did that for--I don't know how long--anyway. So we were teaching to high class--well, maybe up to lieutenant colonel.

Cohen: So you--so you were learning and teaching your superiors?

Storcel: Yeah. We were guinea pigs. [Laughter]

Cohen: [Laughter]

Storcel: They'd say, you know: sergeant. We had fellows that had the title of a sergeants, but they were not, but any way but at this particular time, they were sergeants. The officers were sergeants. Do this and do that. And you'd look at them and you didn't know what to do with them. "Lieutenant, you don't want to do that. You'd go a block and you're dead." "Oh, okay." So then they had to get another plan going.

Susan Storcel: So, was this like maneuvers?

Storcel: Yeah.

Susan Storcel: Okay, so you guys were the soldiers?

Storcel: Well, we were the guinea pigs.

SS: Right. So then the officers would come in to try to direct you with their military strategy, and sometimes it was wrong. So you would let them that you're have to change their strategy if you want to be successful on your battles.

Storcel: Correct.

Cohen: That's very interesting.

Storcel: [to Susan] Yeah, you could be a PFC; you know that?

Cohen: You see, you're all right. [Laughter]

Susan Storcel: I tried. They wouldn't take me.

Cohen: That's their loss.

Storcel: Yeah, yeah, we did that for about six months. And then, we were told we're going to the... at that time it was North Africa, and... to do whatever. And then all of a sudden we started picking up prisoners in New York, taking them out to some farm in the west. And in Boston. We picked some up in Boston.

Cohen: Could I go backward for a little bit? Backtrack. I was reading a document that said the Military Police had similar training to Infantry. That both learned how to use light and heavy machine guns, Tommy guns, Springfield and Enfield rifles. They both learned tactics for the offense of the defensive. Both learnt how to protect bridges and airports and both learnt methods of attacking towns. So, I was wondering would you agree to that. Did you find your training was similar to--?

Storcel: Yeah, yeah. The Military Police, when people would mention military police, they think there was a policeman like an in the evening. In the evening, they would walk the street to keep peace in the streets and the guy gets drunk, you can put him in jail for the day.

Cohen: [laughs] More complex.

Storcel: But that was not true. Military police was the most... how do I explain it? Diverse...

Susan Storcel: Versatile?

Susan Storcel: Versatile.

Storcel: Versatile.... Because one day you're doing this, next day you're doing traffic control, next day you're doing something every... You know, it's, uh.

Cohen: That's what impressed me too when I began the reading. That I, as you said, I had no clue what was involved. Yeah, yeah.

Susan Storcel: It wasn't until recently that I learned about the incident where--he was there when they were cleaning up after the battle and putting bodies in body bag[s]. And I hadn't really realized that...

Storcel: Well we did everything. We picked up bodies on the beach. Three days, four days after the invasion. So we didn't direct traffic on the beach at the invasion. No, we did where, my first job was to protect this... general who went... that made the original... invasion. So I guarded him 'til he got his nap. [Storcel and Cohen laugh] Well, the guy I understand didn't sleep for, you know, for so long, getting this thing organized. So that was my first, and I don't remember what I did after--what I did after that. Then...

Cohen: You know, you know, I think you mentioned before, that you were, you're, you were about to be sent to North Africa.

Storcel: Oh okay.

Cohen: The boat left and instead you were sent to Fort Niagara in upstate New York?

Storcel: Well, okay. We--I'm glad you caught me on that. Yes. The majority of the organization went by train or whatever--but we were driving the vehicles. We stopped in Fort Niagara to--for a rest, for the night, and then in the morning, we were supposed to continue on to Fort Dix. And from there, we were supposed to go to Pacific--to the Pacific...

Cohen: [softly] Front?

Storcel: Well, the war was at that time in Africa.

Susan Storcel: Oh, so, that's not Pacific.

Cohen: The Mediterranean?

Storcel: Pardon?

Susan Storcel: Not the Pacific. The Mediterranean, yeah. That's all right Dad.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Right. So... But when we got to Fort Niagara, something else came up and we became... [Delivering] the prisoners. And then when we got finished with the prisoners... uh, what is it? Oh when we got finished with the prisoners, we had regular training. And, oh then, oh that's when the colonel—what was his name? An old infantry colonel, he said, "I'm gonna make soldiers out of you guys." It was a tank, he was tank man, and we had small tanks in the organization, so he... gonna make, and that's when we did--I thought at least, that hey, we're not there just to parade. We're there to protect the east coast of the United States.

Cohen: Oh, okay, yeah. [Laughs]

Storcel: That—that's what we were there for.

Cohen: But, but, what--I could understand the thinking because of the war of the Atlantic that was going on and I think there was only a turning point in May 1943. So, like, did you have the impression that in general, people were afraid that there would be an attack from the, from the, you know from the coast?

Storcel: You mean the civilians?

Cohen: Either from the civilians or from your commanders or other soldiers. Like, were people-- did you get a sense that they were afraid that there would be an attack on the eastern coast?

Storcel: Well, we were there, the Germans--some Germans were landing on the east coast; submarine landings, so... but, they're getting prepared that the... the Germans were building up a force to make a landing like Normandy, so.

Cohen: Oh, oh I see.

Storcel: I mean, it's not known, but I'm sure that was the--

Susan Storcel: We know that there were some--

Cohen: Plan, plan, right.

Susan Storcel: It was kind of, so what you're saying, Dad, is you guys kinda got up in the morning and, okay now you're gonna do this, now, you're delivering prisoners. Now you're not delivering prisoners anymore, now I'm gonna make a soldier out of you, you're gonna be an infantry man and I'm gonna show you how to fight.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Exactly, exactly. Well, we had the tanks, I mean, they had, then, so we were--we knew we would be involved with the tanks and scout cars and, you know, that we would be involved in the battles of some sort. So.

Cohen: So what was your job with the prisoners? Who were they and what did you have to do?

Storcel: All right, all right. As I mentioned that I was guarding the general while he's taking his nap--afternoon nap.

Susan Storcel: Back in the US. When you were delivering the prisoners in the United States?

Storcel: Oh, in the United States?

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] What exactly were you doing there?

Storcel: Oh. Sitting--sitting from my home, about... uh, what would I say?

Susan Storcel: Well, how did the prisoners get transported?

Storcel: By train, I'm sorry. By train. And that train would--one time, my train stopped six blocks from my home.

Cohen: Oh, my goodness.

Storcel: And I—and I was not home at that time for about nine months, and I could not find anybody on that street to inform my--somebody from my family, "Hey, your son is sitting there." And I mentioned in there that it would be--odd for me to run down the street with a Thompson machine gun. So. [Storcel and Cohen laugh]

Cohen: Yeah, right. Might not go—might not go over. Well. [laughs]

Storcel: But, but there a few of boys [who] decided they were gonna do it. But when they returned, the train was gone. [Storcel and Cohen laugh] So they went to Camp McCoy, and sat there for, I dunno, six months or something in a prison.

Cohen: [laughs] Yeah, so that was tough.

Storcel: But it was--it was hurting this—I could just about see my home and I can't--can't say, get up and say hello to my mother or family.

Cohen: So close, yet so far.

Storcel: Yeah. So.



Cohen: How did you communicate with the prisoners? I think you said they were mostly German?

Storcel: Well, right.

Cohen: And Italian?

Storcel: So after that duty, we did something else. I don't remember. I was put on prisoner detail, when prisoners came off the front of lines, we would take care of them. So they would put a barbed wire fence around, and.

Susan Storcel: In the United States?

Storcel: In the United States, well, is that the, I'm talking about the invasion.

Cohen: Yes.

Susan Storcel: No, no, this is before the invasion, we're still in the United States.

Storcel: Oh, I'm sorry.

Susan Storcel: When you were guarding the train, the prisoners?

Storcel: Oh, yeah, oh okay. Well, we just dropped them off at...

Cohen: [softly] A base?

Storcel: Some kind of a station or another, and then they would be assigned to, I understand, farms. They're working on farms as the prisoners. And then we'd take off and go back for another load.

Cohen: Bring the next.

Storcel: Do the same thing... And to, one time we had a bunch of Germans, next time, we had... Italian. Then we had Italian and German, we had one trip... but.

Susan Storcel: Did you talk to the prisoners? Were you able to talk with them?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh, certainly. Certainly. And I found that the Germans were very... well, naturally, they were upset and we were... enemies. But they... they were very... what would I say? They knew they were in a war, but the Italians, we'd stop. All the Italians in the neighborhood would come and, "Hey!" You know, they drink their wine together.

Cohen: How did the local Italians know when a train full of Italian prisoners would pass by?

Storcel: Some Italian, some Italian happened to walk by to her. [Storcel and Cohen laughing]  
And they're speaking and I wish they would have been at time a Bohemian [all laughing]  
which is a Bohemian neighborhood.

Cohen: [laughs] Okay. I'm trying to think... I think you mentioned in the book that you had a  
good social life when you were in Fort Niagara? You had a nice social life?

Storcel: When I was where?

Cohen: When you were in Fort Niagara.

Susan Storcel: [at the same time] Fort Niagara.

Storcel: Social life?

Cohen: No, not so much? [Laughs]

Storcel: One or two nights I did. [Laugh]

Cohen: [laughs] Okay.

Susan Storcel: Well...

Storcel: I was not a...

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same] I think there were some girls you know.

Cohen: Girls?

Storcel: Well, yeah. I was not too much of a... like, that's, what would you call it?

Susan Storcel: Party guy.

Storcel: Party guy. [Cohen laughs] And we'd get a pass once, twice a month, but I was not a  
social runner... and I forgot the question.

Susan Storcel: About the girls.

Storcel: Oh, about the girls. Well, you'd go to town and you got... these, the Army girls, the...  
what do they call those dances?

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] The Red Cross?

Cohen: Like the...

Storcel: Pardon?

Cohen: Oh, like Donut Dollies kind of? No.

Storcel: The what?

Cohen: It's okay. It's okay. [laughs]

Storcel: So they form dances... and so it's...

Susan Storcel: [after talking with Cohen in background unintelligibly] Thank you! [Laughs].

Cohen: So, so, so they would come by and talk to the guys who were soldiers and bring water or snacks?

Susan Storcel: They--and they would have, they had these dances--

Storcel: And they would...

Susan Storcel: Yeah, and they would--

Storcel: Invite the soldiers...

Susan Storcel: Invite the GI's. Yeah, and they would, you know, just kind of join them.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah. The neighborhood dances, really.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah.

Storcel: And they would invite us to, to join them. But I was not a fly-by-night as they were called. [Cohen laughs] Some guys were out every night, but... I was too young to do that.

Cohen: [softly] Yeah. [louder] You mentioned that earlier on that you made a good friend Bill Ulrick...?

Storcel: Uliks.

Cohen: Uliks, yeah, yeah. That was...

Storcel: The greatest person on earth... I don't know if you got the whole story in there. Where... the first night we...

Susan Storcel: The USO [United Services Organization]. Not SOS, USO.

Cohen: USO! I should've [laughs] thought about that, okay. So the USO girls hold the dances. Sounds good. [Laughs]

Storcel: When Camp Grant, we were assigned to the 783<sup>rd</sup> MP Battalion in Michigan, Fort Custer, so... It was...maybe, eight, nine o'clock at night when we finally got assigned to our barracks and... to our... sleeping quarters and etcetera... [Then... I don't want anything... [46:30 - 46:45 interruption]] So... Oh! So I went out and assigned to my bed... And—be careful now! I figured I'd take a shower and go to bed. Took a shower, I came back and there were two single beds and I was very fortunate to get one of 'em. And Bill Uliks next to me got the other one. And Bill Uliks came from 19<sup>th</sup> and Cermak Road, or... in the old part of Chicago, and was a pretty, pretty rough neighborhood I guess at that time. He was the bunk next to me--as I said, the only two single bunks in the whole platoon, other than the officers... Oh, and I I came back from the shower, the guy gave me a wallet: "Is this yours?" "Oh, how would it be mine?" "I found it on the floor." "Wait a minute. Yeah! It's mine. How'd you get it?" He says, "You set me up, huh?" And he thought I was setting him up.

Cohen: Like testing him?

Storcel: Oh, he had fifty dollars in his wallet and I had nineteen--well, that was plus you know, we were given by the Army at that time. And so he says, "You're testing me." And we became buddies like you couldn't believe. So he says, "Here." He had fifty dollars at the, at that time. "Put it in your wallet, put it in your wallet." He thought I was testing him with my wallet, and we became so close as buddies and for three years why, we were, we were together.

Cohen: What a difference.

Storcel: What was the question?

Cohen: [Susan Storcel laughs in background] Yeah. No. I asked you about Bill Uliks.

Storcel: How I met him?

Cohen: How you met him and, and just... Yeah, just my impression was it made a huge difference to you having a great Army buddy.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh it did, it did. It did. It did. I had... he was such a wonderful guy. Always taking care of me. He was a rough, tough guy, but he was always taking care of me and always checking, you know, "How's the family back home?" He had five brothers in service. And. But I guess their family was in a rough neighborhood. I guess they were you know not too well-associated, I guess they'd called it. So he more or less he appreciated how I respected him and so whenever I needed something, "Why, Bill could you do this? Bill." Like the overcoat, did we get to the overcoat? We had an

inspection every... all of a sudden. A notice comes out, "Line up, we're gonna have an inspection." Well, this happened to me on a Saturday... a Saturday morning. We got a notice that we're going to have an inspection of overcoats. So Uliks looks at me and we had the same rack, we had our coats. So Bill Uliks had, oh, a newly pressed overcoat. [Cohen laughs] So he took my overcoat! Well, it happened when I was pressing it last, that night. I put one crease too many and the officer caught it. So he asked me, he says you know, "Very nice job," he said, "What's that other, what's that sixth crease for?" He didn't know what was...

Susan Storcel: Because it wasn't his coat.

Cohen: Coat. [Laughs] Right, right. right.

Storcel: But when he came back he started freaking out on me. "What the hell did you put that?" "What the hell did you take my coat for?" [Susan Storcel and Cohen laugh] That's the kind of a guy he was, but I volunteered to, after the war got toward to the end--I volunteered to go to Czechoslovakia for Patton's [Army] as an interpreter. My family was there and I thought, "Gee, if I could really get there to visit." All of a sudden, these fellas started leaving, and I'm waiting and waiting. And I went to the officer, or captain, "Oh Captain, what's going on here? I volunteered. I speak the language, these guys can't speak English."

Cohen: [laughs] Let alone, Czech.

Storcel: "And they're going... "He just told me, "Just be lucky you got a buddy like Bill Uliks." Bill Uliks went to the officer, told him my situation at home, 'bout my mother and family, so he went instead of me. Said, "You're lucky so far. Don't stretch your luck."

Cohen: Because you have to support your family, and.

Storcel: He was concerned about my family. Oh, he was a, he was a character. One hell of a buddy boy.

Cohen: [to Susan] Oh, my. You remember him too! Oh yeah, that's so nice.

Susan Storcel: I remember him, too sitting here. I remember him I remember him sitting here. Yeah.

Cohen: So cool. Yeah.

Storcel: A real buddy.

Cohen: A real buddy. So, sorry that I'm, sorry that I'm jumping around, but I think we left off at Fort Niagara, but then you mentioned that you guys were sent back to Fort Custer, Michigan, for overseas training.

Storcel: Right.

Cohen: So, what was new at Fort Custer? Like what were the new things that you were learning?

Storcel: Well, Fort Custer's situated after we're delivered these prisoners. They, I guess, decided to send us across. At that time it was Africa. So... we went and we practiced on every weapon that we could use in time[s] of war.

Cohen: Wow.

Storcel: Or in time of battle. So that's what we went to Fort Custer for, and then from there, we're going overseas. We didn't know where, but we knew we were going overseas. So when I got--when I got [there], there were certain people who went home for Christmas and certain people who went home for New Year's. And so I went home for New Year's, and my brother was a pilot--training to be a pilot.

Cohen: In the Air --in the Air Corps?

Storcel: In Tennessee. So my mother--when I came home--she was so happy and, "Go visit your brother!" She insist that I visit my brother. So she chased me out of the house and I went to Tennessee, spent the night with him--well actually, two nights, and then I came home and from there, I went back to the outfit and went to... We got on a big ship... and we were heading into the ocean, but we didn't know which, where we were going. And we were on a Queen Mary [one of the three of the world's ocean liners that was converted into a troop carrier during World War II] heading for Europe or Africa. We didn't know which at the time.

Cohen: You mentioned in your memoir that-- a nice story about the section Sergeant Wigdorovitz pleading the case for you to go on holiday. I think you said that you had been granted leave for New Year's but somebody higher up wanted to block it on some pretext, and the Jewish guy said, "You guys covered for the Jewish boys when they were away for the holidays, and now they [i.e., we] want to cover for them!" [Laughs]

Storcel: We had a miserable sergeant...the platoon sergeant. Then we had a section sergeant. There were two section sergeants for every platoon... and... well, that night... when the Chicago boys, the second group were just hanging around and then we go and say, "What the hell you guys doing? You're gonna miss your train." So they say, "Well,

Rosenblatt... cancelled the permits.” “What do you mean?” He didn’t know anything about it. So he went and he raised holy hell. And that’s when he said that: “Hey, when we had our holidays, those boys took our... and now we got your holiday. We’re gonna take care of their duties.” And so the two of them had it out and that was the end of Wigdorovitz’s promotions. [Cohen laughs] He just--he got rid of him. You know, maybe he didn’t get, well, he did eventually get rid of him, yeah. So... that’s what that was about.

Cohen: Did you find that in general, people of different religions and cultures got along with each other? Like...

Storcel: Uh... mostly we got along. Oh, there were... I would say ninety-nine percent of the time we got along. I think we had [a] southern boy, Kentucky--Tennessee and some of them couldn’t speak the English language. [Laughter]

Susan Storcel: Well, they could, but their own.

Storcel: Yeah. I was about to say. [Cohen laughs]

Susan Storcel: And they were saying, “You couldn’t speak the English language.”

Storcel: Other than their own, and...then...Other than that--what was your question again?

Cohen: If people of different religions, you know, Jews, Christians, you know, north, southern--

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] No, we did. No we did.

Cohen: --people, you know people in general, if there was a, like an esprit-de-corps if they got along or, you know. How did it work out?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] No, we didn’t have--we did have... a bunch of Chicago boys... they were just... I don’t know, very small amount of us... But anyway. They... and some of the New York boys had donny brook you know. But other than that, no. [softly] Right. That sometime he may, I may need you. [Storcel and Cohen laugh]

Cohen: You got to be on good terms with everybody. Yeah. [Laughs] Yeah, out of curiosity, I mean I know this is before the integration of the military services, but were there any African-Americans in your platoon or in the 783<sup>rd</sup>?

Storcel: Any what?

Cohen: Were there any blacks in the 7--?

Storcel: No. Not at that time.

Cohen: Time. [softly] No, it yeah, came later.

Storcel: No... I... I sort of got along with them very well. The first... first experience I had with the black soldiers was in the... after the...after...

Cohen: The Red—[i.e. Red Ball Express, truck convoy of Allied Forces primarily staffed by African Americans]

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] The battle, the landing.

Cohen: Oh, after the landing. Sorry, sorry.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] After the landing...Uh... What happened was after the original landing, a big storm was coming, and they brought those fellas in—oh, excuse me--to unload ships and supplies.

Cohen: [softly] Oh, I see.

Storcel: So, they were more or less handling supplies, and I got to... Well then we had to guard the supplies, so I got to know 'em and we got along very well. We had no problem at all.

Cohen: [softly] Yeah... That's good... So, I'll just jump back a little bit, so where we left off. You were on the ship, I believe The Queen Mary? You were...

Storcel: Going from New York to... we didn't know where. We ended up at Firth of Clyde in Scotland.

Cohen: Scotland. And what was it like being on the ship? Were you seasick? What were you seasick?

Storcel: Oh, I used to seasick on a streetcar. You know what a streetcar is?

Cohen: [laughs] Yeah.

Storcel: Uh-huh, I used to get sick on a streetcar! [Cohen laughs] So anyway, I got a rumor that if you... if you... That if you sit or sleep in the eastern position or western position, you don't get sick. So, and, so did some of the other boys and they wanted cigarettes. So [I'd] say, "Hey! For a carton of cigarettes, I'll give you my bunk." So we'd sleep opposite. And Uliks was one of 'em.

Cohen: Okay. [Storcel and Cohen laugh] So, did it help? [Laughs]

Storcel: Well, what happened [laughs] the third day, we were supposedly chased by German submarines... supposedly eleven. I don't know how they... how they got to the number,



but anyway. And so I wanted to take my deal back, "Here's your cigarettes. I want to go back to the original position." "No way." [Cohen laughs]

Susan Storcel: [softly] Probably not a submarine but daydreaming.

Cohen: [laughs] Day dreaming, yeah.

Storcel: So those--did I answer your question?

Cohen: Yeah. Yeah. Did you have any duties while you're on the ship?

Storcel: On the ship? Oh, the Queen Mary.

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: Yes, we were guarding... we had guard duty. And... That's how I got into trouble with water. I don't know if I put that in there.

Cohen: Remind me. Remind me, I don't remember.

Storcel: Uh... well we just--

Cohen: Oh, with the hot water?

Storcel: The hot water. Yeah.

Cohen: Do you want to tell the story?

Storcel: Do I wanna tell the story. Well, I'm coming off of duty one night, and our... our cabins were right next to the officers' cabins. Coming off the duty and I heard the officers talking about hot water. Well, we had no hot water. See, so the guys were complaining about hot water and I said, "Hey, those officers got hot water." I say, "They got to have the same pipes we got."

Cohen: [laughs] Good point.

Storcel: So, Uliks and I went on searching for hot water. Well, [we] discovered that... there was a panel in our room that had all the valves controlling all the water. So I discovered, I said, "Hey, Bill." I said, "Look at this panel here." Say, "These, one of these valves control that water in there. Well, if they got hot water, we're gonna get hot water." "Okay." He... dragged me into that section and we're gonna find that valve. So we turned... we would open up a valve and the boys would pound on the door, on the wall if they got the water and now you know turn it off. Just then the siren went off for... practice. What do you call--?

Susan Storcel: Drill?

Storcel: Drill... So... all right, there's no hot water, then it started to knock and all of a sudden... I don't know how I want to say this. All of a sudden, how did I want to say this? All of a sudden, the siren go off or whatever, notifying us for, for a practice. Practice.

Cohen: You had to be on at a certain place on the boat right away?

Storcel: Yeah... and... So, anyhow, now everybody's is rushing to get out for this practice run, and Uliks and I are inside that wall with these valves. [Cohen laughs] So, I said, "Bill, we gotta put these, open up one these valves, you know." Or close them or whatever. So... Oh, okay, during all this confusion, the guys ran out, we thought we had all the valves closed—[we] had forgotten one. [Cohen laughs] Oh okay, after the invasion, after the practice run, we got back into our room. And in those days, the Queen Mary, and I was on the Queen Mary, but they had a wall about this high off the floor. Yeah, from the floor. We used [unintelligible].

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] –Up to eighteen inches.

Storcel: And so we step over this little wall by the door and sh-flunk! "What the hell is this?" Well, our room there was water over-

Cohen: Overflowed with water!

Storcel: The valve that we forgot, controlled the...

Susan Storcel: The sink?

Storcel: The faucet. And we had all our luggage. [Cohen laughs] So after it overflowed, and our room was all full of water.

Susan Storcel: So you found the hot water valve?

Storcel: We found the valve.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] You sure did. [laughs]

Susan Storcel: Good job, Bill. [Cohen laughs]

Storcel: Yeah, we were all concerned -- the officers came and you know, "Where the hell did you guys get this water?" Not only that it's hot, it was, it was water. So... what was the question?

Cohen: So, well you had to, was the next step to bail out the water?

Storcel: Oh, well we had a, "Hey, get going boys. Start bailing out the water." [Cohen laughs]

Susan Storcel: What'd you use?

Storcel: So we were bailing water.

Susan Storcel: What did you use to bail?

Storcel: Hmm?

Susan Storcel: What did you use to bail the water?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Our helmets. Helmets...

Cohen: Helmets. [laughs] Jeez. Wow... How, how--?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Aye. Hey—

Cohen: Oh, sorry go on.

Storcel: No, no that's—I was just gonna joke that I have ingenuity.

Cohen: [laughs] You do, you do! I'm impressed that you guys actually found it, and I'm thinking it sounds like you always had these kind[s] of technical proficiency that you mentioned later, you had an electrical company, but it sounds like you had a very, I don't know, good technical mind. Sorry. So, yeah, how long a trip... was it across the Atlantic?

Storcel: Across the water?

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: Five days.

Cohen: [softly] Five days. Okay. And...

Storcel: Well, yeah it was five days we had a, we didn't, 'cause we didn't know at that time, where we were going yet. So after the fifth day, we discovered that we're going to Scotland. Firth of Clyde, Scotland. So then, I guess, the German boys decided they [are] giving up, so they didn't chase us anymore. So, anyway, we... that's how we ended up in the northern part of England. And then... what, two, three days, we did nothing but march behind a character sitting on their horse, chasing--in their red jackets--chasing dogs. [Cohen and Storcel laugh] "What the hell is this?"

Susan Storcel: Hound hunting?

Storcel: Yeah. Hunting. “What the hell is this?” I’m freezing my ass off--excuse me. [Laughs] And those guys are riding around chasing dogs! So, [a] few days later, while we decide—oh we, they decided to take, to send us to [the] southern part of England. And that’s how we ended up in Firth of Clyde in England. I presume they were preparing us for the invasion at that time already.

Cohen: So, was there more structured military training at Firth of Clyde in England?

Storcel: Oh, yeah.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Than, than in Scotland?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, well yeah. Yeah.

Susan Storcel: Wait a minute Dad, Firth of Clyde, was that Scotland?

Storcel: Was what?

Susan Storcel: Firth of Clyde; that was in Scotland?

Storcel: Scotland.

Susan Storcel: And then when you went south, you went to Plymouth, right?

Storcel: Plymouth.

Cohen: Oh, okay. Okay, thank you. Thank you.

Storcel: Yeah, Plymouth. Yeah, it was Plymouth.

Cohen: How long were you in Plymouth and were people aware that...?

Storcel: Well, it was six months. We got there in June—I mean, we got there in—you know, [the] middle of January, I guess sometime. And well then June 6 is the invasion.

Cohen: So, what was the training like at Plymouth? How did it compare to your previous training?

Storcel: We didn’t.

Cohen: Oh!

Storcel: I was guarding a coal pile.

Cohen: Oh, okay.

Storcel: Six, or five stories high in a block square, and the biggest, biggest question was: Who owned the goddamn coal pile that I'm guarding, freezing my keister off every night? [Cohen laughs] And that was, oh that was it. It was a confusion and well, then we had, we got prepared for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division coming off of... from... Africa... and getting prepared for the invasion. Everybody knew that that's gonna be the... invasion part would be coming from the north.

Cohen: I see. So in a way, there was waiting for the different divisions to come to Plymouth and get organized and wow. So, did you have contact with British soldiers at Plymouth?

Storcel: Did I have what?

Cohen: Did you have contact with the people from the British Army?

Storcel: Well, [unintelligible]

Susan Storcel: No, contact. Did you interact...?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh, contact. Very little--very little.

Cohen: Sorry. Very little yeah, okay, yeah was more of guarding [the coal].

Storcel: See, I was not a... I didn't go on passes or anything like that... Night passes and...

Susan Storcel: And your armies didn't like train together or anything?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh, no. No, no, no, no. Getting some information I [unintelligible]—out of those people are... extended their lives the way they are because it was so miserably cold and oh, it was terrible. I—[the] worst part of—the worst temperature in the world was the southern part of England. Oh, terrible. The humidity! So the fellas--and we put on every piece of clothing we had issued and we're still cold. So one of the--every morning, there was a fella that used to, just watches the cattle and he--he had a hell of a sound that he would make and the cattle would come to him for the feed. So I happened to mention this to him he says, "You could do what you want, but he say you'll never warm up. He say get a piece of metal or something, put it under your bed! Under your cot."

Cohen: Oh, so you don't have that cold coming up--

Storcel: It's the cold coming out the ground that's keeping you uncomfortable, and sure enough, I went and stole a piece of cardboard and that problem was over with.

Cohen: [laughs] You gotta do what you gotta do.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] I already, I already had the pneumonia! [laughs]

Cohen: Oh, that's why you got sick, 'cause, yeah.

Storcel: Yeah. Well I got... post nasal drip... and I... have it ever since.

Cohen: Wow.

Storcel: And...

Susan Storcel: You had a bad fever too.

Storcel: Oh, yeah had a fever... and [the] doctor was Bill Uliks. [Cohen laughs] And went and got some orange juice or whatever, and he warmed it up, got me all sweated up, and then in the night I kicked the blanket off to my cot, and boy, did I [laughs] have a fever then! Yeah sweating up and then I'll kick the cover off, so. And then shortly after that, why, came the June the sixth... and... well and I was assigned to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Special Engineer Brigade. So, I went...

Cohen: They told you [to] be at, like Plymouth, like be at the port at--?

Storcel: Right, right. At that time was when I was arrested. And bring that out.

Susan Storcel: You didn't talk about that, but that was with regard to your guarding the coal, right?

Storcel: Guarding the coal. Should I mention that?

Susan Storcel: You can.

Cohen: Sure.

Storcel: All right. Okay, that particular time we're guarding whatever was on the dock. And everything, I think, a coal pile about six--six, five, six stories tall. I and--it was a bad, cold, and rain, and oh, it was just a horrible night. So, we tried to keep--we, me and... my buddy, Sundheimer He and I were partners in it, guarding that damn coal pile. But, so we couldn't get any meals because we were either too early or too late. So we either invaded the kitchen after everybody was gone or we would wait for a ship, American ship to come in and we would feed off of them... So, anyway, we should, we got the supper to try to figure out how to stay alive that night, and all of a sudden, we heard a ship is coming in. So, fortunately, why, it was an American ship and we went aboard and... they gave us food, and I met, met some fellas that were from my neighborhood.

Cohen: Oh, my.

Storcel: So anyway. While we're shootin' the bull and eating...Sundheimer said, "Hey, you know, we better get going. We've been away for a long time. And it's close to... the... changing of the guard, and the lieutenant and sergeant is gonna be looking for us." Well, you don't want to be caught by them. So, anyway, he said, "Listen, I'm gonna go and..." Oh, anyway, one of the guys said, "You know, there's another fellow from our neighborhood here... stationed on the board." Well, it happened to be a guy I went to school with. It was an officer. So, he went to get the--so, naturally, we're talking and Sundheimer come back and he says, "Hey, we're in trouble. Get a, get a medical slip..." He, the...What the hell was his name again? Anyway. "They're looking for you. They wanna know where you are, and I told them that you went to sick call."

Cohen: Okay, okay. [Unintelligible] To get you off the hook?

Storcel: So, the guy is riding up and gotta sick call slip, made out a sick call for me, and said, "Hey, make sure you get, in the morning, report to sick call." Okay, that was our story. We came down there and Rosenblatt, Sergeant Rosenblatt, "Where were you?" So I told him the story, you know I was sick and I thought that I could get some medication from them. "I'm putting you under arrest, leaving your post of guard--post of duty in time of war." In the First World War, they'd "boom." So okay. He put me under arrest and next... at about seven o'clock in the morning, reporting back to our--our duty was over though. We reported me to our officers' headquarters and--but I was under arrest. Made [an] appointment to go to the medics and--but then just did all hell broke loose. "Okay, well. What the hell is going on?" That was the notice that the invasion just started.

Cohen: Wow!

Storcel: And lucky, fortunately, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Special Engineer Brigade was assigned for the...

Cohen: LST [Leading Ship, Tank]?

Susan Storcel: For the invasion?

Storcel: Yeah. The hell [do] they call it?

Cohen: Like the boat, like the LST?

Storcel: Pardon? Well, they were...

Cohen: The landing ship?

Storcel: For duty! Report to duty!

Susan Storcel: Oh, so you were going to sick call, notice had come out, the invasion had started, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade report to duty. To board, and...

Storcel: They had the nerve to knock me off of sick call just for the invasion of Normandy.  
[Cohen laughs]

Susan Storcel: So, in a way, the invasion saved you from arrest and court martial.

Storcel: Oh, certainly.

Susan Storcel: Well, there you go!

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Well, there you go, right? So what you said, all hell broke loose, but what was it like? Was it all of a sudden there were, were there, everybody was come at—were you seeing people running? What was it like?

Storcel: Well they were issuing mustard gas protection and stuff they put on your body. And... “Well, you’re assigned here, you’re assigned there.” And so forth... Well, the first group, the first invaders of Normandy were bringing in their wounded. And this is some where’s around I don’t know, early in the afternoon, very early in the afternoon. And we were helping them take the wounded off, and we got on board to go to Normandy. But, to be honest with you, ‘til this day I don’t know where the hell we went! Don’t know whatever, we never... we supposedly we got within distance of the French shore, but we never saw it. Well, it was dark by that time. So... Where am I at? Okay.

Cohen: This is—

Susan Storcel: Go ahead, no go ahead, Leah.

Cohen: Okay. So you’re saying, you’re now on the boat, you know you’re headed to Normandy—

Storcel: Headed for Normandy.

Cohen: --you’re, you’re approaching the coast, although it’s not visible to you.

Storcel: At Normandy, yeah.

Cohen: So, does the captain decide to go back to the English Channel?

Storcel: Did what?

Cohen: Does the--

Susan Storcel: So, did your boat turn around or did you just stay?



Storcel: We don't know what... That's the thing that I'm thoroughly--never found out why we were--why we did not land. Story was, it was too confusing!

Susan Storcel: So you didn't know directly. But the rumor was that there was so much congestion and confusion on the beach that they couldn't bring any more ships in?

Storcel: That's correct.

Susan Storcel: That what you're saying? Okay.

Storcel: All right. So, anyway, don't know where we were there for two days. We were in the [English] Channel, close to France, but we didn't know where we were.

Cohen: Were you like anchored?

Storcel: Pardon?

Cohen: Were you in one spot?

Storcel: Yeah. We were--I don't know if we were anchored, or we were, yeah I guess we were anchored. So, June the ninth in the morning, we... well, we decided... they decided they're gonna attempt to put us ashore. And all of a sudden, we got a[n] alert... to abandon ship. We were heading for... Normandy. But four planes came at us. And we got a notice to prepare to abandon ship because we were down in a hole where the luggage was ...

Susan Storcel: Cargo?

Storcel: Cargo normally is... And it had these ladders, rope ladders that we had to climb to get out of there.

Cohen: Like from the hold to the rest of the boat?

Storcel: To the top of the boat.

Cohen: Boat. How many men were there on the boat?

Storcel: Oh, I don't know.

Cohen: Was it small, or?

Storcel: Well, it was a Liberty ship. Yeah I don't know how many men. So all right. Then we were informed that we were being attacked by four planes and be prepared to abandon ship... So next thing, why, two of the planes were shot down. The third one, we never did find out what happened to that one. The fourth one flew right over our ship. And on

these ships they had these big balloons, so the ship--the plane--cannot come in straight to the ship. So, but this one came straight over us... never...

Susan Storcel: Never fired?

Storcel: Huh?

Susan Storcel: [louder] It never fired?

Storcel: It never fired.

Cohen: But it strafed the balloons?

Storcel: It hit the balloon. Dropped the balloon, and then we thought were in Normandy.

Susan Storcel: That's when you found out that you had joined the invasion. Welcome to France.

Cohen: Invasion, yeah. [laughs, Susan Storcel unintelligible in background] France, yeah, boom boom.

Storcel: So then we got to... we got to Normandy... What was it?

Cohen: What time of the day was it?

Storcel: Pardon?

Cohen: What time of the day on June 9<sup>th</sup> was it?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh, this, oh when I got there? I don't know. Eight, nine o'clock.

Susan Storcel: In the morning?

Storcel: Morning. All right, so now...

Susan Storcel: You landed in Omaha?

Storcel: On Omaha...

Susan Storcel: Red dog?

Storcel: Dog red. Uh...

Cohen: What did you see?

Storcel: What did I see?

Cohen: Yeah. When you first [softly] landed.

Storcel: One hell of a mess. Well, ships all torn up... I don't know--I don't remember. Well, then naturally, some bodies being loaded, unloaded from the front. I think--the front line was about five miles from the shore by that time. So like I said, my first duty then as I got off the ship was to guard the general—so, to guard his sleep. I don't know, remember if it was the next day or what time after that, we put up barbed wire... and made a...prisoner of war... what would you call it?

Susan Storcel: Containment?

Storcel: Huh?

Cohen: Yeah.

Susan Storcel: [louder] Containment?

Storcel: Yeah. Barbed wire just stretched throughout. All right. So that's when I heard these people, the German soldiers so-called, speaking Czech and Russian, and everything. So, we naturally start conversing... and so, I said [to] one guy, I'll never forget, he was crying. He had a son who was sick or something like that and he wanted me to give him my blanket. I said, "If I had a blanket," I'd say, "you wouldn't get it." [Storcel and Cohen laugh]

Cohen: There's no blankets here! Were there still a lot of sniper bullets?

Storcel: Pardon?

Cohen: When you arrived in Normandy, were there a lot of sniper bullets from Germans higher up in the hills?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh okay. At night, at night we had... I think the front line is about five miles away at that time. The night time--is the problem... They would attack that night, but we didn't have... we did not have any problem. See then, we had a scout car, actually, I was assigned to the scout car with Bill Ulks. And we would had, sleeping on the ground, we'd dug a trench. So we were sleeping in the ground... But then, I don't know, it might have been June sixth, seventh...

Susan Storcel: No, six or seven was after the, you talk, it would have had to have been after the ninth. The invasion was the sixth.

Cohen: You arrive--

Susan Storcel: You arrived on the ninth, so this must've been like maybe tenth, eleventh, twelve, something like that.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah. Uh... Our scout cars came at--we were originally assigned a scout car.

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: So okay then I brought, they brought in our scout cars so now we took over our scout cars and our coffee. What happened is Bill Uliks and I--we were in England—and so we took all the spare parts out of the scout car and went at night and stole food. [Cohen laughs] Put food in the, to hell with we can't eat the screwdriver or anything. So we had our food hidden... in the scout car. Well, that evening, we got the... oh, the scout cars came in and we got our... coffee. We started making coffee at night, and the aroma! [Cohen laughs] Not realizing, you know, something [i.e. someone was] gonna smell that stuff and they're gonna trace their nose. Sure enough, our mess sergeant found our coffee and took our coffee and all the food we stole, and he distributed it to the rest of the boys. So we lost our stolen...

Cohen: Aw. [laughs] You know, you know. Yeah... Yeah. So, you're at Normandy, you're, you've checked, you're guarding the prisoners, you're speaking with them, you've slept, I think under the scout car. So what happens next? Like, like, before what happens is like how did, how in general do you have access to food, other than the food that you stole, how did you get food when you were still guarding prisoners?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh, well then I, then let's see it's there--about the fifth; no I mean, not the fifth, five days later... they started reorganizing, getting organized and everything. And then a storm was coming up, and their main idea is to get as much supplies off the ships and get it ashore. So we were guarding the... supplies coming off the ship... and... What else? Uh... Oh, that's where I got to find out what about these enemy troopers spoke Czech and Polish and so forth. So...

Susan Storcel: The question Dad was how did they feed you once they got organized on the beach--since they took your stolen food.

Storcel: Oh, oh, oh, oh.

Susan Storcel: Give you other food? [Cohen laughs]

Storcel: Oh, we were, we had the K-rations.

Cohen: O,h the K-rations, okay, okay.

Storcel: We had the K-rations. So, what the sergeant did, he took our stolen food and all the K-rations for that particular day, put it in and he mixed it up and we shared with our hard-stolen food.

Cohen: Okay. [laughs] Okay, okay. So, you described in the book that you were cheated out of a historical moment, as well as a photo opportunity. That you were, that you were initially supposed to escort Generals [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, [Bernard] Montgomery, and [Omar] Bradley when they arrived from Omaha Beach to the front?

Storcel: That was, that was terrible. The closest to murder I ever came. [Cohen laughs] We... for somehow... well, we were up a little... closer in off the shore and our lieutenant was naturally taking orders I guess from whoever and sent a notice that he wants so many, it was Uliks, myself, to prepare for... we're gonna take the generals--the generals were coming off the ships and gonna inspect the landing and so forth. And we're going to guard them and take them up to the, up to the front lines. So, was what the hell do they call that? There's a road, a road it was...

Susan Storcel: Like a path?

Cohen: [softly] Like a...

Storcel: A path, you could say from the [unintelligible], from the top of the...

Susan Storcel: Like the ridge?

Storcel: Yeah... Yeah, it was... a road... You walked on it! Where the car...

Cohen: [softly] A cliff?

Susan Storcel: You got, you got a, you, Normandy there's the beach and then there's a big ridge. And then they had like small--they weren't real roads. They were--

Storcel: No. They were just gravel, gravel yeah. And as we were about to... get on that road, you could see the beach. And some colonel--lieutenant colonel stopped us and tore the hell out of our lieutenant. "What the hell are you doing this? What are you guys walking around like the—dirty and." We didn't have our hat. Well, you had a helmet, a plastic helmet and then you had a metal helmet over that. Well, you know, wearing that metal helmet, you get pretty tired. So what we do, we leave our plastic helmet on and tie our metal to our side, but we didn't have the metal helmets on. So he stopped our jeep and raised holy hell... "And, oh, you'd be, should be ashamed of yourselves. Look at you." Naturally we're full of mud! We're living in a mud hole! And I happen to [unintelligible] and I see there's a commotion, maybe a block away. Here are these generals that we're

supposed to take to the front lines are coming ashore. I said to my guys, “Do you know what this son of a bitch did? He’s got his buddies... he’s gonna deprive us of taking these guys up to lines, getting all this publicity. And his buddies are gonna get all the credit, sure enough.” Well, I was, well my family didn’t hear from me for what, nine months or more? So I figured in those days in the theaters, they would show...

Cohen: The news reels? [louder] The news reels?

Storcel: Yeah, the news reels. Yes. Somebody is gonna happen to see and tell my parents, my mother, “Hey, your son!” So she’ll at least know I’m, I’m still alive. And sure enough she, but, and sure enough I swear that sucker...erased that. He had his buddies or his people lined up for that duty... and when the generals landed, you know they’re not gonna wait. Uliks and Storcel are coming.

Cohen: Yeah. Yeah, no it says—

Susan Storcel: Well but they should have.

Cohen: They should have, right! Right, I mean you’ve--

Storcel: So then, we lost that opportunity, that historic event, and this guy, sure enough, put his, I swear, put his friends to take over our duty. Oh, I was so angry. I was so angry. So he didn’t have his helmet dirty or his... insignia because he was probably sitting in a shack somewhere and...in a bed while we were sleeping in the mud.

Cohen: In the mud and guarding prisoners, and yeah, yeah.

Storcel: So that’s another historic event.

Cohen: Event, yeah. So, are you around Omaha Beach for about two weeks? Like, do you go after that to, I think it’s called Grand Camp [spoken in French accent] or Grand Camp, like where do you go next is what I’m trying to ask? Sorry.

Susan Storcel: Yeah. So, yeah.

Storcel: Uh... I... Oh, how you got those dates. And just about two weeks... oh then a big storm was coming up.

Cohen: Oh yeah.

Storcel: Big storm was coming up, and they were worried... about the storm, stopping our supplies and Hitler was screaming that he’s gonna have us back in the [English] Channel but without boats. So... Oh... What? Oh, so we... Well, whatever we can, they built a

loading and unloading dock at that time and they just started using it when the storm came up. And we were guarding the supplies that were taking over this--off the ships at night because... the G.I.s couldn't work at night. So we were watching it--the supplies at night and during the day, we did our regular duties, whatever our duties were [at] that particular time.

Susan Storcel: What happened after you moved off of Normandy, when you started moving inland?

Storcel: All right. Well then--

Susan Storcel: Where did you go? And about how long ago? How long after you landed?

Storcel: Oh boy. Well, then they started preparing for... they start preparing for...

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] The run across France?

Storcel: No, no, no I was very...

Cohen: I think at some point you mentioned directing tanks through the villages of Grand Camp?

Storcel: The what?

Susan Storcel: Grand Camp! Grand Camp?

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] At Grand Camp, and you were showing the tanks where to move?

Storcel: Oh, yeah, that was... Oh, okay, I started to--so my neighbor here, started screaming one night and he said, "John! John! You're on TV." "What the hell are you talking about?" And they're showing a[n] old newsreel, and there I was guarding the tanks to Grand Camp.

Susan Storcel: It was actually, we were watching it... it was narrated by Johnny Carson, and it was about the war and Dolaske recognized him in particular dad's bowlegs. [laughs]

Cohen: [laughs] Oh, okay. Well--

Susan Storcel: And he was standing, we all—we were sitting in there, he was at home and we're all like--

Cohen: Oh my God!

Susan Storcel: Is that Dad? [Cohen laughs] It was in the, probably in the early seventies. So, he did make it on.

Cohen: You did make it to—

Susan Storcel: He made it on television! [Cohen laughs] Several years later.

Cohen: Several years later. Yeah. [laughs]

Storcel: So, all right. From there then... we took over Grand Camp... I don't know. Was it Grand Camp... where the hotel was. Was that Grand Camp?

Susan Storcel: The hotel, the--?

Storcel: On the beach.

Susan Storcel: I'm not sure, Dad. Isn't Grand Camp where you met the mayor?

Storcel: Was what?

Susan Storcel: You know. Isn't Grand Camp where you met that Czech couple? Or maybe not.

Storcel: The what?

Susan Storcel: [louder] Isn't Grand Camp where you met that little Czech couple?

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Oh.

Susan Storcel: Yeah.

Storcel: All right. Was at Grand--I guess it was... Well then, our platoon sergeant—I mean platoon leader... lieutenant, lieutenant... what was his name? The platoon leader.

Susan Storcel: Platoon sergeant?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Lieutenant, lieutenant.

Susan Storcel: Oh, I don't know Dad. The name isn't all that... important.

Storcel: Well, anyway, we took over the town. We meaning our... about a dozen of us, and we were running the town. And then this, they were building up for Saint-Lô.

Cohen: Okay.

Storcel: Okay. And, they... I'd say maybe a month--a good month, they were building up the Army for Saint-Lô and the invasion of Saint-Lô, which I thought was a terrible thing. I



don't think we should have done--we should not have attacked Saint-Lô. They would have... Germans would have...

Cohen: Surrendered?

Storcel: Surrendered! If--in time because they couldn't get any supplies, we had them surrounded, more or less. They can--they could not get supplies, so, eventually they would have surrendered, and all those poor civilians, plus the soldiers, I mean they're humans same as we were. That slaughter--Saint-Lô slaughter, I call it, would not have happened. So anyway, I met the couple that owned a tavern, I mean the, grocery store--the Bohemian.

Cohen: Oh, okay. In--?

Storcel: In Saint-Lô.

Cohen: In Saint-Lô? That's who turned out to be the mayor, I think? [softly] You, you mentioned...

Storcel: And... Right, Jerry Havlicek.

Susan Storcel: Right, start talking about Jerry Havlicek. So...

Cohen: So, you're in Saint-Lô at this point?

Storcel: No, no. We didn't get Saint-Lô.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Before Lô... you're, this, they're preparing for—

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] No, they're preparing to—Saint-Lô. Which I...

Cohen: [speaking at the same time in the background] The invasion at Saint-Lô. And you're still at Grand Camp.

Storcel: Which I thought was unnecessary... and then while we were at Saint-Lô, I was doing guard duty--street duty, I was--for a second I ever did street duty, and one day, we were--a young lad from southern Louisiana and I were walking on the street, and we saw some figure going to a store. And we looked at him and says, "What kind of uniform was that?" He said, "I don't know." Says, "I was doing, looking at the same thing." Anyway, we went to the store, and the old gent that owned it, he was shaking like a leaf--the poor guy. So all of a sudden, this guy I was on duty with, started in French--perfect French, better than they spoke. And he was from southern—

Susan Storcel: [quietly] Louisiana.

Storcel: And you know they spoke at that time more French than they did English. So, anyway, we went in there, and he [said] in French: “Where are those people that came in here?” Well the poor old man couldn’t remember anything, he was all shook up. So I yelled out, then I yelled out some threatening to come out, and this fella jumped out and I had my-- at that time--submachine gun. I was lined up in the area. He looked up, you know, “Storcel!” Oh wait, no no, “Farragut!” [Ex. How do you spell this?] He yelled out Farragut. And—

Cohen: [softly] Your high school!

Storcel: High school. “I know you! I know—you were, you play craps in the ally.” [Storcel and Cohen laugh]

Storcel: And I, and I was about to—and his--and his lucky strike. So, that’s how I met these people. So he introduced us, and he went on—he was a... detector--mine detector. Which, he’s one of the, one of the first guys there. I didn’t want that job even if they gave, gave me twenty cents an hour. But anyway, so... where was I?

Cohen: So, did you meet the Czech man through your friend from high school? Was they, were they together?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] No, no, no. He owned the store.

Cohen: Oh! Okay.

Storcel: And this guy is visiting--this guy from high school met him over there, when they invaded -- so he had a deal with him. You know, they [would] come down and go in his basement, and they’d celebrate. All right. So that’s how I got to know--found out about their celebrations. Well then, I got to know him, and I did some of the celebrating.

Susan Storcel: So now, so the owner of the store...

Storcel: Was Czech.

Susan Storcel: And Jerry Havlicek was Czech, too.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time, Susan Storcel speaking unintelligibly in background] He was Czech. From my neighborhood back home.

Cohen: Okay, so that’s a real discovery. Again speaking like--

Susan Storcel: How did they learn, how did you get, you got to know ‘em because then you were speaking Czech? The couple in Grand Camp, then you started speaking Czech to him?

Storcel: Oh, well then, Jerry Havlicek told me, you know, that he's got a deal there... You know, he comes, sneaks into town, and they down in their basement and they celebrate, so he had a hell of a nice deal going, so he introduced me and so then I was invited into the basement and I had some of the good schnapps.

Susan Storcel: That would be the good schnapps that the M.P.s are supposed to make sure nobody's drinking?

Storcel: That's exactly the way it should be.

Susan Storcel: Just wanted to clear that up, for the record. [Cohen laughs]

Storcel: That's exactly the way it should be, all right.

Cohen: Okay, so, you're in Grand Camp, you're friends now with the guy who, he Czech guy who owns the store and so on; so what happens at the invasion of Saint-Lô? Like what is your next job?

Storcel: Oh, our next job at Saint-Lô was battle the--I was... Red Ball Highway [Red Ball Express].

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: Okay, so while--while we were in Saint-Lô, they were forming to battle on the... off the... France in the central part of... of...

Cohen: [softly] Like Belgium?

Storcel: France. Uh...

Susan Storcel: So, the sweep across France?

Storcel: What?

Susan Storcel: The sweep across France?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Right. The sweep across, and the Red Ball Highway was a supply line. Then, they put General...

Cohen: [whispers] Patton?

Storcel: Patton to take over from Bradley, and he, naturally, he's got the... he mentioned the lines... the supply line, Red Ball Highway, and that was to feed... Army, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, which...

Susan Storcel: So, it was the Red Ball Highway was the route for supplies...

Storcel: From the beach.

Susan Storcel: Supplies. To get, to follow the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army.

Storcel: 3<sup>rd</sup> Army.

Susan Storcel: Okay. And your job was?

Storcel: Was to keep it going!

Cohen: You know, I thought...

Storcel: Protect--I'm sorry, go ahead.

Cohen: [softly] No, I'm sorry go on please.

Storcel: No.

Cohen: No, I'm sorry. Yeah.

Storcel: Oh yeah, your question is--well, yeah. We guarded the... the gasoline lines, you know, they had to... these trucks, just--it was like a river flowing with the gasoline following Patton. And we were guarding the pipeline.

Susan Storcel: And the pipeline--it's not actually a pipeline, it's the trucks, you were guarding the--?

Storcel: Well, the trucks, whatever's feeding... actually we were [guarding] the pipeline. And when the Frenchmen would drill a hole in the pipeline and then drain the oil--the gas--to run their vehicles.

Cohen: Okay, so from the truck that was carrying the gas, people would pilfer it?

Storcel: Oh, I'm sorry. I did not mention the pipeline. While they were building the pipeline... and... so we were guarding, they would damage it before the gas got in. But the... the... those trucks, they carried not only gas, they carried everything. They were the supply line for... for...

Susan Storcel: For Patton?

Storcel: Patton.

Susan Storcel: So, you guarded and made sure they got where they were going?

Storcel: Yeah, well. They would break down, these fellas and sleep, and they just were behind that wheel day and night, and sometimes they didn't even remember their name! I

mean they, the... They worked hard and they'd fall asleep, get off the road. Well, we'd have to figure out how to get them back on the road, and get the convoy going again and... Our job was to keep that convoy going.

Cohen: How did you direct them? Like would you make signs? Like let's say, here's a convoy, they don't know where to go next. How do you show them where to go?

Storcel: You would ask that question, huh? [Laughs] Difficult. Some of those fellas could just about speak English... but they were supposed to follow each other, all right? So one guy'd go a block away and the other guy couldn't see him, well he'd turn, he didn't know where the hell he was turning--so now he's lost. Now we got to figure out, "Hey, put this guy in the line." To... find a place in the convoy... to get to the station that he's supposed to go to with the gas or whatever supplies he had. That was difficult, but again, you can't blame them. Those fellas worked day and night, and... driving those trucks. So.

Cohen: Did you have radio communication with any of the drivers?

Storcel: No, no. No... Every once in a while, we'd find some from the beach. And one particular day, we had to... when they were preparing for Saint-Lô, I mean from from Saint-Lô, we got to know the pilots. We'd let them sneak in and have a couple of snorts, you know. So. "Hey, it's... Stormy, no no no, Happy." And it's one of the guys that we arrest, or so-called arrest, and... on the beach, you know... while they were being transferred closer to Paris as... as the front went on. So, and. They'd see us, you know, on a motorcycle— or [at] the station at a... repair job or whatever, you know... It was about that.

Cohen: So there, too—

Storcel: We had--

Cohen: You had to be very versatile. Like you know, sometimes on the scout car, sometimes stationed at one place. [softly] You know.

Storcel: Oh, well we had to know what to do, we had... [a] truck driver that didn't who his... but this time what his first name was, why, we had to put him somewhere. [Storcel and Susan Storcel laugh] Put him in a line and just follow that guy in front of you.

Cohen: [laughs] So my--it's my understanding that the Red Ball Highway went on for about two months? So, what were some--

Storcel: Hmm.

Cohen: [softly] No? From, I thought from....

Storcel: Eh, could be.

Cohen: Could be?

Storcel: Two or three months.

Cohen: Three months, okay. Maybe... Yeah, you're right, I'm sorry, from August to November.

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. So... were you also involved in policing towns or other duties? Like did you have in addition to, you know, directing traffic and repairing broken trucks...

Storcel: No. No.

Cohen: Did you have any other responsibilities? Like.

Storcel: Well, we would take over the town when the... Infantry went through a town, they would capture a town, well, we would take over the town 'til they get a permanent... permanent part of the U.S. Army to take over permanently... But maybe, we'd stay there maybe couple weeks, two or three weeks, maybe. And.

Susan Storcel: And then somebody else would move up and actually take over administration?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, then we would, yeah, it's just a continuous... yeah.

Cohen: Right now, let's go back to Liège.

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Belgium. So, you had told the story about your friend who found the right medicine for you.

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. But what was your role in Liège? What was your duty? In Liège at that, that point in time.

Storcel: Liège had--at that time I was... I already had the bike. I was on a motorcycle. Sweep the floors, take a bike ride for... [a] few hours, meaning delivering a message or something like that... Well that's about it.

Cohen: Were the messages in code?

Storcel: No. I don't know, I should say. I don't think so, I don't think our lieutenant knew how to code.

Cohen: [laughs] Okay. So it was, was it just for practical information from one lieutenant to another? Like what the nature of the messages?

Storcel: Oh I don't... well sometimes he'd have the telephone, the phones... You know, in those days those are not like we have today. So the phone would go out and...

Susan Storcel: So just like routine messages about where somebody's supposed to go tomorrow—

Storcel: Yeah. Oh yeah, yeah! Normal telephone, more or less.

Cohen: [whispers] Okay.

Storcel: No, you know there's no wires in those days. So...

Susan Storcel: They couldn't just pick up one of these?

Cohen: [softly] A cellphone. [Laughs] So, you also mention Liège, that you kept hearing the V-1 [flying bomb] rocket bombs as well as the V-2 missile--the first long-range guided ballistic missile. Do you want to talk about that?

Storcel: All right. The V-1... that was that secret... Oh, what do you call it? A secret... bomb that the Germans had to drop on London, and... Evidently from wherever the bombs were--I don't remember anymore--would go over Germany, Belgium, and into London. Okay, so, and, at that time they were concerned about bombing London. And all of a sudden, they stopped bombing London and they started bombing Bastogne... in...

Cohen: Belgium.

Storcel: In Belgium and they discovered the V-2, which is, same as the V-1 but more... more destructive and whatever. But, so as long as you hear this [makes noise] Oh it was horrible, horrible sound, as long as you heard it: "Hey, thank God, goodbye. It's going to London." When that engine stops [laughs] it's coming to greet us. So, that's—I don't know if I made a remark about that.

Cohen: So you would duck for cover, or, you know?

Storcel: Pardon?

Cohen: [louder] Would you duck for cover, or were they--?

Storcel: Not I, I... We... We at times, when a building got hit--like an apartment building—well, everybody went down in the basement, and very few come out alive. So I—and Bill Uliks, and the Chicago boys, we were in-- Liège and we had the fourth floor. It was a German headquarters at one time. So we had the fourth floor and we had a separate room. We pulled our strings, we got a second room. So I said—and then if the bomb hits, well everything goes down. Well, by the time they get down, you—you do a lot of suffering and then you die anyway. So I said, “Hey, when that thing comes over and it stops, don’t worry about me. I want it to hit me right in the middle of my head.”

Cohen: [laughs] It’s [If I’m] gonna go and happen quickly.

Storcel: Does that answer that question, or would--?

Cohen: It does. It does. So after Liège, I believe you wrote that you went to Namur and then to Huy. Is that correct?

Storcel: After Liège, the first time we were in Liège twice. After Liege the first time, there was on the run, what we call, that’s what... What would you call it? When we had the Germans on the run?

Cohen: Like you’re pursuing the Germans?

Storcel: Pardon?

Susan Storcel: So, the Army was advancing and pushing the Germans.

Storcel: Yeah.

Susan Storcel: The Germans were running back.

Cohen: [softly] Pushing them back.

Storcel: Yeah. That was the first time. That was in--I don’t know, I don’t remember what month. And then the second time we went, it was already under American control... and what? What was your question?

Cohen: Oh, I was wondering, when you left Liège to go to Namur and to Huy, but it sounds like you had, you returned to Liège a second time.

Storcel: Yes, but. Well, see, but that’s only--there were only about twenty... I don’t think we had twenty-five maybe members in... in the... It was not the whole Company, C, we were just a portion of it. Maybe twenty-five, that’s approximately the most we ever had from C Company 783<sup>rd</sup> to... this group that we were talking about now.



Susan Storcel: Dad, I think what Leah is getting to is when you went to Namur and Huy and you were guarding the Meuse River.

Storcel: Oh, that was at the end--at the end. But that was in, that was right now.

Cohen: Yeah, talk about--

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, that was right now.

Susan Storcel: Yeah, talk about that.

Storcel: Talk about that. All right. Well, about now is when the 106<sup>th</sup> and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, oh, I mean the 82<sup>nd</sup>... The, on the German border, they were more or less stagnant. Okay? They were doing nothing. In fact, my sister noticed this and had a story about this in the *[Chicago] Tribune*, they never wrote it though. Okay. Uh...

Susan Storcel: So, what was your job at that time, then? Were you guarding?

Storcel: Where the hell was I?

Cohen: Were you guarding the bridge, at over the Meuse River when you were at Huy?

Susan Storcel: Okay. All right, when you were in Huy you guarded the Meuse River?

Storcel: When I was in Greece.

Susan Storcel: Huy!

Storcel: Huy, yeah, yeah.

Susan Storcel: Okay.

Storcel: Oh, H-u-I [i.e. y]

Susan Storcel: Yes.

Storcel: Yeah, what about it?

Susan Storcel: Talk about what you did there as guarding.

Storcel: All right. Oh, okay. Well, at this time by now, it was--what happened is during the Battle of the Bulge, which was January--I mean December, late December. And the main... main object[ive] at that time was to stop the material reaching the Germans. Okay? And there was a big... a big supply dump in Huy.

Cohen: [whispers] Okay.

Storcel: Okay? And here's, here's Namur--I mean, here's...

Cohen: [softly] Germans?

Storcel: Liège. And here's Huy, and here's the river and right behind that river is the--this supply dump.

Cohen: It's very close to the river, it's [an] American supply dump.

Storcel: American supply dump. And the Germans wanted that either closed or they would use it on their own. All right. So now here we are. [Looking at a map].

Cohen: So, you're on this side right? Of the river?

Storcel: We were on the--yes, on this side of the river. We were guarding this bridge, which was protecting the supply dump. By now, we're concentrating on the river, I mean, on that bridge. The Germans had decided at the Battle of the Bulge that they're gonna knock out all of our supply lines and Hitler was gonna get his, like he said, in December--I mean, in... June, June 8<sup>th</sup>, we're gonna have you back in the Channel without any boats. Well, that's--that was his mindset at that time--the Battle of the Bulge. Well, if he had knocked out all of those supply dumps, he would have... succeeded in his prediction. But... so, what happened was at that time there were... [Susan Storcel coughing in background] German... people that came to America and then after the war started, they went back to Germany, okay? And at this time, there were some youngsters that...

Cohen: Were they sent by the German Army to infiltrate the American area?

Storcel: The what?

Cohen: To infiltrate?

Susan Storcel: Spies?

Cohen: Like to spy on the...?

Storcel: Well, how'd they do anything--they infiltrate, to... cause commotion, any kind of commotion to stop... to prevent the Germans from... completing their....

Susan Storcel: So, the Germans that were born in Germany that came to America and went back to Germany...

Storcel: Oh, yeah, they went back to Germany. And that's what a lot of the Americans did... same thing. They were born in one place and then later decided: "Well, hey wait a minute. I'm not going to be German. I'm gonna be American." Well, same thing with the

Germans. These people became dedicated Germans and they started this... What do they call that army, it's mostly youngsters? And... I'm losing my thought here.

Susan Storcel: So, it was, was it almost like they were acting... almost like a resistance to try to get into the Americans and try to foul things up?

Storcel: They were already, they were already in the German...

Cohen: Army?

Susan Storcel: Army?

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: And they wanted to get to the American side?

Storcel: No, they, they—well, they wanted to capture the American side. They were no longer Americans. They...

Cohen: Did they wanted to capture the Americans?

Storcel: Oh, certainly. What happened is--long story there about supplies again. The 101<sup>st</sup> Division was from Africa, they were put on the German border and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne... not 82<sup>nd</sup>, the 101<sup>st</sup> and...

Cohen: [softly] The eighty-something, it's the 83<sup>rd</sup> I remember. Okay so the Airborne—

Susan Storcel: Eighty-something.

Cohen: Yeah, the eighty-something, yeah.

Storcel: 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. They were put on the border for like a rest period, more or less. And that's when the Germans started the Battle of the Bulge.

Cohen: And that's the part that your sister had identified on a map when she read the article in the *Chicago Tribune* and she realized [it] was somehow a weak point in dangerous point.

Storcel: Exactly. She predict—

Cohen: [softly] That's really cool.

Storcel: I said that's terrible, if the Germans could hit that point, and by golly, she told me, you're ready to hit the point. But we're laughing but that's exactly where the Battle of the Bulge started... and from that point around Liège--not Liège, it was Germany, Germany... Oh, god...

Susan Storcel: Well, whatever.

Storcel: What's, Germany from... at the cathedral?

Cohen: Oh, oh at the...

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Cologne? Cologne?

Storcel: Cologne. So around Cologne is where the Germans went, and they followed that route northwest, and that was the Battle of the Bulge. So... And she was watching that and she predicted that was very, it's a very bad situation. And sure enough, that's exactly where they hit.

Cohen: How did she realize that it was such a—

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] But she was--

Cohen: -vulnerable spot?

Storcel: She's watching the *Tribune*, the newspaper, so she was following it up in the *Tribune*.

Cohen: S he's... the movement.

Storcel: Yeah, she--well, she was, yeah, she was keeping track of what was going on and she predicted it's a very vulnerable... spot and we should do something about it. Well, we didn't do anything about it 'til it was too late. And that's exactly where they hit. I mean the Germans they came around, knocked out the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup>... and they had the, the 101<sup>st</sup>—they were musicians. They were—they had no battle experience, so when the Germans came at 'em, they dropped whatever they had and they ran.

Cohen: So, they ran back to the towns? They went...

Storcel: Well, they went back to their outfit.

Cohen: [softly] Their outfit, yeah, yeah.

Susan Storcel: Dad, is that because by this point in the war, we were kind of... we needed bombs, we needed--?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah. Yeah, at this time, there were more or less... What would you call it? Like a rest period, ready for the big bang--at that point. But the big bang...

Susan Storcel: But I mean when you say they were like mostly musicians and everything, the original 101<sup>st</sup> was not. But it, as the reinforcements came in, is that what you mean?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time?] What do you mean by original? When these guys came into the Army, they were—they didn't have guns, they had a clarinet or something.

Susan Storcel: But I thought the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne...?

Storcel: Right, but they had decent replacements.

Susan Storcel: The replacements, that's what I was saying. So as the war progressed—

Storcel: Yeah, they were replacements.

Susan Storcel: --they had to bring people in.

Storcel: The replacements.

Cohen: So, you were saying that you and some of the other MPs were--at some point, called up to Malmedy, Belgium, close to the German border to be part of the front? That you were--at some point, you were called up to Malmedy, in Belgium that was close to the German border but at the last minute it was stopped?

Storcel: Well, yeah. We were more or less, what would you call it? Used as guinea pigs... How would you say? Well, and it was mostly our section, our company was Company C, they were stationed in Dinant, which was right on the German border, and we were—and we went just further back. But more action in our area than where they were... So... what would you call us? Reserves or more or less? I don't know.

Cohen: Oh, oh, I see. Like you were like closer to the front. So, you're--within your company, you were closer to the front? In Dinant?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Well, it depended on where the front was that day. And where the—[louder] No, they were... I would say their headquarters were closer to the front than we were. We were sort of back a bit.

Cohen: Back a bit, but you had a lot action?

Storcel: Dinant is here, here's the German border, and we were about here. Something, something so was...

Susan Storcel: Dad, was there a time—so now we're in Bulge, and a lot of things are moving--was there a time that your unit or some of your guys were actually gonna be called up to the front lines to actually engage in battle?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] We were in the front lines. It was--everything was in the front lines, it was just one big mess. So every time I delivered a message, I went through the front lines.

Susan Storcel: You didn't know.

Storcel: But I didn't know where the front lines were.

Cohen: [whispers] Okay.

Susan Storcel: All right.

Storcel: Uh... I wish, alright, I wish I could get a map, but I think, if I recall...

Susan Storcel: I meant to bring--

Cohen: I have a map here somewhere.

Susan Storcel: I meant to bring one of my—I got a lot of maps of the battle, but I started to pack up my house in anticipation for renovation and I went downstairs, and I can't find these books. [laughs]

Cohen: I did—this, it's just one map, it's really more of the Red Ball Express but it might serve our purposes. [static noises]

Storcel: She had a TV. I was in all these towns at one time or other.

Susan Storcel: So, was, this is Belgium, so the...

Storcel: Oh, wait a minute, uh... I'm goofing around here. I was there.

Cohen: [whispers] I'm so mad at myself for not bringing that—

Storcel: Oh, this is, see, this is the area I'm talking about here.

Cohen: Okay, like closer to... I see, yeah. I see yeah, yeah, I see—

Susan Storcel: Here we go.

Cohen: -- Liège over here. [softly] No, wait a second, no, no.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] I don't remember—I don't remember this.

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh! Just what you want. I got just what you want. Here. Dad.

Storcel: Hm?

Susan Storcel: It's the--

Cohen: Oh, okay.

Susan Storcel: Or this one's in color.

Storcel: All right let's use [noise of paper being browsed] Oh yeah, okay... The 106<sup>th</sup>...

Susan Storcel: [softly] It's a better map. I get angry with these maps is that they all seem to... list different towns.

Cohen: Towns, yeah, yes yes yes yeah. [laughs] I think is Liège over here. And here's Huy. Here's Huy--

Storcel: No that's, that's the enemy [unintelligible]. This is the, this is the...

Susan Storcel: Malmedy.

Cohen: Malmedy. So, and here's Huy over here.

Susan Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: And I see the Meuse River.

Storcel: Now we're in, we're in here, yeah.

Susan Storcel: Here's Dinant. Here's the Meuse. And here's Huy. So this is Germany, this is Belgium. So here's Huy, here's Dinant, here's the Meuse. So you must've been guarding around somewhere around there...

Storcel: Well, okay what's...

Susan Storcel: And this is the Meuse all the way up here.

Storcel: Huy, Huy.

Cohen: Yeah, Huy.

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] So that's where you—okay.

Storcel: Yeah, that's—

Susan Storcel: Liège.

Cohen: It's there?

Susan Storcel: Yeah.

Storcel: So this is the...

Cohen: So, I think you had mentioned in the book, in your memoir, that you were here guarding the bridge and then the supply.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, yes.

Cohen: And then, and that you were called up around here, Malmedy over here, but at the last minute, they felt it was more important to have you guys in Huy because there was just so much action going on there. Was that...?

Susan Storcel: Or was it that there was so much action going on near Malmedy... that they decided to keep them back?

Cohen: Back, uh-huh, uh-huh.

Susan Storcel: That's what it was.

Cohen: I see, I see.

Susan Storcel: 'Cause that's where, you know, Malmedy was the massacre, so that's where there was so much action going there.

Cohen: So, they left a group to guard the bridge and the supply and search for German paratroopers.

Susan Storcel: I think. And I don't remember exactly, but I think that's the way it... Maybe go ahead and ask another [question]...

Cohen: Okay.

Susan Storcel: Otherwise he's going to get lost in the map.

Cohen: Map. Okay. So... You know, you had written, when you went back to France and Belgium in 1970 with your wife and your mother that you saw the hotel building that still had holes in it from when you ran for cover from shelling from a German plane. Do you want to talk about where you were when the shelling started and what you were doing?

Storcel: Yes. We...

Susan Storcel: Right. So tell that story.

Storcel: Hm?



Susan Storcel: Tell the story about when you were shot at. How did you-?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Well. See, by that time, the Germans were starting to take over this area here, and our job... well, one day they were dropping paratroopers so we were chasing paratroopers, next day there was a breakthrough, and every day it was something different. So this, well, one particular night, and here's the--where's the... where's the dump? Where's the...?

Cohen: Oh, well, I see this is--Huy must be around here.

Susan Storcel: They're not gonna show the dump.

Cohen: Yeah. But that area.

Storcel: Anyway, it was right here. Huy is where the bridge was.

Cohen: Yes.

Storcel: Okay. So... so what was I going to do here?

Susan Storcel: So, we want you to talk about when--the night that you were shot at.

Storcel: [loudly] Oh oh okay. Yeah yeah.

Susan Storcel: So, let's take--lemme take this away and just talk about the night that you were shot at.

Storcel: Well, gimme this, gimme that.

Susan Storcel: All right, but I think it's distracting you.

Storcel: No, it's not... Here's the, from Liège, okay that's the road from Liège and Namur. Uh... That particular night... well, at the particular time, I don't know how many days they would. The Germans were looking for--to stop our supplies.

Cohen: Yes.

Sotrcel: Uh... So, we--oh, all right then, this particular night, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Special Engineer Brigade was attached to the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment or whatever it was at that time. And... Oh, that was the area where--this is the time where we were supposed to replace those seventy-five MP's [military police] got killed.

Susan Storcel: Right. So do you want to talk about that first or the seventy-five?

Storcel: Well, this is a very strategic... area here... And... I'm trying to put it in context how it was and I'm having a problem.

Susan Storcel: Well, let me take this Dad, because—

Storcel: No, it--

Susan Storcel: No, let me take that only because first, would you talk about the night that you were guarding and--

Storcel: Right. That's part of it.

Susan Storcel: Right. We don't have to worry about the land so much. Tell us the story when you were guarding.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] All right. That area... these G.I.s from the 106<sup>th</sup> Division were coming into town, they had no food, they dropped their--lost their weapons. So they come into town and we try to feed him and we try to resupply them, and. So the police--and most of them reported to the police and then the police would help us reorganize these guys or reorient them. And this particular night, I had two guys, so somebody sent me to the police station to pick these two G.I.s up. I picked them up, we're walking, and in front of our headquarters...

Susan Storcel: Just tell the story.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Wait. Wait, wait, wait. At the bottom--here's the road from Liège. At the bottom is the main road. Well, I'm coming from this side... and which is where, the east, isn't it?

Susan Storcel: Yes.

Sotrcel: I'm coming from the east with these two G.I.s, and all of a sudden, it's like... the lights went out. And two guys in a Jeep coming from wherever, they're Liège, they put the headlights on in this Jeep--the headlights--so I [say], "What the hell [is] going on? I haven't seen headlights on a vehicle in so many years." I ran up to them and pull the bolt back, and... but the guy turned off, turned the lights off and all of a sudden, I hear this noise. [Imitating an airplane] Hey, I know what that is. So I ran for cover and that's where these G.I.s were just about to enter our, the gate of office and they said... What was that word they used? I don't know. Been a long time since... Oh, they said the sparks were hitting the, from the airplane.

Susan Storcel: What--you're getting a little lost, Dad. So you saw the jeep with the headlights, you run to them because they're not supposed to have headlights.

Storcel: Right.

Susan Storcel: You pull back the bolt in your gun, and then all of a sudden—and so why did you--when you went up to them, what were you thinking about why they had their headlights on?

Storcel: They weren't supposed to have their headlights on.

Susan Storcel: Okay.

Storcel: So that means they were doing something wrong.

Susan Storcel: Okay. And, so that's why you went up, and then you started hearing the whining of the plane.

Storcel: Then I started whining of the—well, I was right up there, and I was ready to pull the trigger. And I don't remember what the guy said. The so-call G.I., I don't think they were G.I.s, I think they were German. I don't think they were G.I.s. So... and then I heard this [imitating an airplane], well, I know what that meant: Run for cover. So I turn and I start running for cover. And these two G.I.s, they were off to the road maybe hundred feet, and when it was all over, the guy says... Oh, the last time I... What the hell did he say that?

Susan Storcel: Something that it looked like they were farting--

Storcel: Farting sparks! [Cohen laughs] Because the...

Storcel: The shells were hitting the... in Europe, the streets are made out of stone.

Cohen: Uh-hmm.

Storcel: Anyway, these bullets would be hitting the stone and it would spark.

Cohen: Spark up! [laughs] Right. And you're lying on the ground.

Storcel: So, he said... I was farting sparks. So that was a big deal.

Susan Storcel: But you survived. You didn't get hit.

Storcel: No. I didn't get hit. But in the meantime, these two guys took off. They ran away. And I asked the two guys that were with me: "You know why the hell you didn't stop them?" Yeah.

Susan Storcel: So, the Jeep got away?

Storcel: The Jeep got away.

Cohen: The lights got away.

Storcel: The next morning, they found the Jeep in the town. So.

Susan Storcel: So that's why you think it was probably spies and they were--?

Storcel: Oh, yeah. They were get--they were guiding this plane to the bridge.

Cohen: I see.

Susan Storcel: Oh! They used the headlines—headlights and...

Storcel: Oh, outside--forgot one thing. When... we went out looking for this lieutenant from the 26<sup>th</sup>, it's that we were patrolling and if we--they were given a signal, and when we see a reply, which is a bright light... of a flashlight or whatever--let go. And that would be... these were guy[s] giving signals to the others and to...

Susan Storcel: That the Germans were giving signals?

Storcel: Right.

Susan Storcel: Right, okay so--

Storcel: And... to bomb the bridge.

Susan Storcel: Because they were, the Germans were within that area.

Storcel: Yeah.

Susan Storcel: They were in that area. Everything, so that area had been infiltrated.

Storcel: To bomb the bridge.

Susan Storcel: Okay.

Cohen: Yeah.

Susan Storcel: [softly] So... and so then we--

Storcel: We didn't know--still didn't know what was going on. But after a while there's nothing, just go from one place to another. So then we end up back in our headquarters and... went for a cup of coffee. And we got talking with this guy, just shootin' the bull with him, then the officer from the 29<sup>th</sup> came in, shot the bull with us and he said, "You guys know who you're talking to?" "Maybe it was... Patton." Who the hell knows? Well, it was one of these guys that was raised born in Germany... went to--his parents went to the United States, was raised in the United States, and decided he wanted to be German. So he went back to Germany and joined the German Army, and that's what

this whole battle was all about. All of these people that changed their deal and became Germans. Does that answer your question? I don't think it did.

Cohen: Yeah. Yeah. So, I think you wrote in the book that on the night of January 1, 1945, you look up and you see the sky is full of American planes.

Storcel: What?

Cohen: You look up and you see American B-19s, B-25s in the sky. Like that it's full of planes.

Storcel: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, at that time, the weather cleared up a bit and the Americans started to fly again... and this particular night, the planes were being blown out of the sky, and this one particular plane, you could see blew up in the sky and then came down and crashed. So we went to see what help we could give 'em, but they were... the plane exploded when it hit the ground, also. It was a hole maybe fifteen, twenty feet in diameter and... maybe ten feet deep. And... Well, the bombs they had on to bomb the enemy exploded and bombed themselves instead. So, I don't know, we would be puttin' the pieces together, and then before the grave registration came, they had bags. And they'd take the dog tag off, put one dog tag on the bag, and leave the other one with the body. So this one guy came and he's putting a tag on my bag. I say, "Hey, I already got it, bud. Only put an arm in there, in that bag." And I say, "Hey I already got one of the, two arms in there and everything." He said, "The guy won't know the difference." [laughs] And I said, "Hey, you know." That's that Russo I lost that... So anyway. That's what we were... helping with. Let me think. We were jack of all trades, I guess you'd call us.

Cohen: Yeah. Was that one of your hardest jobs, like, to pack the remains of the fallen airmen? Like was that one of the most difficult jobs that you had in the war? Was that the--?

Susan Storcel: When you did that, Dad, when you were helping put these bodies and these pieces in--

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] During the Battle of the Bulge!

Susan Storcel: Right. So Leah is asking, was that one of the most difficult jobs you had?

Storcel: Oh, no. Well, we picked up bodies at Omaha Beach.

Cohen: That was, that was--

Storcel: When they, the tide would bring them in. Uh.

Cohen: So, it's toward the end of the war, did you realize that the liberation would be soon? At some point you said that you wanted to volunteer with General Patton because you

figured at some point you'd be rolling through Czechoslovakia and you still had family there. What family members did, were still there?

Storcel: The old family, well it was my mother's--my mother's mother was still alive... her sister and two brothers alive. Well practically the whole family was...

Cohen: [softly] Was there.

Susan Storcel: So, his cousins, all of the aunts and uncles.

Cohen: Were all in Czechoslovakia, so.

Storcel: And I don't remember them and I'm sure they didn't remember me. At six of the—at the age of six when we left there.

Cohen: Yeah, but, yeah.

Storcel: So.

Cohen: So yeah. So you mentioned that you wanted to go, but your friend Bill, said if you've made it this far, you gotta, yeah, yeah.

Storcel: Bill left... Bill left and I didn't leave, so I questioned our--our captain--the company commander, you know, "What's going on? I mean all my friends are leaving and I had volunteered. And I'm still here!" So... He sort of looked at me and took me aside and said, "Listen, you had--you were lucky so far, why stretch your luck? And Bill Uliks wanted to go, so Bill Uliks left and you're here."

Cohen: Wow.

Susan Storcel: So, it was Bill that told the company commander that you were the sole support—

Storcel: Yeah. Yeah,

Susan Storcel: --for Mom and I--for Mom. For Grandma and Joe and Mark.

Storcel: Yeah. So, oh, he was... he was a character, a good guy.

Cohen: And where were you when you heard about the victory in Europe, and--?

Storcel: Where what?

Cohen: Where were you when you heard about the American victory? The V-E? The...

Storcel: V-E?

Cohen: Yeah.

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah. V-E Day.

Storcel: Oh! V-E.

Susan Storcel: Where were you when you heard—

Storcel: Oh boy.

Susan Storcel: --reported that the war had, that the European Theater... had been won? You, were you back home—were you back stateside?

Storcel: No, we were in Europe. When the war ended in Europe.

Susan Storcel: Right. Well, if you don't remember...

Cohen: That's okay. That's okay. The other question I have, it's more like a personal opinion one, it's, and then if you have an opinion, that's fine too.

Storcel: Uh, you give a point, just one second, let me... where the hell were we?

Susan Storcel: [in the background] I'm gonna look back and see if I can find it too. [searches in book of Storcel's memoire]

Storcel: When the war ended, now. I don't wanna...

Susan Storcel: Château-Thierry?

Storcel: Hm?

Susan Storcel: Château-Thierry maybe?

Storcel: Where?

Susan Storcel: [louder] Were you in Château-Thierry maybe?

Storcel: No.

Susan Storcel: [papers rustling, softly] It's not really in here. [louder] We can come back to it.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, we can come back. Yeah.

Storcel: I just don't remember where the hell... where the hell we were.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] That's okay, you--It'll probably come back to you later on.

Susan Storcel: About two o'clock in the morning.

Cohen: [laughs] Yeah, that's how these things always work.

Storcel: No, that was Bill Uliks... Erase that.

Cohen: So, one thing I noticed is that I think you experienced a lot of unfairness from the military bureaucracy. Like for example, you were drafted when you were working for the war effort and supporting your mother. You had not accumulated enough points, even though you had a long service right at the front. You had hoped to be sent to the Pacific at the end of the war, and unfortunately, that was not the case. So how did you reconcile yourself with the, with the kind of difficult bureaucracy?

Storcel: ...Do you speak English?

Cohen: Uh, sorry! [Susan Storcel and Cohen laugh] Yeah, you're sorry, it is too...sorry.

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] So, so, so how sometime the Army was unfair, you felt that it was unfair, that you know some people got drafted, some people didn't. Some people got choice assignments--

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Well, it was not the Army, it was, yeah.

Susan Storcel: Right, some people got choice assignments, some people didn't.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, it was not the Army.

Susan Storcel: And just maybe some of the officers treated some people differently than others. You'd thought you were, had enough points to go to the Pacific but you didn't.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh no I was...well, I was very close.

Susan Storcel: How did you deal with the fact that--you know it was a bureaucracy?

Storcel: How did I deal with it? Accepted it, that's all. What am I going to do about it?

Cohen: That's true. [laughs]

Storcel: Uh... That was the point system, and... I got so many points for whatever we did--whatever I did--and that was about it. I don't know of anything that, uh...

Cohen: When were you--?

Storcel: Higher.



Cohen: Oh, when were you sent back from Europe to the United States?

Storcel: When?

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: Uh... September... September 5<sup>th</sup>. No, wait a minute... early September 1945... September... first, second. Something like that. Beginning of September!

Cohen: Beginning of [September]. Did you have to report to a base?

Storcel: No, no we were stationed in France. There was the embarkation point for the Pacific from the European Theater, all right? And... also, I guess from Africa to the United States, the embarkation point. So we were stationed in... where was it?

Susan Storcel: Château-Thierry.

Storcel: Château, Chateau-Thierry to go to the Pacific, which was the embarkation point for the Pacific at that time. But I figured, "Well hell, the war is over. To have a vacation. Take it all of that in. And, what's going to happen to me, you know? I'm sure my mother would understand." So I asked, you know, "Would you mind if I went to the Pacific as a spectator?" "Please do." And that's what I did, but I got shafted... Our... our camp, our company commander--no, battalion commander, supposedly this is the story, supposedly he stole two cars--no, one car I guess, in Germany, a Terraplane, No, the Hudson. There was a Hudson and a Terraplane if you remember. No you're, you're too young. But they were—a Hudson automobile made at that time. And then they stopped and then they started again. And, so somehow, he got his hands on the--on the Hudson, and made a deal to give it to the camp commander--which is hard to believe--if they would send us home instead of the Pacific. I thought I'd kill that sucker. Because I wanted to go to [the] Pacific. What a vacation that would've been, oh! [Cohen laughs] So when I got home, I got—I ended up working at a crane company because they were giving a nice bonus. And then I met this one guy from my outfit, I mean, he was in my—he was one of the newcomers, replacements, and he was outta, he went to the Pacific, came back, spent a little time in some... some time somewhere in...

Cohen: One of the Pacific islands? Like Okinawa, or--?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] No. In [the] southern part of the States. Louisiana, not Louisiana. But anyway, in less than a year, he's back home discharged... his job was opening duffle bags [Cohen laughs] and stealing our souvenirs illegally. [Cohen laughs] He had--a lot of guys had big money, gamblers, you know? Yeah because we were allowed only so much to take. So a lot of guys had a lot of money hidden.

Susan Storcel: How did you—at, from Château-Thierry then when you found out you weren't going to the Pacific? Then you, then how did you get home?

Storcel: On a boat.

Susan Storcel: Okay. So from Château-Thierry you went to--?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] To Boston.

Cohen: To Boston?

Susan Storcel: Okay.

Cohen: And Boston—

Storcel: No, yeah, Château-Thierry to Boston.

Cohen: And Boston--?

Storcel: Hm?

Cohen: From Boston did you go straight to Chicago?

Storcel: They got, we got off the ship, we got off the gangplank, [they] put us in a cabin and sent us home. And told us about come back in thirty days, it's unbelievable. And that's when the company clerk came to me and he asked me about the... the light. On the jeep.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Turkish delight?

Storcel: Huh?

Cohen: [loudly] Turkish delight?

Storcel: On that jeep. On that... the bombing of the...

Susan Storcel: Oh, the light?

Cohen: Oh, the light. Oh yes. Yeah, yes, yes.

Storcel: In other words, the story was about me and that jeep was... What's the word? Hidden? It was not mentioned.

Susan Storcel: It was not reported.

Storcel: It was not reported. And it is not on my record because of a certain situation.

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh! So that could be why you didn't have enough points to go to the Pacific.

Storcel: That's why I would not, didn't have enough points to go to the Pacific.

Cohen: So, why, I don't understand why it was held against you? I mean, you investigated, there was a bombing, look I don't...

Storcel: Uh... How shall I answer that? Sort of a personal situation of a certain officer, and...

Susan Storcel: Didn't want you to get the credit?

Storcel: That's right.

Susan Storcel: Okay.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Okay. Okay. You also... so you come back home and do you start working at the crane company right away?

Storcel: No. I heard they were giving a bonus. No first of all I got at the... a window, a steel window manufacturer in Cicero, and I worked there for a short time. Maybe a couple weeks, but the guy gave me a window, oh hell, it might have been twenty feet long, fifteen feet high, and he told me to move it from this point to that point. And I looked at him and I asked if he was serious. "What do you mean am I serious?" I said, "Well I'm serious, also." I said, "Because I quit." [Cohen laughs] If I, and I mean I'm pushing, you slide this thing along the floor. If that thing slipped and, slipped out of my hands, I said, "I'm dead."

Susan Storcel: Survived the war but lost to a window. [Cohen and Storcel laugh]

Storcel: So, I said, "Goodbye. Give me my check." So he... Oh, then I heard about a crane company giving these bonuses. So hey, I'll go to the company and enquire. And sure enough they took me on, thanked me for serving. And I got my bonus. And after I got my bonus, I said, "Goodbye!" And I went into the electrical... I said, when I was in Château-Thierry, I was--all of a sudden I got thinking about printing. I always liked printing. And all of a sudden, I found a book on electricity.

Susan Storcel: The G.I. Bill.

Storcel: So, "Gee, I changed a lightbulb one time." I thought, "I'm gonna try it." So I bought a book on electricity and I read, and I said, "I'm gonna be an electrician."

Cohen: [softly] Cool! So did you use the G.I. Bill?

Storcel: What?

Cohen: Did you use the G.I. Bill to study to be an electrician? Like the, like I---

Susan Storcel: The G.I. Bill? The G.I. Bill.

Storcel: No.

Susan Storcel: You didn't? Okay.

Storcel: Well, I shouldn't say, I got the toolbox, and what else? That's about it!

Cohen: So, it just covered some of the equipment and that was it.

Storcel: They didn't pay for schooling for me. The toolbox, with the tools in it [was] maybe a hundred dollars. That's the max that I got. I don't know of anything else, no.

Cohen: So you also wrote that when you came back in September, you would often go the family doctor, Doctor Smith, because you weren't, you didn't have any appetite, you weren't eating, you weren't sleeping well.

Storcel: What about it?

Cohen: Were you, were you--do you think you were still, you know, upset by the war after so many hard...

Storcel: I guess. I just... How should I say it? I don't know. Tired or I just... had no appetite to work. I, my mother couldn't get me out of the bed. So I went to see--she insisted I go to see the doctor. At that time I had... the... civilian doctor. So I went to him and he gave me a prescription. I mean.

Susan Storcel: [Cohen laughs] What was the prescription, Dad?

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, that was great. [Storcel and Cohen laugh]

Susan Storcel: What was the prescription?

Storcel: It says in there.

Susan Storcel: No, you go ahead.

Storcel: Uh, go out and enjoy myself! But he never told me when to stop. [Cohen laughs]

Susan Storcel: Did a little drinking, did you, Dad?

Storcel: A little bit. [Susan Storcel and Cohen laugh] Little bit.

Cohen: But.

Storcel: So... Then... Then what.

Cohen: It sounds like it got you back in the groove, though?

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Like, yeah, like you got you know, [connected with] the people. So when did you meet your wife?

Storcel: When did I meet her? Oh, God. That's a long story. When I was in grammar school-- eighth grade.

Susan Storcel: No you didn't! You're nine years apart.

Storcel: May I?

Susan Storcel: Okay. All right. Go ahead.

Storcel: I was in eighth grade and at that time, my dad was still alive... my... we had a tavern and her dad used to frequent our tavern and he went to Europe, well they were going back and forth and I guess twice to her family. And she was born there, the rest of 'em were born here. So... I was being punished one day we went to a parochial school... and I was being punished one day that, since I was going home down 27<sup>th</sup> Street in Chicago... and her... when we lived west of Central Park... why, I was given the... What would you say? A penance?

Susan Storcel: Reprimand?

Storcel: Reprimand.

Cohen: A penance from the church? Like from the—from the church?

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] And her brothers, oh her brothers apply--her brothers... Eddie and Jerry, even though they were much older than us. But they applied to, at the school to learn the English language.

Susan Storcel: So, he was, he was...

Storcel: So, I was being punished teaching them the English language. So they'll tell me, my language is...

Susan Storcel: So, his punishment for whatever he did wrong was that he would have to do extra time and teach English to...

Storcel: Her brothers.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Brother.

Susan Storcel: To immigrants who did--and that's how he met them. I completely forgot about that.

Storcel: Was that the answer to whatever question?

Cohen: So, when did you meet up after the war again? Like here you've returned, she's a young lady, you're a young man, when did you [unintelligible].

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Oh, boy, how did I meet Geraldine?

Susan Storcel: Yeah, see he did—

Storcel: So.

Susan Storcel: She's much younger than them. So this, you have to listen to the rest of the story to explain how.

Storcel: So... after the war, there were a lot of dancing clubs and organizations that people were getting involved with--and her brothers and sisters were quite active in that--and I saw this one chick one day at a dance hall; I asked her to dance, she wouldn't dance with me. [Cohen laughs] So... then I found out she's, she was bowling, and I used to go to her bowling alley and bother the hell out of her 'til she finally agreed to...

Cohen: Go on a date?

Storcel: To go out with me, and that was to Helen and Tony's...

Susan Storcel: The wedding, that's her. [Points to photo.]

Storcel: Huh?

Susan Storcel: Wedding.

Storcel: A Wedding. A wedding reception. And then we started going out... and...

Susan Storcel: And Helen and Tony--

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] One day I got drunk and asked her to marry me. [Cohen laughs]

Susan Storcel: And Helen and Tony remained their close, closest friends.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time] Oh my!

Susan: No, Helen still is Dad's closest friend, Tony died about a year before my mom died, but they... passed as friends.

Cohen: [softly] Wow. Wow. So that is...

Storcel: Uh... yeah and she... she said, "All right." I shoulda said, "Oh, no." But she said, "All right."

Cohen: [Cohen laughs] It worked out okay. [Susan Storcel and Cohen laugh] Okay. Okay, I'm not quite sure where—okay, so here was a little thing I was, I'm a little bit curious about, and, okay. One thing I noticed is that you're very dedicated and you served whatever mission had to be taken care of. You know, whatever was asked of you, you took care of properly. But on the other hand, I think, am I right in understanding that you're a little bit critical of the U.S. military, such as the decision for the Battle of, against St-Lô or the fact that Americans were not astute enough to defend the weak point you know at, at the Battle [of the Bulge]

Storcel: Very, very critical because of the blunders and all the young lives that were lost because of these stupid blunders like the Battle of the Bulge. I mean, there was the...

Susan Storcel: Normandy?

Storcel: The Normandy invasion, dropping our troops in the middle of German maneuvers. Having maneuvers. And they dropped our troops in the middle of those maneuvers. Or the... paratroopers dropped into this swamp and drowned, drowned to death because somebody made a horrible blunder, and I thought it... I don't know, it... Life, it seemed to me, as [if] they didn't bear any problem for anybody else, they... Anyway, that started the feeling I had.

Cohen: [softly] Yeah. Yeah?

Storcel: It's not that I was not a... American what was it called?

Cohen: Like, like patriot?

Storcel: Yeah, but... It's the way some of us were treated: very unfairly.

Cohen: Yeah. Would you want... did you want your children to enlist in the army like when they were young, you know, young adults or teenagers did you hope they would... enlist?

Storcel: Well... Here's the, here's the--my father was a soldier in World War I and as I—did I said he had no breast, this whole part was shot off. [Pointing at his chest.] And [on] his death bed, he made my brother and I promise him that we would never go to war. But when I

was drafted, what was I gonna do? So... I... I lied to him. I went to war. So that bothered me quite... And he died at the age of forty-nine. But that bothered me that I had... What's the word? Did not tell him the truth, or how, how would you put that?

Cohen: Well, you made a promise, but it wasn't your fault when you were drafted later.

Storcel: Oh, I know, well but he hated war so much. 'Cause so many of it, so many of our customers let's put it, 'cause the Hines Hospital Hospital [[i.e. Edward Hines Jr. VA [Veterans Administration] Hospital]] which is right here, was just... what, two, three miles?

Susan Storcel: [softly] Maybe it was a little bit more, maybe five miles.

Storcel: To where we had our tavern. And the guys [would] get couple of schnapps'es, you know and they start talking about the war. Well he wouldn't allow that—you don't talk war. So, he had lot of problems keeping customers from talking about wars, and. And then he asked my brother that, to make a promise that we would not go to war. And we went to war.

Susan Storcel: So, what would you think if your grandchildren decided to enlist?

Storcel: Uh... It would be very--I was thinking about that the other day. How would I feel if one of 'em said, "Hey, ... you know, we're going into the Army" What would I tell them? That... I tell th' to lie like my father did? I mean that we did to my father. But yet, hey, I'm American...

Cohen: Yeah, no, no—

Susan Storcel: Struggle.

Cohen: --no easy answer.

Susan Storcel: No.

Storcel: Well... And like I said he—you could not open up your mouth in our taverns, mention war, out you go he didn't care if, if it was the Almighty.

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: He'd left the front door.

Susan Storcel: [softly] Sounds like PTSD maybe after World War I.

Cohen: [softly] One, yeah.



Storcel: Huh?

Susan Storcel: He--you probably don't know what he experienced because he didn't talk about it. But obviously he was extremely painful, beyond being wounded.

Storcel: [speaking at the same time] Well the, when I was with him, and gave us some pictures, which were lost--I don't know what happened to them, they were--they had two, like the Indians did! Two sticks. They didn't, they pulled him along.

Cohen: [softly] Hm. Yeah, after he was shot.

Susan Storcel: [softly] Yeah.

Cohen: [speaking at the same time, softly] Wow.

Storcel: So, that's why he hated war.

Cohen: Now, I noticed from your book that you went back a few times to France and Belgium and Germany in 1970 with your wife and mother, and then 1972, I understand you met up with Susan and Susan's [sister]—

Susan Storcel: Janet, Janet.

Cohen: Janet. So, why was it important for you to show your family where you had been in the war?

Storcel: Well, we belonged to some organizations like the one that you were with the, oh you were with the 5<sup>th</sup>, well she loved the Patton. The other time was the C.S.A. convention.

Susan Storcel: I joined Battle of Normandy Foundation, which later was dissolved and that started up just before the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But I was always very fascinated by his stories of the war and when Bill Uliks and his wife would come over and sometimes when Jimmy would come over and—Jimmy and Edna— and they would sometimes just talk about things, funny things that happened in the war and I was always very, very fascinated by it. So he--it was important for him to bring me there. He wanted me to see it.

Cohen: But that you were so interested. Yeah, yeah, yeah. [clears throat] Did you belong to veterans' groups in Chicago?

Storcel: Uh-hmm.

Cohen: Afterwards and...

Storcel: Mostly VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars]. The American Legion I just joined... a few years back, three years. When did Scuffy die? About two years ago I joined the American Legion. And that was about it. [I] attended a local school... a veteran's thing...

Cohen: Oh, that's nice!

Susan Storcel: On Veterans Day the Riverside Brookfield High School asks him to come and speak to the students. And so they assign veterans to different classrooms and talk about their experiences.

Cohen: Wow, that's great.

Susan Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Did you talk right away about your experiences? Like, when you returned, would you talk about what it was like in the war with your mother or your brother or sister? Like were you--some people after the war, they didn't want to talk at all ever or for, not until a few decades later. So I'm wondering, when you came back, could you talk about the war with your family like your mother, or your brother, or your sister?

Storcel: Really, it was just my mother and sister... first--first month, month and a half, why, most of the time I was in bed. But, well then like the doctors told me, he's gonna give me a, I mean a...

Susan Storcel: Prescription to...

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Have fun. [laughs]

Susan Storcel: So, I think what Leah is trying to get to is: how long after you came back before you felt comfortable talking about what you experienced there? [softly] That's that's it...

Cohen: [softly] Oh, oh okay. It's okay.

Storcel: Uh... Really... you get used to it. To what... it's... How shall I say it? Like for me to pick up an arm or a leg, it didn't bother me.

Cohen: Right, like you adapt.

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. Yeah.

Storcel: Uh...

Susan Storcel: Just doing your job?

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: Huh?

Susan Storcel: Just doing your job.

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah. Is there something that you would like to talk about that we did not talk about? Is there a story you'd like to tell that, well, you haven't told during this interview?

Storcel: I dunno.

Susan Storcel: Did you, did, did we miss asking you something that you'd like to talk about? Or do you think that you've said it all?

Storcel: I think I did.

Susan Storcel: Okay.

Cohen: [To Susan] Okay. Is there something you would like to ask or say, before [we close]--?

Susan Storcel: I just, um, I will; remember when we went back for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary?

Storcel: Yeah.

Susan Storcel: Okay. The, there was a town in France, I can't—was that in Avranches. Maybe. Where they actually got all the vets that were there and they gave them a special little medal, a commemorative medal. And it was really a lovely ceremony, I think it was the mayor of the town that did that. But the experience that we had all throughout that trip, and we did Normandy and then we went further into France. We did Paris and then we went into Belgium. The, the response that... the welcome that the vets got was amazing. They would go into—they'd step off the bus and the French people would just surround them and the children would be asking for autographs, and they, they were... they just were treated with such honor and respect. And that was not the experience that we had in the seventies when we went. The French were not that welcoming of us. But this was entirely different, and it was so moving to him. I have a wonderful picture of him signing autographs and posing with the kids and it was a very--he was very sick at the [laughs] time with a heart condition--but it was very uplifting for him and for all the returning G.I.s that, that. that we saw there. And there was one, do you remember the little short

man? He sat at our table the first few nights but he wouldn't talk. And then he would, after dinner he would leave right away and he wouldn't talk. And then, two days into the trip that we were, that we went to the Normandy Beach. And I always go up at the cemetery I don't go down to the beach and I was overlooking the ridge--I can't remember if you were with me or not--and there was this little guy, he was there with his nephew. And he was kneeling on the beach almost in fetal position, just sobbing. I could see him retching from—I was up on this hill. And his nephew was just looking over him, and it was a rough day for him. And I—that evening, he didn't come to dinner and I asked his nephew what happened. And he said he was eighteen, he landed with the first wave and... or he landed about noon. He landed about noon and so he was faced with this disaster and he had never spoken about it again. And the following night--after he had had that night of crying--he came and remember, you guys used to sit together. And he--the little guy wouldn't shut up.

Cohen: [laughs] Like once you start.

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] He just--it was his first time back and he had to--he had to purge everything that was in there. And they all got along so well. It was wonderful. They were, they had different experiences, and it was so wonderful as an observer to watch these G.I.s fifty years later remembering their stories and sharing and... having a camaraderie, that. It's hard to imagine how you could build a camaraderie under those circumstances. And if you've never met before.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah [unintelligible] yeah.

Susan Storcel: [speaking at the same time] You can't--you have that common denominator and I was, I, I felt very grateful that France put on an amazing, amazing ceremony for these returning G.I.s, and he just had a wonderful experience.

Cohen: Wow, do you...yeah.

Susan Storcel: Do you remember that?

Cohen: Do you remember the—

Storcel: Yeah.

Cohen: --the, the 1994, yeah, it's amazing.

Storcel: Yeah, that Senator John.

Susan Storcel: Oh, Senator [Bob] Dole. Yeah, Senator Dole was there.

Storcel: I went to shake his left hand, no went to shake his right hand, and his right hand was...what. There was [unintelligible]. That's how to-- and that was right on the beach.

Susan Storcel: Yeah, we took pictures at the bunker that he guarded that, on, on ...

Cohen: The first, oh for the first few nights, right, wow.

Susan Storcel: Yeah, that's still there. It's a monument and...

Storcel: The what?

Susan Storcel: The bunker on the beach.

Cohen: That you guarded.

Storcel: That's what got me sick. [Susan Storcel and Cohen laugh]

Susan Storcel: So, yeah.

Storcel: You're talking about Company C?

Susan Storcel: Yes.

Storcel: Our company has their name on the... they came there... five months... not five months. [Mr. Storcel later clarified that this was three weeks and not five months.]

Susan Storcel: No, days after... he thinks the signage is wrong.

Storcel: C Company did not invade France.

Susan Storcel: They, they were not there.

Storcel: There were twenty of us. If there were twenty of us. They were not there, but they're taking the credit for it.

Susan Storcel: That's one of his pet peeves.

Cohen: Well, it's always a controversial thing. I didn't read it thoroughly yet but a colleague sent me an article about Robert Capa and questioning was he really here and there [laughs] and you know was it set up a bit? Like you know I guess that said it's hard--I guess there's always people who are there to take the glory, let's just say.

Susan Storcel: Right. Well, he has a friend who is since deceased, Jimmy Michaels, who was one of the original men who raised the flag at Iwo Jima. And of course he's not in the picture because it was a staged picture. And it's very troubling to him when he sees other

people taking credit or benefiting monetarily when the poor guys that really were doing that under fire are sort of lost in history.

Cohen: Well then, I'm glad you gave the interview and published [i.e. printed] the book because that way you put yourselves back in history.

Storcel: Do what?

Susan Storcel: She's glad that you did the interview because you put yourself back in history and kind of leave the story for people to know what really happened.

Cohen: Yeah, and published a book

Storcel: Yeah, I want to be truthful.

Cohen: Yes.

Storcel: There's so many people talking credit that have no business taking credit. And if you thought about Company C--they were in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge 'cause they land... they're right next to each other. But other than that... they were never--they weren't near the original invasion.

Susan Storcel: So, they were at the Battle of the Bulge, but they just got credit for something else.

Cohen: Yeah.

Storcel: Well, they got credit for the invasion.

Susan Storcel: Yeah, well, you know, records during war time...

Storcel: They should not have had accepted it... That's... And they never gave me credit for watching their coal pile.

Cohen: [Laughter] It's, you know, I don't know if this is any help, but thank you for your service and for giving the interview today--thank you.

Storcel: Certainly.

### **Supplemental Questions Prior to Interview**

Susan Storcel consulted with John Storcel and emailed the following response, on Feb. 18, 2019. This would further elucidate the interview.

**1. When did John leave the 783<sup>rd</sup> and get attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Engineering Brigade?** He never left the 783<sup>rd</sup>. Some members of the 783<sup>rd</sup> were attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Engineering Brigade about a month before the D-Day invasion, for the “dry runs” in preparation for the invasion. But they never left the 783<sup>rd</sup>.

**2. What unit was John assigned to when he worked on the Red Ball Highway, and what work did he do? What does he mean when he says they “prepared” the Highway?** He was still with the 783<sup>rd</sup>, attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> when he worked on the Red Ball Highway. His work on the highway was protecting the supply line that was using the Highway. Mostly he was charged with protecting the vehicles that were moving gasoline from Normandy to Paris. He and his colleagues also redirected lost supply convoys. You need to remember that many of the roads were not marked, and they were all foreign to the drivers and soldiers. So he was one of the MPs who helped make sure everyone went the right way on their move to Paris. So by “preparing” he was referring to making sure everyone knew which roads were a part of the Red Ball Highway and making sure people stayed on the right route. Many of these drivers drove for several days without any sleep. Everything had to keep moving. The supplies needed to get to the troops, so there was little time for rest. Under those circumstances the drivers could easily get disoriented and lost. The MPs were charged with making sure the drivers of the supplies, especially the gasoline, kept moving and arrived where they were supposed to go. This group that was attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> were primarily responsible for protecting the supplies that were moving forward and making sure they arrived at the intended destination. But after the infantry went through a town, they would also police the town and help maintain control.

**3. When John was in Liege, Belgium, he wrote that he delivered messages between Huy and Maastricht. Were those messages related to the Red Ball Highway and movement of supplies?** No. By the time they got to Belgium, few references were made to “Red Ball Highway”. These were general messages. That group of 783<sup>rd</sup> MPs attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, moved between Huy and Maastricht over several months. Conditions were not static. They were very fluid. After the Allies took Belgium, the Germans continued to push so the “front line” changed over several months as the Germans continued to advance, and the Allies continued to try to push them back.

4. **When John was delivering messages, was he operating solo?** He was on a motorcycle. Sometimes he went alone, sometimes they would go in groups of two. Normally they were not crossing enemy lines, but during the Battle of the Bulge, it was hard to tell from day to day where the line was.