

Anthony Battillo
Narrator

Michael Russert (?)
Interviewer

Interviewed on April 15, 2002
Hyde Park, New York

Anthony Battillo	AB
Michael Russet	MR
Unidentified second interviewer	IN2
Lillian Battillo	LB

MR: When you painted your paintings, were you using models from old photographs?

AB: No I do everything from memory.

MR: Is that right?

AB: I'll have references for the uniforms. I don't copy anything, I just use them as reference. Once in a while, my son posed for some of these guys. He's a very good model.

MR: He seems like he has a real interest in the Civil War.

AB: Oh yeah. All American history, but in particular the Civil War. I've done articles on the First World War, Second World War, and I did one on the Revolution.

Now, I have something in that large book there (points), it's a synopsis, and you can use that in your article if you want to. Lillian, will you bring me the big book there? I have to point something out for him. (To cameraman) Just excuse me a second....

Ok, this is from the *Poughkeepsie Journal*. This may help you in writing your article.

MR: Oh, great! Tony, what were you saying, before you went into the regular Army, you were with the 14th New York?

AB: Yes. Right after Pearl Harbor I enlisted with them, thinking that they were going to be mustered into Federal service quickly, but they weren't right away. The usual regiment was already gone, so they formed a new regiment, that's the one I was in. I found after nine months that they weren't quite ready to go into Federal service, so I enlisted in the regular Army.

MR: So you were actually in the same regiment as in the paintings, the 14th, eighty years later?

AB: Yes, I was part of it. An awful lot of pride in that outfit. Even successive units had a lot of pride.

MR: (To someone off-camera) Would you like to get a shot of Mr. Battillo holding one of the paintings, perhaps? Would that be good for you? Or would that look too staged?

AB: You want me to hold a painting? One of the 14th.

MR: How about this one?

AB: Yeah, that looks good. (Is handed a painting, and holds it up) That's a colorful one, yeah. (Cameras flashing) This was used as the frontispiece for a magazine article. It depicts the 14th in, they were in, I think, nineteen engagements with the enemy. In the Civil War.

MR: They were almost decimated at Gettysburg [unclear].

AB: They started off from Brooklyn in 1861 with about 900 men, and when they come back, when they were out of Federal service. They come home to Brooklyn, there were fewer than 100 men marched in the parade. The rest of them were either captured, dead, or missing.

MR: Those flags are particularly significant, too. I think I heard Mike telling you before about the one on the left, the regimental--

IN2: Are you going to have that one in the museum?

MR: Well, we have it, and it's been conserved, and it's—

AB: (To a photographer) I should smile, shouldn't I? (Camera flashes)

LB: Is it in a glass case, I hope?

MR: Yes, it is.

LB: Oh good.

MR: The two smaller ones are very interesting, too, because those are called marker flags, or guide flags. A lot of people think that the reason they all stood shoulder to shoulder and shot close at each other, standing up, was just because we didn't know any better—

AB: That's right—

MR: But we had to do that because of the way the weapons were in those days. If you didn't stand shoulder to shoulder and fire, you couldn't get any kind of accuracy or impact on your enemy—

IN2: I see.

MR: And there was so much smoke coming out of the black powder of these things, that the only way you could tell whether you were in the right place, or your unit was going forward or back, was by reference to those flags. The two big ones in the middle, and the two little ones on the sides. That's how you could tell whether we're winning, we're losing, I'm where I'm supposed to be, because you couldn't see anything else with all the smoke.

LB: [unclear]

AB: That's one thing about World War II, we were spread out. Most of World War II was fought on the highways.

[Cameraman asks: Do you want me to take that for you?]

AB: (Hands pointing to cameraman.) Very seldom did we come into close contact with the enemy, and it was ok with me. This one-on-one business is terrible. We had a lot of action, but it was not very close.

MR: You were in the Army during the war in Europe?

AB: In Italy, yeah. Africa and Italy.

LB: Tell them what you did in the Army.

AB: Well, they took me out of the infantry and made me, because I had experience in drawing—I was a map overlay maker, making map overlays.

[Unclear comments between interviewers and Lillian]

LB: They still keep the 4th Corps together--

AB: We still have reunions. After all these years, we still have reunions. We meet about every year or two.

MR: What is your unit again?

AB: Headquarters, 4th Corps. We were part of the 5th Army, you're familiar with that, Colonel, right?

MR: Right. 5th Army. Mark Clark.

AB: Mark Clark.

MR: Fighting their way up the boot of Italy. What was your rank, Anthony, when you got out?

AB: Sergeant.

MR: I was an artillery officer. I know the importance of those overlays. It tells you things that the map doesn't. Everything changes, and you can't keep changing maps, so the overlays tell you what's going on.

IN2: I got you. They're kind of clear, so you lay them on top of the map? And that gives you the update—

AB: Excuse me, Colonel. The field commanders, just think of this now. They're in a strange country, in the dark. They don't know where they're going sometimes. It's not chaos, but it's a tough job. So what our job was, my section was engineering maps. Now we used aerial photographs, and we had patrols went out, all the intelligence would come back to us, and we would put it right on those maps. We'd have "bridge out", "road closed", whatever it was. And we had a hand-operated machine (gestures cranking motion) to make copies of the overlays on tracing paper. Now those maps were referenced, and the coordinates were referenced, and they were copied and given to the commanders, and they put it over their map, and they knew "don't go this way, go **this** way". Somebody had to tell them where to go. And the overall head, for example, in our case was the colonel in charge of the engineering, roads and bridges. So before anything went out he had to approve everything. And it was a responsibility that we had to take seriously. Sometimes he'd send us up closer to the line so we'd get the latest bit of intelligence to put on those overlays.

I was up with the 10th Mountain Division one night, and with the 34th Infantry Division for two nights in a row. The artillery was brutal, but we sat in a pyramid tent with a Coleman gasoline lantern, my friend and I, making overlays. This guy next to me, Sgt. Bond, always had a bottle of wine under the drawing board with him (smiling). There's always humor attached to this, too. He used to say "don't worry about these shells whistling overhead" "Why? What do you mean, don't worry?" "Because my father was in the First World War, and he said you'll never hear the one that hits you." "You know," I says, "Ted, I feel better now that you told me that, I really feel better." That's the kind of a guy he was.

LB: Tony, tell them what you did after the war was over, you couldn't go home right away.

MR: Why don't we begin the interview and get this rolling?

AB: Sure, go ahead.

MR: Ok, I'm going to start very informally with some questions.

This is an interview, Friday, April 12, 2002, at approximately 10:30 a.m. at the home of Anthony Battillo of Hyde Park, New York. Mr. Battillo served with the 4th Corps, 5th Army, North Africa, Italy. United States Army. You served for three and a half years?

AB: Yes, sir.

MR: The interviewer is Michael Russet(?)
When and where were you born?

AB: Brooklyn, New York, on June 7, 1917.

MR: Could you tell me a little about your prewar education?

AB: I went to Heron? High School in Manhattan, and I went to the Art Students League in Manhattan, I attended there for a couple of years. And I went to the National Tech Institute to study mechanical engineering drawing.

MR: Can you tell me about Pearl Harbor, when you first heard about it and where were you?

AB: I was out duck hunting that day on the north shore of Long Island with some friends, and we didn't have a radio in the car. When we got finished hunting, and were coming back, we were just talking about the Jap envoys in Washington, and were hoping that they could make some kind of a deal. And then I got home for suppertime, and my sister-in-law says to me "We're at war". And I says "What?" That's how I found out.

MR: What was your reaction?

AB: I wasn't surprised. I was surprised that they attacked. I wasn't surprised that we were going to be in the war, I knew we were going to, sooner or later. But Pearl Harbor was as big a shock as 9/11 to my generation, really it was very bad. When you look at the casualties--I think it was 2400 at Pearl Harbor, and a little under 3000 in New York and Washington, and in Pennsylvania [on 9/11]. It was a shock to us all.

MR: When did you enter the service?

AB: Shortly after Pearl Harbor.

MR: So you volunteered?

AB: Yes.

MR: How old were you when you volunteered?

AB: Twenty-five.

MR: Why did you pick the Army?

AB: I liked it (smiling). I just liked the Army.

MR: Ok, why don't you start, in chronological order, telling about your basic training...when and where, and your unit assignment?

AB: Ok. Basic training started in Camp Shelby, Mississippi in October of 1942. And after basic training I was assigned to the 4th Corps Headquarters in Camp Beauregard, Louisiana. And there is where they found out that I had engineering drawing experience, and they asked me to go into the Engineering Section of the Corps to do overlays and other things too. After the European campaigns were over, they asked me to do combat illustration. I did several publications for the Army. The main reason why they didn't send me home when the Corps went home, they wanted me to finish up a history of the Italian campaigns, written and illustrated. They kept me there about six more months. I didn't mind. We were having a lot of fun. (Smiling) I was single, you know, girls, wine, women and song. My wife didn't know me then. It was a good experience, really good.

In basic training, in the 85th Infantry Division, it was tough going. For three months, they really told us, in plain English, "you civilian idiots are going to be soldiers within six to eight weeks". And they weren't kidding, they weren't kidding. They put us through all the training you could think of. Like, for example, get up at three o'clock in the morning and walk through a swamp. Very interesting, you know, things like that.

And you've heard of the machine gun courses in World War II? Well, there were two machine guns mounted on high stands, across each other. There was live ammo, and it was about twenty minutes of crawling, and I went through that thing in Mississippi. Then I was transferred to 4th Corps and we went to the State of Washington, and they told us we were going to go through that thing, and that goes on your record, as you probably know, gentlemen. It goes on your record. So I said to the First Sergeant, the morning we were supposed to go out for this machine gun class, "You know, Sergeant, I took this already, do I have to take it again?" He says, "Get your butt in there!" And so I get in there, and that was the second time.

Then we went down to California, after that Washington stint, and the Commanding Officer says "everybody goes through the machine gun course at night". So I says to the First Sergeant, "What do you think?" And he says, "Yeah, you're coming with me". So

we went through the course together. I was holding the barbed wire up so he can get through, and somebody else would hold it—you know, the buddy system—and he was cranky the whole time, squawking—I don't want to use the word bitching—that's what he was doing the whole time. And I says "What did you think the Army was, a picnic? This is the **real** Army". And he says, "Yeah, I guess you're right". Well, anyway, I went through that thing three times, and I did three twenty-five mile hikes, three times, and every time I said "This is on my record already" [they'd say] "Good, then it'll be on there twice now." So, three of those marches. That was fun.

After basic training, I have to admit that we were a bunch of untrained.... The government did a great job of making an army fast, very fast. Within six months, we were thick into the war, as you might recall. And I never regretted the tough training we had because it paid off. What they were trying to teach us, more than anything, was survival. Believe it or not, this lieutenant I had as a training officer says to me, "You know, you've got to be skillful to survive, not just lucky, you got to use your head, otherwise you won't make it". One of the things he did was put us in foxholes holding up targets in the morning. It was out in the desert in California. He says, "Don't come out of the holes until you're relieved. This is live ammunition flying around-- don't put your head up, don't be nosy". That taught us how to stay down. Then, when the firing was all over, I knew it was time to eat. We were still in the foxholes. Nobody says come out, so we didn't get out. So, four o'clock in the afternoon, we'd just had breakfast that day, the guys who were in the hole. And when the lieutenant came around and says, "Ok, you guys can come out now". I says, "You know, we're starved!" He says, "That's what you have to learn in combat. Staying where you are until it's safe to come out, and if you don't eat, you don't eat. You'd rather be eating and dead, or hungry and living?" That's the way they put it to us. But you see the point, what they were doing? That was tough. Anything else you want to talk about?

MR: What happened after basic training?

AB: I went to Camp Beauregard, joined the 4th Corps, and, like I said, they found out about my drafting and engineering drawing experience, and they put me in the Engineering Section. I learned an awful lot there, it was very good. I was under a colonel by the name of Gillette, who was a very good engineer, he was very experienced in building airstrips in the Pacific. And he joined us in California later on, and he became the commanding officer of the Engineering Section.

Our overall commander joined us in Africa, General Crittenberger—I don't know if you've ever heard of him. He was a Major General at the time, and he took command of the Corps in Italy. He put us through three campaigns from Naples all the way up to the French-Swiss border, then the war ended. I admired him because he and Patton come up together in rank from West Point on. Patton was the big theatrical type, you know (makes a fist). Crittenberger says "I'm not going to lose men. I'm going to win without losing a lot of men." And I admired him. I remember I used to do maps for him, and I used to hear him say to his staff, "If we go this way, it's going to be bad, if we go this

way, we can still get there and we're not going to lose so many men." He was very concerned about his men. He lost two sons in the war, so he felt it, you know?

He stayed with us for the whole thing, and one of the things about him that I have to mention, is that we were in the area where Mussolini was trying to save his tail. He was ousted, as you know, and he was heading for the Swiss border in a German convoy. He had with him his mistress and five Fascist officials, and they had fifty million dollars in gold bullion in the truck with them. They were trying to get into Switzerland, where they would have been...a safe haven. So Crittenberger sent his MPs out, "Let's get this guy".

Then all of a sudden the German commander of the northern army of the Nazis wanted to talk surrender. So the press says to him "What's more important, catching Mussolini or taking this guy's surrender?" And he says, "Look, I'm a Corps commander, and an army wants to surrender to me, with—I don't know—a hundred, eighty thousand men, whatever it was—I forget the number. I'll put the priority on the surrender. The MPs will get him". Well, they didn't get him. The Italian partisans, the underground, stopped the convoy. There were only about several hundred of them, and the whole German convoy, they outnumbered the Italian underground. But the Italian underground commander bluffed and told them he had many, many more men behind the hills, "So you better do what I tell you". "What do you want to do?" "We want to search the convoy". They went through the trucks, and they found Mussolini sitting in the back of one of the trucks with the canvas over it, with a German corporal's overcoat over him, trying to hide himself. And they took him out, found out who he was, and they took him and his girlfriend and the five officials and they kept them in a villa overnight. The next morning, they summarily shot them, just like that. And they put the bodies in a van, a moving van, and they brought them to Milan, and hung them up by their heels outside of a gas station under construction with a canopy over it. (To Lillian) Hon, can you get that one of the magazines that had a picture of that?

MR: Could you go back a little bit, to North Africa?

AB: Sure.

MR: What campaigns—

AB: Well, we got to North Africa, the African campaign was just about over. It was just in the cleanup stages. The reason why they took us there, the Army did not know for sure whether we were going to go to Italy or to India. So we were set to go through the Suez Canal to India, and we got to Algiers, from Morocco, from Casablanca, we went to Oran, North Africa, where the officers' command changed. We were told then—they didn't tell us where—just to board ships, and we went on a twenty-one ship convoy to Italy. At that time, the main front was at Cassino. The Anzio beachhead had already established itself, but they were stalled. So we were in the campaign, our first campaign was to break out the Anzio beachhead. On May 11, 1944, we knew something big was happening, we didn't know exactly what. At eleven o'clock that night a barrage started from the west, Mediterranean side of Italy to the Adriatic side, which is about a hundred miles. British,

American, Australians, South Africans, you name it, we were all in this together. It was a barrage of artillery that lasted for two hours, and during that time we moved in with trucks in blackout, doing about ten, fifteen miles an hour. We moved under that umbrella of missiles that lasted for two hours, and we didn't know where we were going, we had no idea.

The next morning, pandemonium ensued. There were troops from all nations running all over the place, and finally the beachhead broke out. Then the real campaign started for the attack on Rome. Hitler had said to his people that the Gustav Line, which was a terrific fortification south of Rome all the way across Italy, was impregnable. He says "They'll never get through." Well, we got through. And the entry into Rome was something that you'll just never forget the experience. Here was a country that was supposedly our enemy, and we got a welcome in Rome that—well, have you ever heard somebody hit a home run in Yankee Stadium?—that's what it sounded like. It was just great coming in. We didn't stay long, we stayed about a few hours, and the city was declared open by the Germans, because the pressure was on them not to destroy Rome. We would have hit it with artillery, and air bombing if we had to, but we didn't want to. They gave them three days to pack and get out. They went fifty miles north of Rome, where the war resumed.

From there on in, there was another campaign called the Rome-Arno—the Arno River goes through Florence—that campaign took a couple months, then from there we went to the North Apennines campaign. That was the winter of 1944-45. We were really bogged down. We were losing more men with sickness and car and truck accidents than we did on the line, that's how bad it was. It was stalemated. But then in the spring, April, this time of the year, of 1945, Crittenger and Clark, they all got together there and we broke out into the Po Valley. We crossed the Po River, and it wasn't too long after that when the surrender came, and when Mussolini was captured. (To Lillian: Where was that magazine, hon?)

MR: When you were in the winter of 1944-45, were you equipped for the winter, did you have winter gear?

AB: Oh yes, pretty good, as best as could be expected. We had good coats and blankets and whatnot. You have to realize also that you're not allowed to make any fires to keep warm, we just had to bundle up. Sometimes, one of the finest things we could find was newspaper. You put newspaper on the ground, and we put our raincoat over that, then blankets—

There it is (Lillian hands him magazine) – you can pass this around, there's the photograph. (Soberly) Yeah.....

MR: (Holds a photo up to the camera) Did you witness this?

AB: Yes, a few of us in the jeep were in Milan, and a terrific crowd of people. I'd say.... (points out the window) You see that greenish house over there? That's about as

close as I got to Mussolini. There was just a mass of people there, civilians. British military police were there, and they said “Look, Yanks, if I were you, I’d get out of here”. We said “What’s the matter?” They said “This crowd is not too calm, we expect some kind of trouble here today”. Fortunately, the people who were on our side outnumbered the few Fascists left. They were diehards, they were almost as bad as the Nazis, you know. Nothing really happened there. What they did do is to take the bodies down, in the van again, and bury them in a place unknown. They didn’t want to make martyrs out of them. Especially Mussolini. So his own wife didn’t know where he was buried. I don’t think she cared; he was buried with his mistress. He wasn’t a nice guy (smiles). Neither was Hitler.

MR: What can you tell us about some of your combat experiences?

AB: Well, I told you about being in the tent with Sgt. Bond and his bottle of wine, that was a good one. Oh, Col. Gillette sent me up to the line one day to do some drawings of tramways. You know what tramways are. And the reason why--we were still in the mountains, and in those mountains the roads were wind-y, narrow and whatnot, and getting down into a valley and up again—you know, Italy had seven hundred miles of mountains. Anyway, they built these tramways because they could go from one mountain to another without all that highway, road business. And what they did was send supplies over, what the guys really needed. On the way back, they came back with wounded and dead. It was a great thing. So he sent me out there to make drawings of these things. Photographing them wouldn’t be good because they were so far away. All they could photograph is the mechanism on one side. In a drawing, what I did was show this side, and you could draw the line just where you wanted to. And then I would make a drawing of the other side. Put them together, and you had the complete picture. So while I was there--the Americans ran one, and the Brazilians—Brazil was in the war with us, too—the Brazilian troops were taking care of one, so I was with them one day. While I was there, we got shelled, so I had to get into the bunker with these Brazilian soldiers, and it was around four o’clock in the afternoon. I made some very rough sketches of the tramway. When I got back to my post, I would do them over again in ink. Well, anyway, while I was in there they started bringing out some cheese, Italian cheese, and bottles of wine and whatnot, garlic and you name it. So when I got back to the camp it was dark, and Col. Gillette met me by the tent, and he put his arms around me and says, “Son, are you all right?” And I says, “Yes, I’m fine. What happened?” He says, “We heard about the shelling up there”. And I say, “No, I was in a bunker with the Brazilians.” He says, “You know what? You smell just like them!” (Laughs)

MR: Were you allowed to keep any of the drawings you made during that time?

AB: Not the originals, I had copies of them.

MR: Do you know what happened to your original drawings?

AB: The Army took them, the 5th Army Headquarters took them. I was told later, when we had the reunion in New York City, the one in 1952, one officer says to me “Those

tramway drawings are being used in Korea as the basis of how to do this from one mountain to another.” I says “They’re still good?” “Oh yes, they still do them the same way”. So that made me feel good, too.

MR: What happened after the Po Valley?

AB: That was the last campaign. Surrender came there, and of course, surrender in Germany came eight days later. Like I said, my group stayed to do historical documentation. It wasn’t just the war and the fighting itself, we also had to document what the Engineers did in Italy. The number of bridges that they put up, Bailey bridges, you know—temporary bridges, and the number of culverts. Everything that we did, repairs, this all had to do with accountability, and had to go back to Washington, as to what we did over there, why did we spend all this money. The question of, when soldiers broke somebody’s fence, we had to pay for it. All those bombings... As a matter of fact, I saw a clipping recently of Cassino, after we gut Cassino, and the war was over, the United States government rebuilt their village. Those people were bombed out. They built new houses for them. So this is the accountability we had to give to the government. This took about four or five months. The war ended in May, I got home December 1.

MR: When did you leave the service, December 1?

AB: (Shakes head) Yes, December 1, 1945.

MR: What was the reaction when you returned home? On your part, and your family?

AB: First thing I did, we got to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. I went into the post exchange and bought a quart of milk. I sat down on the steps outside and I drank most of it. We had no milk at all in Europe or Africa, no milk at all. I’m not a milk drinker, I just wanted milk, I just felt like it. I kept saying to my friends over in Italy, I can’t wait till I get home, I’d just like to have a ham on rye, I just miss it. Or go down to Coney Island and have a hot dog, something like that.

Then I met my wife a few months later, and the first thing she cooked me was a roast beef dinner. On a Saturday. And I said, “I’m going to marry her, she’s a good cook”. That’s not the only reason (looks fondly toward his wife).

MR: What do you think was your most memorable experience when you were in the service?

AB: I have a few of them, but.... One of them....I’ll tell you this because.... Everybody’s familiar with the book *The Greatest Generation*. I had a story for him, Tom Brokaw, and I didn’t know he was doing this book, I would have gladly submitted this to him. I’m sure he would have used it. Here’s the way it went.

There was a fellow close to me in the Army; his name was Hendrickson. His first name was Arvo. He was from an upper Michigan farm family. He and his twin brother, Arno—Arvo and Arno—were drafted on the same day, and an older brother who was thirty-five years old. When they went to the draft board they asked if they could be put together in the same unit. And the draft board said, “No, we just had a very bad experience, the Sullivan brothers were lost on one ship, no more brothers together”.

So Arvo came to my unit, and he says, “You know, my brother” (his older brother, not the twin) “is in Italy in a different unit.” So there was a terrific fight going on in a place called Santa Maria, south of Rome. While we were going through, in transit, we stopped at a truckstop, where there was a kitchen for transients, it was a big Italian barn, or warehouse. We went in there and they had a kitchen set up, and we had our own mess kits. As we were going through the line, we saw this huge rack of shelves with American Army duffel bags packed on there. And Hendrickson says to me, “Hey, Tony, you know what? My brother must be in the area someplace. There’s his duffel bag.” The name was stenciled on. So I said, “That’s nice”. So we went through the line and I was thinking, why is his duffel bag there? Well, there was a military policeman guarding these bags. After the lunch was over, he went to wash his mess kit, he went outside to the truck. I went back to the MP. I says to him, “Can I ask you a question? What are these bags doing here?” And I told him about Hendrickson. “Well”, he says, “I don’t know if you want to tell him, but these guys are all dead. They were all killed at Santa Maria.” There must have been about a hundred bags up there.

So I didn’t say anything to him. I had to really do some soul searching. Why am I going to upset him? Let him hear it through family. I didn’t think it was my duty to say it. So about two weeks later I saw him sitting under a tree with a handkerchief in his hand. And I said “What’s the matter, Arvo?” And he says “My brother was killed.” And I said “Oh, I’m sorry to hear that.” You can see my point. I just didn’t want to be the guy to tell him. Then I says to him, “Look, Arvo, let’s do something. Let’s go to our captain and ask him if we can go to your brother’s company commander and get more information about your brother’s death”. We did. We found out where his brother’s unit was; they were in a rest area in the woods. So we went there and asked for Captain So-and-so, and he was sitting on the ground playing cards. And I said, “Sir, would you mind... This is Hendrickson here, and his brother was in your unit, he was killed.” He never even looked up from his cards. He says “Your brother didn’t know what hit him. He was killed immediately, that’s all I can tell you.” Just like that. So we got back in our jeep and went back home. Of course, it didn’t make Hendrickson feel too good, but.... This guy was shaken up, that captain was shaken up. He wasn’t being nasty, he was just shaken to know that he was talking to the brother of one of his men....

Well, that’s not the end of the story. About a month later, he got a letter from home saying that his father had died with a heart attack. Then the campaign started in France, after D-Day, and the twin brother was burned badly in a tank. And he went back to Walter Reed Hospital by air in a basket. He was burned from head to foot. His mother died with a heart attack. So he got home, and he wrote to me in January of 1946, and he says “I’m back in the Army. There’s nothing for me to stay home for. My parents are

gone, my brother is dead. My other brother, we don't know what's going to happen to him, he's still in Walter Reed Hospital. The farm is sold. There's no reason for me to stay here at all."

So he went back in. He got married, and asked for an assignment in Tokyo—

[Change of tapes]

AB: Ready? That story is similar to *Saving Private Ryan*, in a smaller way, of course. Another experience we had, was when the war was over, we were stationed up on Lake Como, Italy. They had very nice billets for enlisted men, and nice billets across the lake for the officers. So this fellow in my outfit, his name was Casey, got notice from home that his father died. They were going to hold the body for five days if he could come home. So, he says, he spoke to the captain, and the captain says "I'll see what I can do for you", but the captain says "I can't do it. I got a hold of the chaplain, I got a hold of the Red Cross, I got a hold of the commanding officer", and he says "They're all stalling me".

So he sat there and he was really kind of down in the dumps. He said "I'll see if I can get a telegram home and tell them I can't make it". "Wait a minute, Casey," I says, "hold on, hold on. Let's get a boat, go across the lake, and go to the officer's club over there. Your senator from Massachusetts is in our outfit. His name is Lodge—(aside to interviewer) remember Senator Lodge? He was a colonel in the 4th Corps—Let's go over and see him".

So we got into a boat and we went across the lake, and there was a party going on in the officers' club. So the MP at the door says "Hey, listen, we can't—" and I said "Wait a minute," and I told him the story about his father. "Get Senator Lodge out here, just for a minute." So he went and got him out, and he was a Lt. Colonel, and we told him the story, and he says "What's your name?" and he says "John Casey". And he says, "Casey, I'll be with you the first thing in the morning."

First thing in the morning, he came across the lake, and he says "There's a truck waiting for you to take you to Genoa, there's a plane going back to the States." He says, "You just stay there, and we'll discharge you from there." So he says to me, "Thanks for the suggestion. What can I do for you?" "You can do one thing. Make sure you have a nickel in your pocket, and call my mother when you get to the States and tell her I'm ok". And he did. I said "I'll give you the nickel", and he says "No, it's ok". But that's something I never forgot because it really—I don't know how Senator Lodge came to me, this guy was from Boston. I said "Look, Casey, he's your Senator, come on, let him work for you". And it happened. It worked.

MR: What happened after the war? Can you tell me a little bit about your background after the war?

AB: Yes, I was trying to do freelance artwork, and it was tough going, really tough going. And I have to bring my sister into this—this was before I met Lillian—I had two

older sisters. They were wonderful, they were like extra mothers. And I talked to my sister one day, and I said “you know, I’m getting really discouraged. This freelancing is.... I’ll get a job for \$500, and then I don’t get another job for six weeks, what does that average out to? It’s a tough way to make a living.” And she says “Look, why don’t you do this? Why don’t you go back to school and take something that has more sales value, like something to do with your engineering, and there’s so much industry going on....” I says “That’s a good idea”. She says “You can always do this on the side”. So I says, “Fine, wonderful advice”.

So I went down to a school in Brooklyn and I registered, and what it was was a crash course for GIs. There were many around the country, where instead of going to school for four years, you could do it for two years. But it was tough going. For example, I had five hours a day in one subject for a year. That’s a grind for any student, right?”

MR: Yes, sir.

AB: Well, I never regretted it because after I graduated—meanwhile, I had met this little charming girl over here (points toward his wife)—and we got engaged very quickly. I says, now that I’m going to get married, I’ll have to get a job. It didn’t take long after I graduated from the school, I was certified. I says, “Now, where do you want to live?” “Wherever you can find a good job is where we’ll live”. That was a big plus for me, because some women they don’t want to leave home, you know, or leave mama. Well, anyway, Lillian was ready to move anywhere, so I went upstate from Brooklyn and I was talking to my brother, and his friend came in and he says to me “Where are you headed to?” I told him Schenectady. General Electric is up there, and American Locomotive is around there, and I’ll find something. [Unclear] says “I’m going to Detroit, to try the automobile business. He says look, there’s a place in Kingston looking for a designer, a mechanical designer”. And I says “Oh”. The name of the place was called Electrol Incorporated; they were doing hydraulics for the Air Force. So I went there and I got hired like that (snaps his fingers). It wasn’t a great paying job, but it was a very good career start. I was young yet, you know. I stayed there for four years, and from there I went to IBM in Poughkeepsie here, and that’s why we moved and bought this house. That’s the way my career went.

So all those years.... I recuperated well from polio, I really did. Lillian can tell you I was walking without a cane, I was driving a car, no trouble. I did work on this house here, and cut the grass until I was 78 years old.

During all that time I was doing magazine work on the side, and at IBM I was in management, doing manuals, and the artwork I directed, the text preparation I directed, the page layout and the printing. I was in charge of the whole production for twenty-five years. It paid well, and it was a very satisfying career. I retired early. I says to Lillian--I was 60 years old--and they put a plan on the bulletin board one day: if you want to get out early, this is what the deal is. I read it over, and I says to Lillian, you know what? They’re not going to make me a vice president, so I’m going to leave. I looked at my little calculator, and said, “If I stay until I’m 65, I’m going to make \$4,000 more a year

than I'd be making if I retire". So we chose retirement. And I never regretted it. I'd had enough. I'd really had enough after 25 years.

I'm going to be 85 in June, so that was 25 years ago, and I never regretted it. I mean, some guys say, geez you shouldn't retire early. But if you've had a good satisfying job and—it depends on your outlook on life, you know. I was very happy doing that.

MR: Have you continued painting?

AB: Well, in the last few... I've got to tell you, I walked fine, I did everything fine, until about twenty years ago. Shortly after I retired I started to notice a weakness in the legs. I went to my doctor, locally, and he sent me to Coyle[?] Medical Center in New York City. And there the specialists looked at me and they diagnosed what they called post-polio syndrome. It happens to about half the patients in their old age. And what it does—it's not a return of the disease—it's a result of it. You just can't do what you used to do. Then, as a result of that result, I was using my arms more than my legs, and I found out that I was wearing out my shoulders. (I'm getting to the point about painting.) So I went to the specialist again, and they x-rayed and found out that the cartilage in both shoulders was going because of overuse. After twenty or thirty years of overuse, something's got to go. So the advice was surgery. So in 1997, January 1997, I have a prosthesis in this shoulder (points to right shoulder). The rotating cuff, all plastic and steel now. She (points to wife) calls me The Bionic Man (chuckles). But, ok, I come out of that pretty good, I was driving a car, doing things, and walking, and then about six months later I says to Lillian, "By God, this shoulder (gestures to left shoulder) is going on me too." So, back to the orthopedic specialist. They x-rayed again, and this (points to left) is worse than this one (points to right). Surgery again, sixteen months apart. The result of that was that I—I had to walk with a walker, and I couldn't put the pressure on the walker because of the shoulders. So up until five years ago I walked fairly well, then we had to put the lift on, as you can see over there (gestures off to his right), on account of the stairs, because the stairs were pretty tough.

So, painting calls for this (raises right arm and makes painting movement), you know? My arms can't take it, shoulders can't take it. And even if you lean on something.... You may say, "oh painting, you just sit down and paint". But you know, you got to put yourself into that thing, not just the time, but there's a physical effort that you can't believe. And if you don't have the muscle power to do it, you just can't do it. So I haven't painted, but I've done a lot of drawing since then. I can lean on my drawing board, that's a great help. And I still feel that—I'm a diehard—I feel that I'm going to make my best painting yet. I hope I can do it. I don't know if I can, but I'm going to try.

MR: Well, I look forward to seeing it. I'd like to thank you very much for all you've done.

AB: It's my pleasure, really.

MR: Can we have you explain some of the paintings? Especially a couple of the stories you've told us?

AB: Sure

MR: I think you explained this first one.

AB: Yeah, we did that already.

MR: Was that on camera?

IN2: Yes, we did that one.

MR: You had a great story about this.

IN2: (Hands AB paintings on canvas)

AB: (Holds up paintings to camera and points to figure on canvas) This represents Sgt. McNeil of the 14th Regiment who was captured by JEB Stuart's men, cavalry. As a prisoner, he was interviewed by the General, who says to him "If you stay with us, we'll give you a higher rank and a horse. You can be a Southern cavalryman." And I'm showing him here saying "You can offer me no inducement great enough to make me fight against the Union." Well, not too long after that he was paroled and sent back to the 14th Regiment, and in due time he was promoted to Captain. That's the story on Sgt. McNeil. (Hands canvas to IN2)

(Shows next painting to camera) Now this one shows Sgt. Frank Head, who was the color bearer for the 14th. He was twenty-one years old, and in the first hour of the Battle of Bull Run, the First Bull Run, he was struck in the chest by a bullet, and when he went down, his friends came to try to help him. And he said, his famous words were "Never mind me, boys, save the colors." And he was taken away and died a short time later. Twenty-one years old, became a war hero.

(Hands painting to IN2, receives another in its place, which he shows to camera)

Now this one is a typical soldier of the famous New York 69th Regiment, which everyone knows about. They've made movies of it, and told many stories. Their part in the Civil War was great, absolutely great. Of course, they distinguished themselves in the two World Wars.

(Hands painting to IN2, receives another which he shows to camera)

Now, the night before the First Battle of Bull Run, the 14th Regiment fellows got together and sat around a campfire singing songs. They were joined by the blue-pants fellows you see here from other units, and they just had a great time singing songs, mostly about home and family.

(Hands painting to IN2, receives another and shows to camera)

This is another version of Sgt. Head, Frank Head, at the time he was shot. It's a mate to the one I showed you first.

(Hands painting to IN2, receives another and shows to camera)

This one shows the beginning of the First Battle of Bull Run in 1861, the 14th going into action. They were in a place behind some barn—I can't think of the name—but they called it the Slaughter Pen. There were so many men killed on both sides within one hour. The Battle of Bull Run was really lost by the North. As a matter of fact, few people realize it, but the North was losing the war up until Gettysburg. They weren't doing too well. Gettysburg turned the tide.

(Hands painting to IN2, receives a large painting which he holds up)

We can both hold this one, all right? This one was used for the cover of *Civil War Times* in 1972 (Lillian hands him the magazine, which he holds up to compare with the painting).

MR: Now, why was that on the cover?

AB: Well, I submitted photographs of all the paintings and the text to the magazine editor—

MR: So you did an article for that issue, also?

AB: Yes, the written article's in here, too. And the editor chose this one for the cover. And the article, I'm very happy to say, was very well received by the public, and I received quite a few letters on it. It was my pleasure to do it, because the 14th had plenty of publicity, but this helped them quite a bit. (MR takes magazine, opens it to the article, and hands it back to AB, and he shows it to the camera.) There's the frontispiece and the beginning of the story, there. (The article is titled "Red-Legged Devils from Brooklyn".)

MR: Why did you have so much interest in the 14th Brooklyn?

AB: Well, my older brother was in it when I was a kid. And then I joined it, myself. Everybody in that neighborhood in Brooklyn, the 14th was part of our culture, you might say, in that particular area of South Brooklyn. I said to you before, when I was in it, the pride, I couldn't believe the young fellows who had fathers and brothers in it before us, like I did, they took a great pride in being part of the 14th. It should be that way.

MR: I think a lot of people don't realize how much of a social group these regiments were.

AB: Yes. As a matter of fact, during the time I was in the 14th, they had two dances that they held in the Armory, which had a magnificent parquet floor throughout the whole Armory. The 14th Regiment Band, they were a terrific marching band, but they were also—I didn't realize it—they were a terrific dance band. And so we were on the floor, we had a great time at both dances. And one of the things that was a source of pride, too, before I went to the regular Army, they had a very special day in June 1942, called "New York at War Day". I think the Mayor was still LaGuardia in 1942. The 14th was invited to march in it. And we went by the reviewing stand, we marched from...you know where the Museum of Art is, I think on 86th Street? ... we started there, and we didn't stop until we got on 23rd Street, at the subway station. We were all absolutely soaking wet. You could see the guy in front of you, you could see the sweat mark (draws with fingers in the air to show the shape) on his back get bigger, and bigger, and bigger, until finally our backs were all soaking wet. When we got to 23rd Street, our commanding officer says "Ok fellas, ride the subway, we'll go right back to Brooklyn, let's get out of here! That's enough!" That was a great day. We saw quite a few dignitaries on the reviewing stands, including the mayor, Mayor LaGuardia, who was, himself, a very colorful figure.

MR: Well, thank you very much, that was wonderful!

AB: You're welcome, I'm sure.

(visible quick skip in film, as though camera was turned off then on again)

AB: (Now holding and looking at a large book)

MR: (Indistinct) —from Park, down Fifth Avenue?—

AB: Yeah, this is it, this is it, by golly! I couldn't believe anybody took a picture of it.

MR: Well somebody did. (Joking) Can we see you spinning around--

IN2: That's probably you right up front (points to picture in book that AB is holding)

AB: (Turns book around and shows a photograph. Photo is captioned "State Guardsmen on Parade".) (To cameraman) Ok, you got it? Very nice. Thank you.