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Aurio J. Pierro oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, June 30, 2008

Aurio J. Pierro (Interviewee)

Michael Hirsh (Interviewer)

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[Transcriber's note: The Interviewee's personal information has been removed, at the request of the Interviewer. This omission is indicated with ellipses.]

Michael Hirsh: How do you pronounce your name?

Aurio J. Pierro: My first name?

MH: Yes.

AP: Aurio, A-u-r-i-o.

MH: Aurio J. Pierro. P-i-e-r-r-o?

AP: Yeah. Some Italians pronounce it Pierro, but I say Pierro. (pronounced differently)

MH: Pierro. And you live in...and your phone number is...What's your date of birth?

AP: 3-1-17 [March 1, 1917].

MH: 3-1-17, making you ninety-one years old?

AP: Ninety-one, yeah. Young guy.

MH: Congratulations, man. You're not the oldest person I've interviewed; the oldest person I've interviewed was ninety-six.

AP: Pardon?

MH: The oldest person I interviewed was ninety-six.

AP: Is that right?

MH: Yeah. Can you tell me, where did you grow up?

AP: I was born here...in this house. I still live here. Went to the local school; I graduated from Lexington High School in 1934. In those days I could go directly to law school, which I did, and graduated from Suffolk Law School in 1938. Didn't pass the bar, was in the Selective Service before Pearl Harbor, and when Pearl Harbor happened, I got my orders to report to Fort Devon, Massachusetts, and was inducted on January 15, 1942. Want me to go on?

MH: Keep going.

AP: Okay. I took my—at Fort Devon, I was assigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky, went down there for my eight weeks basic training. From Fort Knox, I went down to 3rd Armored Division, was assigned with B Company, and I remained with B Company all the way until the end of the war.

MH: Okay. When did you—so, were you an enlisted man or an officer, considering you were a lawyer?

AP: No, I was enlisted. They didn't seem to have much need for any lawyer-trained people, or many of them.

MH: Okay. When did you go overseas?

AP: September—well, we took our training at Camp Polk, and we had desert training in the Mojave Desert. Came back from there, went to [Fort] Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, and in September we went overseas to England. September forty-three [1943].

MH: And how long were you in England?

AP: Well, we were there until the invasion. And we were—our tanks were ready to make wet landings, and our mission as a so-called heavy armored division was to move in after the initial landing. And we landed—I landed at D+17.¹

MH: When you say “wet landings,” tell me what that means?

AP: Well, to me it means that our tanks were equipped with waterproof material so we could get into water up to the top of the turret. In other words, they waterproofed the tanks and there was a duct at the back for the exhaust and everything else, which extended up to the top of the turret, so we could get in water up to the top of the turret.

MH: So, it’s actually rolling on the bottom, on the sand.

AP: Yeah. And we made a wet landing. We did not land on dry ground. The ramp was off, and we were in the water. The drivers really—once they get off the ramp in the water, they couldn’t see anything, but the tank commander, being up above—that was the whole idea of the tank commander, being able to observe more than the crew inside down below.

MH: That would have to be terrifying, wouldn’t it?

AP: For those inside?

MH: Yeah.

¹ D-Day, June 6, 1944, plus seventeen days, i.e. June 18, 1944.

AP: Oh, yeah. And initially—the initial combat of course, everyone and the tank commander had heads down. But you couldn't be a good survivor if the tank commander had his head inside and couldn't look over too good. We had periscopes we could maneuver, but that was not the best. So, if you could have your eyeballs hanging over the top of the tank, you can observe 360 degrees, if necessary, and see where the enemy was. It was much better, and that's the way it developed with us. Under circumstances where we were under heavy bombardment, shelling, I closed the hatch a few times.

MH: That was D+17, so there was no fire on the beach at that point, was there?

AP: No fire at the beach? There was no fire at the beach, but we moved in just a short way—it was in the afternoon—and we started pass the burning buildings, it wasn't very far inland. And we moved to our bivouac area.

MH: Which beach did you land at?

AP: Omaha.

MH: Omaha Beach, okay.

AP: That's where they took us.

MH: So, buildings were burning still when you got inland.

AP: Oh, yes. It was afternoon, and we didn't go very far before buildings were burning. That first night was—one of the things I remember (inaudible) was hearing the German machine guns. They had a different sound than ours, quite distinguishable from ours. So, that was one of the memories I have. (inaudible) and to hear that German fire that first night.

MH: You were older than most of the guys.

AP: Well, not in my division.

MH: Ah. Okay.

AP: In my division, I was one of the Selective Service. When I went in the service there were guys from all over the country, and some of them ten years older than I was. They had been—some of them had been in the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] already. But the average age was, I think, about my age when I went in. Anyone who came in afterwards when we were getting ready to go in overseas, they were the kids, eighteen or nineteen years old. They were the kids.

MH: Right. So, do you get sort of treated like a father figure by those people?

AP: Pardon?

MH: Do those kids who were around sort of treat you like a father figure, or an older brother?

AP: By that time when we went overseas, they were the younger group, to replace some of the members who had done all the training beforehand. But they just weren't—well, they culled them out. Not everyone that trained in this country went overseas.

MH: At this point, had they told you anything about concentration camps? Did you know anything about them?

AP: No, not a word. No, never even heard of them.

MH: Okay. What about as you moved into Germany?

AP: Say again?

MH: As you moved into Germany, did anything filter up to the troops about those things?

AP: No, no. We were the first to penetrate Germany around Stolberg and Breinig, the little town there by the German border there. And no, we—no. The concentration [camps], didn't hear anything about that. We were too busy doing other things.

MH: What was the first heavy combat you were in?

AP: The first combat?

MH: Yeah.

AP: In Normandy, just as we moved in the Normandy area, and that's where they set up the task forces. In training up until that point, I was in B Company 1st Battalion, and 1st Battalion was three companies of light tanks, headquarters, and that was 1st Battalion. 2nd Battalion was three companies of medium tanks. We called them medium; they were referred to as Shermans, but they were medium tanks. And the 3rd Battalion consisted of three companies of medium tanks.

Once we got into Normandy there, they started to put the task forces together, and they broke up the battalions. A Company stayed with the 1st Battalion, and they brought in two of the medium companies. B Company went to 2nd Battalion, so we were a light tank company and two medium tank companies. And the 3rd Battalion was the same way. And of course, at that time, when they set up the task forces, there was really a complete fighting force. The tanks and then—initially, in the campaign in France, they had considered the infantry working with the tanks, and they had the infantry leader, whoever that was, as the one in command of the unit. But that didn't work out. So, once they changed it to have whoever was the tank leader took over the operations, that's when we really started to move. He could command the tanks, and the infantry rode on the tanks and they were part of the—most of the assaults.

MH: And which armored division were you in, again?

AP: 3rd Armored Division.

MH: 3rd Armored Division.

AP: The Spearhead Division. We got that nickname by being the spearhead of the 1st Army. And when I mention tanks, all I get from civilians is, "Oh, Patton."

MH: Where did you go into Germany? You had mentioned a city before.

AP: Around Breinig in Germany; it was around Stolberg. It's south of Aachen.

MH: And your first combat in Germany was what?

AP: In Germany?

MH: Yeah.

AP: Actually, that was just when we penetrated—went across the German lines there. We had some of the most terrific bombardments of artillery that we ever had, and it was very touch and go there. That was a penetration: the Germans brought out all of their big guns and artillery and other forces. The Siegfried Line there was protected with their pillboxes, and that was touch-and-go there.

MH: I was in the Army; I was in the infantry. I just can't imagine what combat is like in a tank where you realize if the tank gets hit, your chances of getting out are not real good.

AP: Yeah. Well, we called them tinderboxes, or there was another term: the cigarette lighter. And that—you talk about the fact when we first entered Germany, the other side of the (inaudible) at the time was just forests. There were no names as far as we were concerned. I recall my platoon was being pushed around to take a defensive position anywhere that was needed.

I remember that at one point there, we went to an area that needed help, and I could see that their platoon—the platoon sergeant's tank was about seventy-five yards where I could see, and it had been hit, burnt up. At that point, the toll—I think the (inaudible) tank commander in there was supposed to be the only survivor of the tank. And the driver, (inaudible), who was a German immigrant, he was—his tank was hit, he was in the tank, and the tank burned up. They just couldn't get to him to take the remainder of his body out of there. That was the type of situation there at that point, when we first pushed into Germany proper.

MH: There was one point at which your own tank got hit?

AP: Oh, yeah, more than once. Most of the times, though, they missed it, 'cause the bazookas were one of the problems. It seemed like every German infantry had a bazooka.

MH: You mean the *Panzerfaust*?

AP: *Panzerfaust*, yeah. But their most reliable—really, bazooka—was a stovepipe type. And I could see that guy, nearing the end of the war, when he raised out of his foxhole. I could see that the bazooka was pointed at me and it was too late to do anything until he fired, and no one got out of that foxhole. After that—and that was the experience during the initial assault part in Normandy, the first time we saw the Germans. They were very, very bold; and of course, by that time they were well trained, experienced troops. To see a German infantry—once I saw the procedure. He kneels down, points his bazooka and let go. And I was to see that many times after that. So, that was the way they fired the *Panzerfaust*. But their most accurate one was the longer one that was really like our bazooka.

MH: I guess they kept improving them as the war went on.

AP: I don't know that. All I know is that at the end—that's what got my tank, right there at the end. But, before that, they had had a lot of *Panzerfaust* bazookas.

MH: You got the Purple Heart?

AP: Yeah, the Purple Heart, yeah.

MH: More than one?

AP: No, no, that was at the Bulge. And I got the Silver Star there, also.

MH: Tell me about the Silver Star.

AP: Well, when those guys, we came down—have you seen anything of mine on the Internet?

MH: I've read a little bit about you on the Internet, yes.

AP: Did you see the one—there's part of my story about me at Petit Coo. Have you seen that?

MH: No, I haven't, but I'll look for it.

AP: Just a suggestion. There's quite a bit—I was interviewed many times, and one of our members had the foresight, many years ago, to video interviews that we had. And the National Museum person also did it, so there are some out there. It's a good thing, because as time goes on, people forget, or they're not around. So, that would be interesting, to see it. And also, if you just type in my name, there's a lot of it there: my first and last name.

MH: Okay.

AP: But that was when we—we were at Scherpenseel in Germany, which isn't too far inland from our original entry, when the Bulge started. We came down and were part of Task Force Lovelady, and we cut in behind Colonel [Joachim] Peiper, who was really an outstanding German tank leader. I don't know if you heard of him or not. Peiper?

MH: No, but I'll find it.

AP: Anyway, he had made the furthest penetration down near Belgium. We came down from Germany to cut in behind him. As the tank force got down into this Coo area, Tango area, my platoon was dropped off to guard the task force that—the first aid station, and the rest of the task force went down to Trois-Ponts, which was in the southerly direction where that main road and the railroad tracks were. But we were left behind. There were a couple knocked out vehicles in front of the building, and dead Germans in the back by the railroad tracks, and it was calm for a while.

That afternoon, we could see some Germans coming over the hill to us, on the hills and to our left. We were surprised to see them come over that hill and just simply moved up a little bit. And then, the mortars started to come down. We were firing there and moving closer to where we actually had come over the river and the bridge. It turns out later that that was the point that they tried to get over; because that was the only way in that whole area they could cross the river. There was a mountain on the other side, and there was a tunnel right at the bridge over the railroad track by the river. And that was their apparent objective, to get, as I've heard—there've been other writers that talk about it, and they said there were three companies of Germans coming over there, what's left of them anyway. And that was their objective.

Well, we moved back and were firing. There had been five tanks, and we had four tanks; I don't know what happened to the fourth [*sic*] tank. We got back on the bridge and set up a division moving forward to attack. I called headquarters and told them what was going on, and I was told, "Well, hold the position; we're sending up the infantry." And a couple hours later—I don't know what time of night it was—the infantry came up, and they got on the tanks and we started to move forward, retrace our steps, firing as we went.

Came up to the first aid station there, and I got out of the tank to go in the building. The infantry, once we got up there, had gone into the building. I got out of my tank and went into the building, and the platoon sergeant, who had been wounded, was there and greeted me. And about that moment, a bazooka hit, hit the tank in back of my tank. I was knocked to the ground, helmet flew off, and I could feel something in the back. I went back into the tank and started to fire back. The other two tanks, I guess, had gone around the other side, but I was up forward for many hours after that, firing back. They'd come up with a bazooka, and I could see the bazooka go off; it was in the front. However, the bow gunner managed to fire, and it was turned to the left because they turned the gun to that side, and had it in file.

We were hit, and had sparks and smoke and everything come into the tank. They hit on the left side, and my gunner (inaudible), and I grabbed him and held him in and we fired until we ran out of ammunition. They would—every once in a while, when they thought they had a free chance, they would sneak up in the dark and fire the bazooka. The fire went into the building there and surrounded it, and we had shells coming into the building. One particular shell came in through the brick wall there, and I remember stepping on it, idly thinking I could put it out. But the top was burning, we had to go down in the cellar, and there was a big furnace down there. So, the infantry and I set up position behind that furnace there, watching the back door.

During the night, the Germans hollered for us to surrender; we didn't. There was some firing. We hung on and the building started burning down (inaudible). Next morning, next day, there was one attack from around the back. I radioed, "Bring the tank," and crawled out there. The radio was gone. Called headquarters, told 'em what was happening, so (inaudible). In the afternoon, the guys just didn't want to stay there any longer—it was hopeless—so I went back out and contacted headquarters and told them what had happened. I got authorization for us to go back on foot.

As soon as they came into the building, some of the guys went out and started to go for the railroad tracks by the river. Unfortunately, there were tanks on that bridge looking down that railroad tracks, and they were firing. I don't know how many were killed there. My gunner and I were one of the last ones out, and right in front of us, there was a guy

firing. I guess it was some of the infantry—had to be; I didn't know him. He started to fall down, so we carried him up to the bridge. By that time the firing on the bridge had stopped. We got up there, and there was a medium tank up on the bridge. My driver had been hit in the toe. I was fortunate, didn't get any more but one, but that one that hit the guy in front of me could have been me. He stopped it.

So, we get back there and back to headquarters; I don't know what time that was. We got back there and they worked on my back, took out some shrapnel, one of my friends who was filling in. And then, the rockets started going over, and planes, German planes, were flying around. I went out in a half-track and manned a .50 caliber machine gun, and saw one of the rockets come over. It was just at housetop level, but a bit further away—didn't come right over where I was—not too far, heading towards the Channel, Antwerp or someplace, that rocket. That was the—I guess that was Christmas Eve, Christmas night, Christmas Day, we were told.

I got another tank and we had a meal in the woods there, and then I was ordered to go down to set up a defensive position. It was an area that the 'dozers [bulldozers] had dug out a hole in the ground, and he had put the tanks in that, waiting to attack the Germans, and they didn't materialize. And after a day or so—I guess maybe a couple of days—it didn't happen. So, on to something else.

MH: I didn't ask you before: what was your crew position on the tank? What did you do?

AP: Pardon?

MH: What was your job on the tank?

AP: I was the tank commander.

MH: The tank commander, okay. And what was your rank at that point?

AP: Buck sergeant.

MH: Buck sergeant, okay. So, tell me about getting to Dora.

AP: Okay, Dora. By the time we got that far into Germany, we had different missions. In other words, we would have missions, like my platoon attacked—would have a mission to attack a town. At that point, my platoon—I took over the platoon and I had been put in for a direct commission. Anyway, I was moving the platoon in an area there, and I came to a fence. I didn't know what it was, but there was a gate, and there was a barracks just on the other side of the fence. And I didn't have any idea what it was. No idea at all.

We waited, and all of a sudden, the prisoners started to come out of the barracks, opened the gates, and when they realized who we were, they started jumping for joy. But my crew stayed in their tank; they didn't know what was happening, what was gonna happen, what could happen. I remember one individual there; he was hopping around on one foot, hopping on one foot: he was just as happy as the others. So, that was the point where we were, and then a little time in that day passed.

My guys were wandering around on foot there, and they came back and said, "You gotta look in that building over there." It was a brick building. I went in, and there was like an operating table, and there were dead prisoners, emaciated bodies there, tied hand and foot. On the floor, on the table—like an operating table, whatever it was. But that was—and then the—

MH: How do you react to something like that?

AP: Huh?

MH: How do you react to something like that?

AP: Well, by that point, you know, you really didn't feel it any more. We had a lot of casualties by that time. I still, you know, think about those emaciated bodies there, tied hand and foot. Why tied hand and foot? No clothes on: they were naked bodies.

MH: Was it apparent how they died?

AP: No, no. I just didn't know, you know, what was going on there.

MH: Did the other prisoners tell you anything, the other inmates?

AP: Pardon?

MH: Did the other inmates tell you anything about it?

AP: No, no. I didn't see any of those. We had to stay with the tanks. If you were out of the tank, all you had was your sidearm. And you never knew what was going to happen. A crew outside the tank is defenseless, really. So, that—I don't know if it was that night or what. We moved again down into the building part of someplace down there, Nordhausen. I remember there was somebody [who] had found a warehouse with eggs or something like that, and they were making good on those. And then, I guess it was the next day we were off again to another mission. And we were on our way.

MH: You didn't see any of the underground factories?

AP: No, no. We didn't—see, we didn't have that mission. Our mission was to move, and once we took ground, we moved on. And we were really moving. There was—the next larger place there was—well, there were events going on all the time. Our mission was to move on. The people that came up behind us were able to explore all that stuff, but we didn't. We were—I don't know how far we were when they were doing that.

MH: Was the camp you first came to, was that Dora or was that the big Nordhausen camp?

AP: Well, I really don't know. I've talked with a lot of people—journalists—that have asked me about it. And really, at the time, I wouldn't know one from the other.

MH: Okay. Did you have—were you able to have conversations with these people that survived, while you were outside of your tank?

AP: No, no, no. We stayed in the tanks.

MH: But, I mean, when you walked into that building, the one time you went in the building.

AP: Oh, there? No, I don't remember talking with anyone there.

MH: How did your guys react? I mean, you're the tank commander, they're looking to you. And you're confronted with this horror.

AP: Well, you know, it's not like it was something new, something that was a new type. But at the time, we'd seen a lot of dead people and a lot of hurt people, so by that time—and we had a mission: to move forward as long as we were able. We took casualties, and those that were casualties stayed behind and the rest of the crews moved forward. We had casualties, we got replacements, and we went forward.

MH: Did you see any other camps?

AP: No. No, that was, I guess, in our area. And after—you know, a long time after—we went back. We were invited by the German government to go back. I'm trying to think of when that was, 2006? I don't know. Back when they had—I had been back on other trips, too. One of the men in our division, John O'Brien, was in the tourist business, and of course he conducted tours of Europe after the war, every time we could get a group together. I went back with him maybe starting in 1990 or ninety-two [1992]. And I have been back several times.

The last one was when the German government had—well, I guess it was the purpose of the prisoners meeting the liberators or something. I guess that was the theme of it. And that was—and I have been back to somewhat that area on previous trips, but that was the most extensive one. The German government had gone all out to enlarge the opening in the tunnels so you could get further into the tunnels; you couldn't before. And also, I think it was Buchenwald. Have you heard of Buchenwald?

MH: Of course.

AP: That was in—I think that was in 3rd Army area. And on that trip back they had people invited from not only 3rd Armored, but also I think it was the 80th—I don't remember now, but one of the infantry divisions. Yeah, he and his wife, and their first name's both Jean. I've been thinking about going back in my records to renew my memory of his last name. I think he was from one of the Carolinas, either North or South Carolina.

MH: Did the experience you had—well, years later, after the war, how much of this stuff comes back to you? Or are you able to put it aside? I mean, you had a long career as an attorney, I understand.

AP: Yeah. When I came back—my mission in life was to become a lawyer. And I had trouble passing the bar in Massachusetts. Where are you from?

MH: Well, originally, Chicago. My brothers-in-law are lawyers in Chicago. But now I live in Punta Gorda, Florida.

AP: Well, when I was growing up in an Italian immigrant family, there was no help out there. You had to do it yourself. Tuition my first semester, it was 140 dollars; that came from money—I sold blueberries and worked on a farm. Anyway, that's another story. But when I came back, my ambition was to become a lawyer, and I passed the bar, Massachusetts bar, in 1947. Yeah, 1947. And I still have my ticket for practicing law. I still renew it.

MH: You still have your ticket.

AP: Yup.

MH: What kind of law did you practice?

AP: Well, initially I was with an insurance company, claims, and then I became head of the fidelity and surety bond claim section. And I retired: mandatory retirement age, when you're sixty-five. They were easing people out before it, same old way of saving money, you know: getting younger people for less money. But that's what I—I was the supervising attorney for the fidelity and surety bond claim section. After I retired from there, I went to work part-time for a law firm, with a friend of mine who (inaudible). He was partnered with other people and went there for a while, and then they wanted to go to a larger firm, and we went there, and they were breaking up; it was a time when the big firms were breaking up. And we went down—he and I went down to Quincy, and he wanted to give up. Then I was doing some claims work for another insurance company and they decided they were going to close out the business in Massachusetts, so I decided it was time for me to take a vacation. So I did.

MH: Did your war experiences come back to you? Did you have nightmares? Did you ever have to deal with that sort of thing?

AP: No, no. What I found happened was that when I started talking to my friends—my service friends—and we'd talk about it, it got me thinking about it. And I'd do a lot of

thinking, remembering about it. Normally, you talk to other people that were not in the service with you. You probably hear the stories that the veterans never did talk too much about it.

MH: Right.

AP: And so, I guess I was the same way. I talk more about it now than I ever did, I guess, and I'm kind of thankful for it. Well, Charlie Corbin was the one; he was in the same task force, Task Force Lovelady, and had interesting stories. And he was the one that started this interviewing at the reunions. And then, like I said, the 3rd Armored museum had—they came back from Germany. I guess he did it a couple of times at the reunion. It's good that he did, because most of those guys that took part in that with me are no longer around. They're no longer around.

MH: Right. I'm looking at a website, and there are several pictures of you. There's a picture of you standing in front of a concealed 88.

AP: Oh, yeah.

MH: Do you have that picture?

AP: Yeah.

MH: Is it possible to get a copy to use?

AP: You can't use what you saw?

MH: Um, I don't know whether the quality will reprint. That's the only question I have.

AP: See, that picture, you can see two versions of that. One is the original, when I had my gunner standing next to me. And when Vic Damon, who put together the 3rd's website, he wanted—when he was talking about me, he wanted something so he brushed out my gunner. My gunner was killed. Anyway, that was—that anti-tank gun, a lot of the GIs talk about the 88. The Germans didn't have that many 88s. Their 75 high-powered, high-velocity gun was their main event, really, even the Panzer tank and anti-tank guns. And that was there when we first covered that minefield on the coast (inaudible).

When we went through that minefield, my company was—the objective was, as soon as we come through the minefield, to move to the left, to make contact with the 1st Battalion task forces coming up, going through that same minefield, extended minefield, to our left. So our mission was going, but we had such heavy artillery and direct fire there. At that one point there, I was in my tank, and I get this fire. I get hit just over the top of the tank and the tank behind me. It was a good thing I was in sort of a lowered position there; otherwise, I wouldn't be here. And it was coming from the area where the Germans were. They had the most elaborate defensive position we ever saw—that I ever saw over there—in that area, with the minefields and the underground quarters of them.

MH: This was the Siegfried Line?

AP: Twenty, thirty feet down.

MH: This is the Siegfried Line?

AP: They had—and my idea of having him get that picture was to demonstrate the size of that 35mm shell and our 37mm shell. If you look at that picture, you'll see, in the lower part, the shells. Well, our 37mm, which had a pretty high velocity, 2650 [feet per second]; that was as much as an M1 rifle. And to show the comparison of the anti-tank shell and our cannon shell, that was the whole idea at the time. That was in the German defensive position, facing, protecting, backing up the minefield. And, like I said, the original picture has my gunner in it.

MH: Well, there's another picture underneath it with your whole crew, with three guys plus you.

AP: As I tell people, I could tell where I was by the crew I had, quite a bit. And that was at Marburg, on the approach to Marburg, in Germany.

MH: So, would it be possible to borrow a couple of these photos? I can scan them and send them back to you.

AP: Yeah.

MH: Do you have an e-mail address?

AP: Huh?

MH: Do you have e-mail?

AP: Yeah.

MH: What's your e-mail address?

AP: I have two. ...

MH: Okay. Do you want me to send you an envelope for photos, or should I just send you my address? Whatever works best for you.

AP: Why don't you send me something so I can send to you?

MH: Okay. I will do that.

AP: Now, I probably have—I'm trying to think now whether I made copies of those pictures. I'm not sure right now about that.

MH: Well, I'll put something in the mail to you tomorrow.

AP: Yeah.

MH: If you could send me any of the war pictures; and if you have a current picture of yourself, that would be great, too. I see one of you here in a yellow hat.

AP: Pardon?

MH: I see a picture here of you in a yellow hat.

AP: Oh, the yellow cap? Yeah.

MH: How long ago was that taken?

AP: That was—that's when our General [Maurice] Rose was killed. He was killed in a combat situation, on the way to—we were at Marburg, going up to another point. He was following the troops up, and he was killed by a German tanker. But he was born in Middleton, Connecticut, and this Vic Damon and others had put together information as to where he was born, and it was quite a ceremony in Middleton, Connecticut. Have you seen that?

MH: Uh, no.

AP: Yeah. Anyway, Middleton, Connecticut. I don't know how many years ago that was. But it was a very interesting time down there with the ceremony. The political representatives of Connecticut and our representative went down, and a local veterans group was there, commemorating the birthplace of General Rose, who was born on the second floor over a store down on Middleton's main street. And a lot of that is on the computer.

MH: Okay. I've found a number of things while we were talking on the computer about you. So, I'll read all that. I have one other question about Dora. Did you ever hear a story about a lone guy from the 80th—I'm sorry, from the 104th Timberwolves—locating Dora?

AP: Yeah. I've had that, and had some correspondence from another fellow from the 104th. And he claims to have been the first one there.

MH: Yeah, or his daughter claims he says that.

AP: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Frankly, I was getting e-mails from another fellow, Gilbert, Milt Gilbert.

MH: Milt Gilbert, okay. Yeah, I know who he is.

AP: He seemed to be a reasonable guy; but, frankly, I was getting this mail and e-mails and stuff from the family of that guy. It just turned me off.

MH: Yeah. She got me on the phone the other day and went on and on and on, and you know, I listened to her and I'm going, "About 90 percent of what you're telling me, lady, doesn't make any sense."

AP: Yeah. Like I said, they sent me big packets of stuff. I didn't even open 'em up. I got the feeling that, you know, they thought I was a liar or something, you know? And boy, when anybody says that, watch out.

MH: Well, you know, one of the things I've run into—I've interviewed dozens of people by now, and every so often you get into—you talk to somebody who seems to want to convince you that he won the war single-handed.

AP: (laughs) Yeah.

MH: You've run into people like that?

AP: Yeah, they're the ones who do all the talkin'.

MH: Yeah. So, okay, I was just wondering if you had heard of that guy.

AP: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. And, you know, it was a big area, and different places. But when I got the impression that they were trying to question that I was where I was, that just turned me off. Yeah.

MH: All right. Well, I thank you for your time, and I'll put an envelope in the mail to you tomorrow. I sure appreciate it. Thank you very much, sir.

AP: But like I said, a lot of that stuff about me is connected with my name—and also the 3rd Armored. Are you aware of that one, of that e-mail address—or website? 3ad?

MH: Yes.

AP: You are. There's the newer 3rd Armored, which is—well, it can be made up of both World War II and later veterans. But there's a little rivalry going there between the two. But the one that I like the best is by Vic Damon: that's the 3ad.com.

MH: 3ad.com. Okay. All right. Thank you very much, sir, I sure appreciate your time.

AP: All right.

MH: All right. Bye-bye.

End of interview