

**James and Elizabeth (Liz) Brady
Veterans**

**Interviewed by the
Hudson Falls H.S., Hudson Falls, NY**

**Date of Interview
Approx. 2003.**

**Place of Interview
Not stated.**

**Appears to be Jim and Liz's home.
Possibly Valley Stream, NY.**

Q: Jim, what's your date of birth?

J: 3/12/1919.

Q: You're eighty five right?

J: Eighty four. I'll be eighty five (unclear)

L: Eighty four. 1919. (cross talk). Same as me. I'll be eighty four in October.

Q: OK. So, you're birthday is what?

L: October 8th.

Q: 1919. You're eighty three.

L: Yes. I will be eighty four in October . Don't rush it.

J: Don't hold your breath.

L: The only trouble about this is so many aches and pains. It's so frustrating. You can't do what you've always done. Everything takes me about twice as long as it did before to do anything but at least I can do it. I thank god for that.

Q: What branch of service?

J: Infantry.

Q: What was your highest rank?

J: Captain. I went in as a Private and came out as a Captain.

L: He went to OCS.

J: I went to OCS at Fort Benning, Georgia right after Pearl Harbor.

Q: Did you enlist?

J: Well, you heard about the draft right?

Q: Yes.

J: I figured that when they pass it I looked up the numbers. I was going to get drafted in August so I figured what the hell am I waiting for. I got a hold of a buddy of mine in Oceanside, Long Island and we signed up. We volunteered. They made a big deal of it. They had a parade in Long Beach. Bands were playing. The first ones to go into the draft from that area of Long Island.

Q: What month was that?

J: November, 1940.

Q: Pearl Harbor was '41.

J: December, 1941. I had a chance to get out in November, 1941. They gave me a choice. There were eight of us. They gave us a choice. We could get out and go in the enlisted reserve or stay in for 18 months more. I was the only one of eight that said..... I mean my father didn't have a steady job. I had a job (unclear). I think what the hell, I've a roof over my head and clothes on my back. I got money in my pocket. (unclear) I came up here to Glenn's Falls in the winter of '41 and played in the Catholic place here.

Q: St. Mary's?

J: St. Mary's. We played there. We played at General Electric. I was having a good time. What the hell. I signed up for another 18 months. One week later.... Pearl Harbor. I'll tell you something that I found out a lot of guys did this stupid thing.

I was home on a weekend pass in Oceanside, Long Island. I went down to the local football field where the Catholic church was playing. Father Mc Elroy was coaching the team. So, I walk up on him. I'd been out the night before. I said, "Hi Father, how are you doing?". He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I came to watch the football game." He said, "You didn't hear about Pearl Harbor?" I said, "What the hell is Pearl Harbor?" A lot of people thought the same thing, where is Pearl Harbor? I didn't know. I went back. That was the beginning.

Q: You two didn't know each other at all?

J: No. No. We met in Italy.

Q: It's funny because you were from Hudson Falls at the time.

L: He was from Long Island.

J: I'm from Long Island.

Q: Where were you when Pearl Harbor hit? What were you doing?

L: I was working in the (unclear) hospital.

Q: As a nurse?

L: Yes. I had my RN then.

Q: You were about what? Twenty two or twenty three in '41?

L: Twenty one or twenty two. I guess I was twenty two.

Q: (unclear)

L: My girlfriends were going into the Navy and they kept asking me. So, I said thought maybe I would go with them. I didn't realize that you didn't go where you wanted to go. So, I went down, you had to go to Albany and I enlisted there in the Navy. They told me they didn't need me in the Navy so they sent my name to the Army. Of course, they accepted me in the Army. That was in 1943.

I came down to New York. I had my great aunts in New York. My Aunt Helen McGuire she never thought I grew up at all. Here I am now an RN working in a hospital. She wouldn't let me go from Fort Kilmer down to Fort Monmouth by myself. So, we got on this train and she took me down to Fort Monmouth. Of course, I will say she left as soon as she deposited me there which wasn't the same when I went to Mt. Sinai because Aunt Katty went with me. They had a fit. They said afterword, "Miss Roselle, why is your aunt with you?" But they always were protective and thought well I might get in trouble so they took me everywhere.

I was at Fort Monmouth for a couple of months and then I was transferred to Camp Kilmer which is in New Jersey. Also, Fort Monmouth is in New Jersey. I was there a year. I was what they call a "Station Compliment" but I had a girlfriend that wanted to go overseas so she talked me into signing up for overseas. I didn't have to go because they needed us there.

So, I went. We went over. They sent us to Virginia to Newport News. I'll never forget it because I wasn't used to it. We put into this barracks and it had a potbelly stove for heat and everything. It was in the spring. Then we got on this ship and they had an albatross take us out for I think about twenty four hours because we were traveling along and we had to travel in total blackout at night. We didn't have lights or anything. Then, when we got to Gibraltar, two destroyers met us and took us into Oran.

Q: Oh really.

L: I was in Oran for maybe six or seven weeks. I came over as a replacement. Of course, my girlfriend had talked me into going. She was assigned to a general hospital in Italy. But I went to a station hospital - they were called station hospitals. We were stationed in Oran. We lived in a hotel and they had weapons carriers that took us up the hill to this French hospital because the Americans had certain buildings and the French had certain buildings. I was so amazed when I was there because when we'd go to mass, we'd have to go on the sidewalk and the Arabs would be having siesta laying on the sidewalk. You would have to walk around them.

I was there. I guess we were like detached service. We were there for about a month. Then, we got orders to go to Italy. They put us on a hospital ship and we went from Oran to Naples. We got to Naples. We couldn't go to our... see, ah, they sent a lot of the people ahead of us to setup a hospital in Leghorn - the station hospital. So, the nurses and the doctors had to work on detached service. So, they sent me to the 12th General Hospital on Mussolini's fairground because they made that into a hospital complex.

There, I met my friend again. That's where she was assigned- 12th General. When I was there, I had a very sad ward because most of the boys were paralyzed with wounds to their spine. It was sad. We had to do everything for them. Write letters. It was a big awakening about what I was going into when I saw that.

Q: So this was what year, 1944?

L: No, that was still 1943.

Q: Was it really.

L: Yes. Because, I came in the army in '43. I was only in the states for three months. Then I went to Oran. I was only there a couple of months. Then, I went to Italy. See the world with Uncle Sam. By that time, I had met him (points to Jim). I met Jim in Naples.

J: I got in trouble meeting her.

Q: You'll have to tell me about that. I need to change the camera. Go ahead.

J: My CO, the Colonel showed up with this girl at the club. In Italy in those days with the war and everything there wasn't clubs like there are now. Let's call it a club and all you had to drink was Cognac. There wasn't Whiskey there yet and there was no beer there yet.

We're drinking Cognac and the Colonel's got her (points to Liz) with him. So he gets up to go to the bathroom and I said, "What's a nice looking girl like you doing out with a jerk like this?" She said, "I don't know, he told me he could get you to work nights and he could take me out." So, he comes back to the table and I said to him something about trying to beat my time.

I was out of order. I know that. He was a "chicken" Colonel and I was a First Lieutenant. He calls me in the orderly room the next morning and said, "I'd thought he would give me a chance

to apologize." I said, "For what". He said, "For the way you talked to me last night." I said, "You had it coming, I'm not apologizing." I had a chip on my shoulder. The phone rang. He said, "Yeah, I got somebody." He said, "I don't have to worry about you. You're being transferred to an Italian outfit, second in command of an Italian truck battalion." So, I reported. (unclear)

In those days, the Germans, if somebody refused to do something, "'bing" you're dead. So, I always packed a 45. I never pulled it but the Italians had it up here. So, I got along pretty good with them (speaks some Italian). "A lot of work and nothing to eat" that's all I used to hear.

Q: They weren't prisoners?

J: No, they weren't prisoners. They were all soldiers. So, I used to go down to the docks at night at Naples and steal food for them. Then they got a little upset because I didn't steal the K-Rations that had cigarettes in them. They complained about that. I'm stealing stuff for them to feed them!

So, finally, we got orders to go up to (unclear) Leghorn, Italy. We had about ninety trucks. It took two days. We left Naples right up what they called the coast road - Route 6. We go through Leghorn (aka Livorno, Italy) and I had a bivouac area I was supposed to go to set it up because I didn't have a building yet. I passed this station hospital. 7th Station hospital.

So, I walked into a tent and asked, "Is Betty Roselle in this outfit?" They said, "Yeah, she's in the next tent." So I walked into the next tent and I will never forget the look on her face when I walked into the tent. We were doing pretty good then. We spent about a year up there like that.

Q: Its fate isn't it?

J: I think a lot of it was because she shipped out twice. The first time, I didn't know where the hell she was and she didn't know where she was going. We figured southern France but she ended up in Leghorn in a hospital. Then she shipped out of Naples again. I was so stupid in those days. I'm in Leghorn. You look at a map. I talked to her on the phone. She said the ship was going to be gone in a few days and I've got to spend another night in Naples. I (unclear) to my CO and he said, "Why don't you go on down and see her?"

So, I got in my car. It wasn't dark yet and I drove all night long and I had breakfast with her. She was kind of surprised to see me. Then she got a ship and we figured that she was going to go to the far east because things were over in Europe.

But here's the amazing thing. I hit the states and I swore that when I hit the states, the first thing I'm going to do is go to an American bar and have a cold glass of beer. I landed in the states on Election Day. The bars were closed, right.

I'm walking around Fort Dix and she had given me her phone number. "Call my mother if you're ever in the area. She knows about you." So, I dialed the mother. The mother answered the phone

and says "Yeah, just a minute." She (points to Liz) gets on the phone. What were you home half an hour or something like that?

L: I had just gotten in.

J: She had just gotten in and I'm down in New Jersey and I call her up. So, I bought a car and I was coming up to see her. The first time I came up this is no man's land for me. I landed. I got the Montreal Express. What the hell was it? What did they used to call it? I don't know.

I got off at Fort Edward. I didn't know where the hell I was. I don't see a familiar face. I'm looking for her. It's the only familiar face I know. They had swinging doors on the station. Maybe they still have them. I don't know.

L: There was a bar across the street.

J: There was a bar.

L: He was there with Tom.

J: So, she comes walking through the door. From there on, I'm commuting up and down and we decided to get married.

Q: Were you both still in the service?

J: Yeah, we were on what they call "terminal leave". I had ninety nine days leave. I didn't take any leave over in Italy and you get thirty days a year. I hadn't used them and they accumulate. So, I had ninety nine days leave and I was getting paid by the Army. I used to come up here and she would come down for New Years.

L: I was stationed at Fort Dix.

J: And she was stationed at Fort Dix. Yeah.

Q: Where's Fort Dix?

L: New Jersey. See, when I came back. (unclear) Italy. Then, I went up to 7th station. I was there for over a year. Then, I didn't have enough points so, they took me out of my outfit and sent me to Naples to wait for the general orders. General orders took forty days to go from Naples, Italy to go through the Panama Canal to Manila (?). I went to Manila. I worked there at that hospital for about a month.

We were just waiting for transportation home. We were three days out of Panama when the war in Japan ended. We thought our ship would turnaround - a lot of them did. Ours didn't. We just went. They told me when I was there that if I wanted to wait, I could wait for a plane but there was a ship going to San Francisco. It was a Lurline Line vessel.

So, I said, ok I'd rather go. So, I got on the boat and it was a luxury liner but it was completely stripped down. You had no amenities. You just had..when we ate we had a table cloth. The food was a little bit better. The Navy always ate well.

Then we got to San Francisco. When we came under the Golden Gate, they got on the loudspeakers and they said now you have to learn how to behave in civilization. I guess they were talking to the boys. No whistling. No yelling at people.

You know what happened. Before we got there, they put us on the weapon's carriers and you never heard so many whistles and everything to us from the civilians.

Q: From the civilians?

L: We went to Camp Stoneman. We stayed there one night. Then, they put us on this cattle car. It was a train. In the freight car, we had to bring our mess kits and get food. It was worse than when I was in the Army. Then we had to sleep. It was a Pullman but you had to sleep two in a bunk.

Then we got to Des Moines, Iowa. When we got there, it was really blackmail. They told us we could go right home and take our accrued leave or else we could stay there for a couple of weeks until we were processed out but we had to sign up for three months. So, I signed up for three months and I had to come back to Camp Kilmer for three months and I had a GU ward there.

Q: A what?

L: A GU Ward. Venereal. It was really beautiful (laughs). As they say, you know when I went from Naples through the Panama Canal, we had to have that - you know you go over the date line. The sailors just loved it because we had to have initiation to become a Shellback. You're a Pollywog before that.

There was about maybe sixty women on the ship and about two thousand men but we had Marines guarding us. The Marine who was Top Kick came from (unclear). So, when he knew that I came from Hudson Falls, he was very nice to me.

You couldn't believe this. We got a whole set of orders. I had to be the Top Kick's sidekick. He would send me to the galley for coffee and he told me no sugar but, of course, they put it in.

I'd have to go back again and they brought all these fellas in with beautiful curly hair and everything and they were making crosses on their heads and everything and I had to sweep up the hair. I was really annoyed by then.

Then the Top Kick says to me "Betty, take your shoes off". I said, "Why?" He said, "You'll find out." So, we came on the deck and they had the Royal Court sitting there. King Neptune and the royal baby is this big fat sailor who has something that looks like a diaper on him. On his stomach, they had painted (unclear) or something.

We had to go on our hands and knees through the whole court and kiss the baby on his stomach. Then, they had this big vat of water and they put you in this chair. One of the sailors says to me, "Be you sure say 'shellback' when they dunk you. Otherwise, they'll keep doing it". You see, we had to say pollywog every time they say who you are. Of course, I knew enough to say that.

But then they take you up and they got this long...it looks like a ramp. Yet, it was all covered with engine grease. Here we are sopping wet fully clothed. Thank god we had our brown and white seersucker on.

So they slid us down like this and they got sailors on each side with pieces of canvas and they are hitting you as you go down. I'll tell you, by the time I got down there I was furious. But then they got a guy sitting at a desk and he gives you this little card that says you are now a "shellback".

Q: A what?

L: A "shellback". You've gone through everything, you are now a "shellback". We could only have water certain times during the day. Thank god, they put the showers on. There was a blonde girl ahead of me. One of those sailors picked up a whole thing of engine grease and put it in her hair. I thought it was very uncalled for.

So, anyway, we could go anywhere on the ship then so the Top Kick wanted us to go his quarters so I went down with three or four other nurses. We went to his quarters. He was going to make it up to me us so he brings me - I have it home - a big diploma like this. It's got King Neptune and the royal court. It says you are now a "shellback", Elizabeth Brady. He made a special cake for us. He had the cook make a special cake and we had Cokes and stuff. That was an adventure.

Then, when we got to Manila, we couldn't dock. They put the ladders over the side of the ship. We had to go down with full packs down the ship go into an LST and then they took us on to shore. And here, the war is over. We never had to go through this. We never had to do anything like that the whole time I was in the army. They were good experiences.

J: I went overseas and they had what they call a C2. You probably heard about that. They were very slow. They were making a ship almost a week in the shipyard. They turn them out. They carry cargo, carry personnel. So, I ended up on one of them and we were in the middle of this big convoy. It took us 28 days to go from Virginia to Africa because you only go as fast as the slowest ship. They had the Navy boats patrolling the outside and all of that.

So, we go through the Straits of Gibraltar. I thought I would see the Straits of Gibraltar. It was all blackout. I couldn't see the Strait.

Q: It was at night?

J: It was early in the evening. It was dark. So, right in the middle of it down the middle of the convoy comes this pleasure cruiser and I'm looking at it. I'm standing with a Navy officer and I said, "Christ, there's nobody on that ship." He said, "There are Germans on there. They're taking pictures of this convoy. We'll probably get bombed tomorrow." Bombed tomorrow?

The next night at sundown just when the sun was setting, six German planes came over and they started dropping bombs and I was scared. I'm in the middle of the Straits of Gibraltar and they're hitting some ships near me and hitting the water near where we were. I'm looking at Africa wondering if I can swim that far. It must have been six, seven miles. I couldn't swim that far but that's what I was thinking.

All of the sudden, two British Spitfires came out and they shot down two or three of the planes and the rest of them (unclear). I had to give these guys credit. They dove right in the middle of these planes. Well, they knew what the hell they were doing. There's no question about it.

We were wondering where the hell we were going. Of course, Axis Sally came on the air. We would listen to her on the ship and she said that they had sunk a lot of ships and killed a lot (unclear). They had sunk one ship and there was no personnel like me soldiers and stuff who went over. Nobody got hurt.

So, we're wondering. We're going to Sicily. We were probably going to land in Sicily because we used to get regular reports Patton was doing this, Patton was doing that. We're all convinced we were going to Sicily. We passed Bizerte, and all of the sudden the ship made a u-turn and landed at Bizerte.

Q: Where is that? Italy?

J: Algiers. It was all bombed out. Bob Hope had been there the day before we found out. The airport, they were working on the air field. They were working on that filling in the holes because the Germans had bombed that. They put us on trucks and we rode out in the country a couple of miles. We bivouacked in an olive grove. That's when I first came in contact with Arabs. We didn't call them Arabs. We called them A-rabs. You go into Bizerte. It was all bombed out. You'd walk down the street and it would be loaded with people and you don't hear a sound. (unclear) on their faces and stuff.

So, I was there for awhile and then we got orders. We still thought we were going to Sicily but I ended up in Naples. That was an education. Walking down in Bagnoli just north of Naples and these kids come up to (unclear). "How much?" A Hershey bar. Believe me, I didn't accept any offers.

L: It was very sad.

J: It was really something. So, we ended up in the race track which was Mussolini's favorite race track which was a replacement depot. I was there for a couple of weeks then I got assigned to the

36th Division up at Monte Cassino. There were more casualties at Monte Cassino than any place else in World War II including D-Day.

Q: Trying to take...

J: It was also because the Germans were so good and then trench foot. I had two or three friends. I'd see them down at Naples later on after I got out of combat. They were all smiles. "I'm going home. I gave up a leg but I'm going home." Trench foot. You'd get infection and everything else and the only way they can cure it is to cut off your foot. They were happy as hell. "I've got one foot left but I'm going home. I'm going home." That's how they felt about it you know.

The closest I came to having it, I guess, up there was - in Italy if you look at a map around Monte Casino, there is a little stream called Rapido River. "Rapido" is rapid, right? Here I was in February (1944) and this river is really flowing. It wasn't frozen but there was snow on the ground.

I had a detail to go across that river in rubber boats -one rubber boat- with these six GI's and another officer to see what the Germans were doing. Don't make any contact with them. This are the orders you get.

So, they had cleared the mine field from here to there. There was white tape down. They put white tape. The Germans would go, oh, bomb between the tape.

We get into the rubber raft and just as we were ready to push off, they open up fire from the other shore. Machine pistols. They sunk the boat right away. We lost our guns in the river. It was February 1st, the middle of winter and I'm in the water.

I drifted downstream not far. It wasn't far. I figured, I got to get out of the water. I get out and I look at this big field and there is no white tape there. I'm scared to death. There is no question about it. So, I started crawling. It was about here to the next house across that field. It took me over two hours to go that far. I go like this. Nothing happed. Then a little bit more.

I finally got back, of course, and I went up to battalion headquarters to report and told them what had happened. He said, "Don't worry about it Lieutenant. It's probably just a couple of Jerries out to take a leak. We'll do it again tomorrow night." I hear this rumpus outside his headquarters. I got out and there's my sergeant who had come in at Anzio and he says, "I'll kill that son of a bitch. What does he mean they're out to take a leak. What the hell he's sitting there smoking a cigar." It took three or four guys to hold him back. Finally, I calmed him down.

I went back thinking I would have to do it again the next night but they called it off. Instead of going that way we went around this way where there were more mountains. My last day up there, they were shooting at us from the Abbey with machine guns and rifles. They said there were no Germans up there but somebody was shooting at us.

Q: Didn't they bomb the daylight out of that place?

J: Oh yeah. I'll get to that. So, they were throwing artillery shells and all of the sudden I see my arm is bleeding. I don't know what the hell happened. I was scared to death no question about it. So I get down and go to the aid station to get it treated. So, I'm standing there talking to the officer (unclear). The Sergeant's name was Woods. I said, "Do you have a Sergeant Woods who came through here?" They said, "Oh yeah" I said, "So, how is he?" They said, "Oh, he's had it." I said, "Was he hit?" He said, "Oh no, he's out of his mind." All that combat you know. We went on this patrol. I looked at him and said, "You know, Sergeant, you got your safety on?" (unclear). He said, "I don't take it off until I see a German. I haven't taken the safety off since Anzio" That's a long way. But that's the way the German are. Their non-coms were better than our field officers when it came to military knowledge and stuff like that.

Anyway, I'm laying in the hospital. I hear this awful roar. What the hell is that. I looked up. I never saw so many planes in my life. Probably more, but I never had seen that many planes. They bombed the Abbey. All you could see was this big smoke and dust. It wiped out the Abbey.

The doctor who was examining me said. "You're having trouble breathing?" "Yeah, I am in a lot of trouble in here." He said, "I think you have Bronchial Asthma." Then I remember, I used to play ball and if the gym was hot, I could run like hell. If the gym was a little cold or there was a big crowd, I had trouble breathing. You don't give it a thought when you're in your early twenties you know. So, they listened to me and said I was limited service. I couldn't go back to my company because nobody who couldn't breathe should go back to the infantry. It saved my life. It really did.

L: That's how come he got an Italian battalion.

J: They don't send you home after all I was physically alright. I had trouble breathing under certain conditions. First, I went with a black battalion, a black company. Then I told you about the fight I had with the Colonel and he shipped me out the Italian battalion. That was the greatest break I got overseas as far as that goes. I ended up with her. I didn't get hurt.

L: Yeah, we had a ward that had German prisoners.

Q: You did?

L: Yeah, and I felt so sorry for them because they had men, old men and some of them really weren't able to fight. They had ulcers They had a great many physical deformities but they put them in the army anyway. They were scared to death because on the same ward, we had two SS men. We know they were.

J: (unclear)

L: They were scared the other ones so bad. The fact is at one time, one of them knifed another one - one of the SS men in the lavatory. But I really did feel sorry for some of these German people. They just put anything in the army.

Q: Towards the end.

J: We were pushing through Italy. Genoa was liberated. I got a hold of her and said we're going to go see Genoa. It wasn't that long a trip. I forget how long but it wasn't long. We get up there and I had a camera and film and I saw a Kodak sign all in Italian but Kodak. So, I go in there to get a roll of film. This British soldier walks in.

L: When he came out, there was people all around the jeep.

J: I'm getting to that. So, I go in there and this British soldier says "Well, mate it's all over huh." I said, "What's over?" He said, "Hitler's dead. Germany surrendered." This is how I found out the war was over, you know. So, I'm going to go back to tell her. I go back to the jeep and there were people crowding around the jeep. I thought something was wrong. I got to her and said, "Are you alright?"

L: I don't think they had seen an American woman.

J: They hadn't seen an American nurse. They wanted to look at an American nurse and that's why all of the people were around her.

Q: Italian people?

J: All Italian people.

Q: So, that was early May?

L: That was right after the war with Germany ended.

Q: It was May 8th, Hitler shot himself..

J: It was May 9th.

L: Because we hadn't heard. We heard it there.

Q: Mussolini was dead by then.

J: I was in there when they strung him up.

Q: You were there? You'll have to tell me that story. You were there. That was in Milan wasn't it?

J: I was there. I just happened to be there. I wasn't looking for Mussolini. I saw this big crowd and they had him strung up in a gas station on a sign for gas hanging by his ankles with his girlfriend there.

They were going by spitting on him. His eye was hanging out and they're kicking him. He's dead.

L: I thought that was (unclear)

J: Then with her, they tied her dress around her knees. She was upside down but they tied her dress around her knees. We saw some weird things, I'll tell you that.

L: They're very emotional people.

J: They're very emotional. I don't know.

L: Of course, a lot of them hated Mussolini. They just had to go along with him, you know.

J: They had no choice. He did an awful lot of good for that country. (unclear), railroads and Rome. Some of the monuments. He built like the Victor Emmanuel monument. It's beautiful. I looked. I couldn't believe it.

On the wall, they had all the good things he had done and made what do you want to call it in the wall. Not paintings.

L: (Unclear)

J: All the way through to Ethiopia that was it, that was is.

L: (unclear) all those buildings for us. They had gorgeous buildings.

J: She got to meet the Pope. I did too.

L: I saw him.

J: Pope Pius the...

L: The twelfth.

J: Pope Pius XII

L: They talk about him now.

J: They say he was a (unclear) for the Germans but the Swiss Guards, they all have to be six feet or more, came over and asked him she would like to meet the Pope. I said can I go in there. Yeah sure.

L: The women they love to sit right up next to the Pope. The Pope was here. We were here. The rest of the men had to go down there.

J: But very impressive. He spoke excellent English.

L: You kissed his ring.

Q: Did you get a photograph?

L: No, you couldn't take any pictures.

Q: Your mother must have been impressed.

J: We went to almost everywhere we could in Rome. What was it, the uh Catacombs.

L: The Catacombs.

J: The Catacombs. You're doing stuff like that. That was nice but you look back forty years later, I was there.

Q: You guys haven't been back to Italy?

J: No. I have no desire to go back there. I had such liberty. I had a jeep.

L: (unclear)

J: I actually stole a jeep because what I used to do was get an old jeep (unclear). The only identification they have in the service is the number on the hood. So, I would make friends with some guy that's getting shipped out of some outfit and we'd switch hoods. He'd take my old hood for a new hood. I ended up with a brand new jeep and it had my name on it "Character". That was the name of my jeep.

I was going to get a motorcycle but she said if you get a motorcycle, I am never going out with you again. So, I never got a motorcycle.

L: Would you like a sandwich or anything?

Q: No, I'm fine.

J: Are you recording this?

Q: Yes.

J: Oh. Good. Good.

Q: (unclear)

J: I was wondering if you had a photographic memory of something.

L: (unclear)

J: I never told you about the Straits of Gibraltar. On my way home, I had heard through the mail and stuff that there was an awful whiskey shortage in the United States. Everything was going to the servicemen and they couldn't ship it and stuff like that.

So, I had made friends with the guy who was in charge of liquor in Leghorn, Italy. I got him a pair of officer shoes and he thought I was the greatest. I had about five or six bottles of Rye. I'm going to take them home.

We were in (unclear) to take on ballast because all we had was troops on and they wanted weight in the ship when the water got rough. We're hanging out there practically the whole day so I figured what the hell, I'll break out a bottle. I'm with a couple of the Majors and a Captain in this cabin that we had. We started drinking. We didn't have any water, or ginger ale or soda. We'd pass the bottle around.

So, it's just getting dark and we're going to ship out. By this time, I was smashed. I don't deny it. I thought I better get some air. We're going through the Strait of Gibraltar. I had so much to drink. I couldn't see it. So, I went through there twice and never saw the rock.

L: There's nothing much to see.

J: Huh?

L: There's nothing much to see.

J: There isn't but you can always say, I saw the Strait of Gibraltar.

The last day I was there. While I was in Naples, Vesuvius erupted for the last time. I was in Naples. I didn't know her then, I don't think. Anyway, I was in Naples on the Via Roma you hear a lot of glamorous stories about the Via Roma. If two Volkswagens are going this way, they had trouble passing. It's a real narrow street then it widens up and goes to Rome.

So, anyway, I'm there and it was like snow coming down from Vesuvius, So, I'm ducking down in this doorway to get out of it for a few minutes to get a breeze. I realize there is somebody in there with me. I'm not saying anything but finally this feminine voice says, "how are things in Jersey City?" A nun. There I am. Vesuvius is erupting and I'm caught in a doorway with a nun. I said, "What are you doing here?" She said, "Same as you. I came over here for this and can't get out."

So, I talked to her for awhile. It's the story of my life. That's why I don't play the horses. I'm stuck in there. God knows how long it's going to be and I'm with a nun.

L: You know what I really miss which I would what I would like to have seen the (unclear0

J: I went over there.

L: I went to Vesuvius. The city.

J: You know what it was there. The village that got wiped out. That was nothing but a collection of houses of ill repute. Guys used to go in there and point at what they wanted - what service they wanted. Some things really surprised me.

L : Weird.

J: Weird. I'll tell you a weird thing. Caruso. The singer. He's buried in Naples. All during the war, they had volunteers, Italians, standing guard over his tomb. In this big cemetery they were the only ones there standing guard over it.

The Germans would come over and put anti-aircraft guns in cemeteries. We did the same thing. Most of the Italians don't get buried, they get put in walls around an area. The Germans would bomb. Not one bomb touched his grave, his tomb (unclear). He is like god in that country. Enrich Caruso. I don't know about now.

L: He had a perfect talent.

J: I found out volunteers all night long would patrol his tomb so nobody could mess with it. I saw a lot of that because they had small cemeteries around Italy and people are not buried in the ground. They're buried in the walls. When you bomb them, there's bones all over the place.

L: (unclear). There's so many rats.

J: Like that.

L: We went to a movie one night. I had to put my feet up because the rats were running right across the stage and when they put the lights on to change the reels.

J: Change the reels.

L: Oh god, they were like this.

J: That's a small one. (unclear) We ended up in the balcony with a railing so she ended up with her feet on the rail most of the time after that. They would put the lights on to change the reels.

We had some weird things happening.

L: . It was an adventure You never regretted it.

J: You never regret it but you wouldn't want to do it all again. Oh, certain parts of it were alright.

I met this family in Bagnoli.

L: He wants them to make pizza. They never heard of pizza.

J: The woman was a great cook. My buddies and I, we used to steal cheese and stuff and tomatoes and stuff and bring the stuff to her and she would make dishes. I asked her to make a pizza. "No, no pizza. no cabish, no cabish." I'm trying to tell her what it's like and she goes in the kitchen and comes out and what she made was pizza but in squares, little squares. I'm thinking boy, they'd go over big in the states. I never followed through on it. It was delicious. She was a good cook anyway with the spices.

L: (unclear). He was Italian.

J: Jocomo (unclear)

L: He took this house and (unclear) gave him a little thing like this. I knew what he meant when I tasted it. It was just like fire in your stomach

J: It like exploded in your stomach.

Joc was quite a guy. He had escaped from a German work camp. He got down through the lines. He showed up when we took over apartment where the city hall was being built in Leghorn. (unclear) but it was enough to live in. We made beds out of 2x4s. We'd make a frame and get machine gun belts and put them on to get a little bit of cushion. There was no mattresses or stuff. We got Jock American clothes. He learned to speak English.

After she left Italy, he would come up to my room and I've got a portable type writer someplace. He used to take it over and put it "write Miss Betty, write Miss Betty a letter." I sent her I don't know how many. She never got one of them.

Q: Never got them.

J: Never got one of them. She wrote me too but I never got one of them.

Q: OK.

L: You know, we lived in tents when I was in Italy. They were winterized. They had a floor and they were boarded up halfway on the sides. Then we had a potbelly stove and oil. We had to wash in our helmets. That's why I never liked camping. When I had to go with the Girl Scouts with Kathy my oldest girl, oh god I hated it because you had to go sleep on the cots and everything. I had enough of that.

Q: So, this is about as far as the camping goes now.

L: This is bad enough.

J: When I went in the army in '40 we were out at Camp Upton, Long Island which hadn't been built yet really and we were in the same kind of tent she's talking. We had a potbellied stove. It

was one, two, three, four..six of us in a tent. So, we had an agreement that anybody that got up during the night and had to go to the latrine, when they came back, they would have to stoke the fire to take away some of the chill. That worked pretty well.

Some guy came in with Yankee ingenuity and he rigged up an oil burner. I don't know what he did but there was a little thing coming in dripping oil. We had heat all the time in the tents

We spent the winter there. In Suffolk County it can get pretty cold in the winter time out there on eastern Long Island and they were building barracks. In the spring, we moved into the barracks. It was like a palace.

I remember laying in my room and my boss who was from Good Humor happened to be on Long Island and I'm lying in bed and he walked into the room.

Q: I remember, didn't the newspaper do an article on you?

J: Yes. What that was they had a guy he had German accent. He was an officer. We used to call him (unclear). Some of you guys couldn't find a bass fiddle in a telephone booth. He had this accent.

So when he gets finished, the photographer says he wanted four guys. He wanted to take a picture for the paper. I was selected with three other guys who I knew. We were to run up this rise and leap through the air with fixed bayonets and come down.

Q: (unclear)

J: This guy. I didn't know what newspaper he was from. So, what the hell. We did it. we went through the air. We had the World War I helmets on not the kind you're familiar with. World War I. We went through the air (unclear) jumped as high and far as I could. I hit the ground and my helmet came off and I said, "Oh shit, I spoiled the picture" The guys said, "No, I got a good picture, I got a good picture."

I said, "Where is the picture going to be?" He said, "(unclear) probably the Times whoever wants the picture." OK. I never gave it another thought.

Forty years later, the local newspaper down here like the *Times Union* used it for like a fiftieth anniversary or something like that and on the front page they got the picture with the three of us jumping and my helmet starting to come off. I had been looking for that picture for forty years. So, I called this guy.

Q: It must have startled you.

J: Oh yeah. It's me. So, I called up this guy at *Newsday* who used to work for me at Good Humor as an icebox man part time. He was a writer. He remembered me and I told him. He said, "Are

you going to be home this afternoon?". I said, "Yeah." He said, "Is it ok if I send somebody over?" I said, "Yeah"

He sends over a woman and she took my picture on the front porch looking at the picture. It comes out at the newspaper a full page picture. That was the picture. Just like I am talking to you now, I was telling him about going in the army. I didn't mention much about overseas. I mentioned about going in. There were eight of us. We were the first ones to go from Nassau County. They had a big banquet. The county supervisor came over and they gave us gifts, a travel kit, comb. It was on (unclear) Road in Freeport. I got the letter home someplace if wanted to bring my parents to accommodate then. It was really something.

When I volunteered I never figured. I never told my parents. My father picks up a local newspaper and there on the front page "First Volunteers from Nassau County" and there's my name listed.

He said, "Why didn't you tell me you're going?" I said, " I was going to get drafted" and he said, "Yeah, you're right"

L: They guy that did that article on you.

J: Ed Lowe

L: Ed Lowe. He's on TV a lot. The Catholic station.

J: Quite a reputation.

L: With Monsignor (unclear).

Q: Does he still work at *Newsday*?

J: He writes columns for human interest stuff

L: He's a very nice man.

J: He wrote a book and he was over in Green Acres (unclear). So, I went over and he was talking to people and I'm standing in the back like this looking at him. He stopped and he looked and he looked at me. He said, "I've got to change the subject for a minute. That guy there used to be my boss when I worked in the cold room of Good Humor Ice Cream."

I had a Good Humor cap. We had caps (unclear). I had taken it over there and given it to him. You know. A friendship thing. He was a good guy. (unclear)

Q: I was wondering what year did you get married.

J: '46.

Q: Did you settle right in Valley Stream then?

L: Before we got married, I was at Dick's. I used to come over (unclear) but they weren't building anything. It's a good thing the bank had to approve everything and we were looking at some damn shack.

J: Yeah. It was terrible.

L: We were so desperate, we were going to take but the bank wouldn't give us a loan.

J: But then by a stroke of luck I went to a real estate office in (unclear) which is the town next to Valley Stream and this woman says (unclear). I said how did you know me. She said she used to live next to (unclear). I used to watch you necking on the back step with her.

So, I told her I was looking for a house. I'm getting married. She said, "I just got a phone call."

L: It just went on the market.

J: It just went on the market. \$7500. I said, "What's the matter, no roof on it? Let's go over and take a look at it." There was an old guy painting the house. I said, "Is this house for sale?" He said, "Yes, but I am not letting anybody have it until I'm done painting it." (unclear)

L: They had a couple in there.

J: They had a couple in there and they were paying \$40/month rent.

L: They told us that they weren't going to buy it. They could have gotten it for \$2400 years ago but we were desperate and we took it. Now it's worth \$260,800. That's what they assessed it at and I was so mad because of my taxes. So, I called them up but because we were both in the service and both senior citizens and Jim has (unclear), we were only assessed for \$2000 so I said don't bother sending me the papers, I don't want to protest.

J: I went down to the village auditors because I heard that veterans were getting exemptions. So I went down there and they wanted to know how much time I spent in the service, what decorations I had (unclear). I am giving her all the information, how much combat I had. I went back a couple weeks later to see what the answer was. She said that we gave all the credits that you're entitled to and actually, we should pay you to live in Valley Streams.

L: We didn't even have to pay a town tax.

J: (unclear). that one we have to pay.

L: We pay town and school.

J: The only tax we pay now is school tax. That's everywhere I'm sure.

L: That's everywhere.