

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWIN LUSK

FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY
MARK BOULTON
AND
MELINDA MORROW

INDIAN SPRINGS, ALABAMA
MARCH 12, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY
MELINDA MORROW

PROOFED BY
TAYLOR GRIFFEN
ALYSSA CULP

REVIEWED BY
MATTHEW E. KELLEY

BOULTON: This begins an interview on March 12, 2004, just outside of Birmingham, Alabama with Mr. Edwin Lusk. And Mr. Lusk—if you—we should perhaps identify ourselves, if you could give your full name for the cassette please?

LUSK: Edwin Lusk. L-U-S-K.

MORROW: Melinda Morrow.

BOULTON: ... and Mark Boulton. Mr. Lusk, I think we can begin. If you could say a little bit perhaps about ... where you were born, when you were born, and the area you grew up?

LUSK: I was born in Grundy County, Tennessee, November 5, 1918.

BOULTON: 1918.

LUSK: I'm an old guy. (Laughter)

BOULTON: And ... what did your parents do?

LUSK: Farm.

BOULTON: Farm? How long had they been in farming?

LUSK: All their lives. All their lives.

BOULTON: Do you know when they came or when your family first came ...

LUSK: Well, they were Scotch-Irish descendents and they—as far as I know, they lived there all their lives.

BOULTON: Uh huh, so you were born in 1918? And what were your parent's names?

LUSK: Hubert Lusk was my father, and Mary Hazel Lusk was my mother.

BOULTON: And they had lived in Grundy County, as well, all their lives?

MORROW: How many siblings did you have?

LUSK: Huh?

MORROW: How many siblings, brothers and sisters?

LUSK: One sister.

MORROW: Okay. What did y'all do for fun?

LUSK: What did we do for fun?

MORROW: Yes.

LUSK: Hunted and fished and shot rabbits and lizards. It was a lot of fun. That it—we didn't have all the stuff today.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: You created your own amusement. We played baseball.

BOULTON: Did you have ... a close group of friends growing up in that area then?

LUSK: Uh, no, they're all gone.

BOULTON: Where did you go to high school?

LUSK: Uh, first two years at Manchester, Tennessee and then the last two years at Tracy City, Tennessee out there near Monteagle ...

BOULTON: Before we talk about your schooling, ... before we move on, ... about your parents a little bit more perhaps, ... what kind of farming did they go into? What kind of ...

LUSK: Oh it was just general farming of, uh, cattle and hogs and grain and—my father was a school teacher also. He and his brother and his two sisters were all school teachers. His brother was superintendent of the schools. He believed in getting your lessons, period. And, I went—my first eight grades, to my father. He taught in a big ol' story, one room school house. You know all eight grades. He said, "Son if I ever have to whip you at school you get two more when you get home." (Laughter) And, uh, we go to church on Sunday and I heard one of the fathers ask how his boy was doing. And he said, "Well sir, he's doing fine. Well, let me tell you something, if he gets out of line, you go out there on that creek and cut you a limb and tear him up and I'll get him two more when he gets home." (Laughter) You can't do that today.

BOULTON: No. Did he ever ... have cause to do that?

LUSK: No, I knew better.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: One time—this was ... when, we had a fireplace for heat and a wooden cook stove. And we had to go to the woods and cut wood for the fireplace. So one cold day the ground was frozen about six inches. Dad was hitching up a big pair of black mules to a wagon, and he was going to work. And he told me to do something, and I was probably about twelve years old, I probably said something smart back to him. The lines to a pair of mules are a piece of leather probably

about that wide . He said, “What did you say?” And I said it again, and he took one of those lines off and he said, “Bend over,” and he tore me up. Whew! (Laughter) He tore me up. I never said anything again. (Laughter)

BOULTON: Yeah.

MORROW: I bet.

BOULTON: What was the community like that you grew up in when your family was ...

LUSK: It was a valley in the Cumberland Mountains facing the northwest, towards Nashville. It was like a horseshoe, faced the northwest. And we had a lot of friends and we created our own amusement on Saturday and Sundays. Played baseball, hunted and fished, and so forth.

BOULTON: Hmm, was it mostly farmers in the community?

LUSK: All farmers.

BOULTON: All farmers, okay.

LUSK: Yeah.

BOULTON: And, what kind of communal events did you have? You mention baseball. Were there any kind of regular get togethers, things like that?

LUSK: Oh, we had baseball game on Saturday afternoons at one of the places in the valley. Of course, all the neighbors gathered around, it was a lot of fun.

BOULTON: Yeah. So growing up in the 1920s, how were things economically in that area?

LUSK: Well, uh, in the, uh, of course I didn't have any responsibility in the twenties, but—but, when it came the thirties, in the Depression, we had all kinds of food. We had food running out our ears,

BOULTON: Really?

LUSK: But, a dollar was hard to come by.

BOULTON: Hmm.

LUSK: We had what came through the valley, it was called a rolling store. It was a man in a covered wagon and he sold like coffee, sugar and staples and he had chicken coops on the back and he would trade you staples for chickens. I've seen my mother sell—my grandmother sell a dozen eggs for a nickel. I've seen my dad, not to this man, but I've seen him sell a good size hog, a hundred pound hog, for five dollars. But we had all kinds of food. Just money was hard to come by.

BOULTON: Hmm. Yeah. What kind of things would you have needed money for that uh ... was it mostly a subsistence kind of community?

LUSK: Well, uh, we grew wheat and uh, it was about five miles away to the flour mill where they ground wheat into flour. And after, uh we thrashed wheat in May, we'd load up the wagon and take it to the flour mill where they would grind it into flour ... (Inaudible)

MORROW: Did you have a lot of household chores?

LUSK: Hmm, I didn't, my mother did of course. And we usually, in the winter time we'd kill ... uh, five or six hogs. We killed a couple in November and then ... save two or three of them until after Christmas. We killed a total of about five or six hogs. And uh, my dad had a rough sawed box a little bigger than this table, a little deeper. And he would cut, cut the meat up, the hams, you know what country ham is?

BOULTON: Mm hmm.

LUSK: Shoulders and sides and he put a layer of salt about that deep (Gestures with hands) in the bottom of the box, and like a ham, he'd take the skin side down lay it in different pieces and cover that up with a layer of salt and come on up with another three or four stacks of meat. He would leave that in there for about seventeen days depending on whether it was wet or dry or what ... and then he'd take it out and brush it off, and uh, smokehouse just, uh, wood plank walls with cracks in it and he had a big ole iron wash tub. And he would hang that meat like (Gestures with hands) that long, with a stick through the piece and he would hang it across two other pieces up here and it would all hang, hanging there like this. Well, he'd go firing that wash tub out of hickory bark and dry corncobs and and you'd go out there and you'd think that building was burning down. Smoke was rolling out of there, that was pretty good smoke making.

BOULTON: Hmm.

LUSK: Yeah.

BOULTON: So, it doesn't sound like the Depression, when it hit, that it affected you too badly in your community?

LUSK: No, not as far as food. No, no way. We had all kinds of food. We grew, uh, all we could eat. We'd dig potatoes in the fall and early summer. And when we took potatoes, Dad would build up a birth about this thick maybe, six to eight feet in diameter. He'd cover that in wheat straw, about this thick. And we'd lay our potatoes in there and more wheat straw and it ended a cone shape with potatoes and straw, potatoes and straw. And all that wheat straw, turned the rain off and then you'd put dirt over the whole thing. And, uh, rain would come through there and it'd hit that wheat straw and roll off. You'd go out there in the dead of winter and start digging and get fresh potatoes out.

BOULTON: Hmm. What did your parents, uh, what, who did they vote for, do you remember, in 1932?

LUSK: What was that?

BOULTON: Do you remember who they voted for in 1932?

LUSK: Roosevelt.

BOULTON: They were democrats?

LUSK: They didn't know any better.

BOULTON: Right. (Laughter) So they were big FDR men?

LUSK: Oh yeah.

BOULTON: Yeah. Um, let's see. What—how important was religion to this community and to your family?

LUSK: Oh, we went to church and Sunday school every Sunday.

BOULTON: Uh huh. Which, uh, which denomination was that?

LUSK: It was a Methodist Church.

BOULTON: And was that a big part of your, your family life as well ...

LUSK: Yes.

BOULTON: Every Sunday? Okay. Uh ...

LUSK: My dad taught Sunday school class for a while and then, uh, I became a Baptist. My mother was a Baptist and my father was Methodist. So I just hit the middle. I was baptized in a creek. So, uh, I can recall all those days. We had a lot of fun. We had a lot of hard times. And ... we uh—my dad and I had been squirrel hunting one Saturday afternoon and we came back all across the west, a big thunderstorm. You could see where it had risen up, lightning, (sound effect of lightning) by the time we got the stock fed and ate supper, that thing hit. We had, uh, like a fireplace here and I was sitting here, and my dad here and my mother there and my grandmother was sitting over there by the chimney. Well, it was raining so hard you couldn't see the barn and the barn was like across the street. I mean it was a downpour. The lightning (sound effect of lightning) All of a sudden when the lightning hit that chimney and it threw a piece of mortar off and smacked me in the face with it. And blew out the kerosene lights and it blew on the top of the door, oh well, it was about a ten foot ceiling.

BOULTON: Hmm.

LUSK: Between the top of the door and that it just blew it out, whew, it was gone. Well, the kerosene light, it blew it out and just as the lights went out I saw my grandmother drop over in the floor. And, uh, Dad picked her up and put her on the bed, he didn't know whether she was dead or alive. And I was sitting—behind my grandmother there was a window and when that lightning hit the chimney it forked, or most, a lot of it came down through the chimney and part of it jumped on a metal ridge roll and went out and came right down the side of that window. For one thousandth of a second I saw a bolt of white lightning about that big. You, uh, could—it blinded you it was so hot. It was gone. And, uh, next day... Dad and some of the neighbors—we had a wood shingle roof—were up there patching the roof. Well, there was a section of two by four rafters—two by four is about that big, about that wide—ten feet long, that were burned a quarter inch deep. If that rain hadn't been, raining so hard, that house would have gone up like. (Snaps fingers) And the corner boards on the house, about six inches wide. We found two of those, about as far from to that house, (points) down in a field that jerked the nails out and threw them, pretty explosive. Those things you don't forget. (Laughter)

MORROW: Yeah.

LUSK: Yep. (Audio Interference)

BOULTON: Obviously that was a very powerful memory. Do you have any other memories or anything else that stands out in your childhood or of growing up in the valley?

LUSK: Well, there was a neighbor who had a big spring that came out of the mountain. Oh, it was kind of a cave back in there; it was about as far as from here to that far door out yonder. You had to walk in there by stooping over. And, of course there was no refrigeration anywhere. We had no electricity, but maybe at church, one fellow said, "Well, I'm gonna kill a beef tomorrow." There was cold air coming out of that cave. They'd take that back in there and hang it up. Flies couldn't get in there, it was too cold. We'd bring that beef around on a wagon, on a sheet. They had a pair of steels and they'd cut off what you wanted, that was it, but you had to eat it.

MORROW: Yeah.

LUSK: There was no way to preserve it. So it was things like that that you remember. You did what you had to do.

BOULTON: Did you or your family ever do much traveling outside of the valley?

LUSK: No. Go to see, uh, kinfolks maybe, ten, twelve miles away.

BOULTON: Did you have any contact with cities, or anything like that, any urban, uh, environments around it, or any cities around near where you were, nothing like that?

LUSK: Small, small village about five miles away that was, uh—one doctor and he was a big fat fellow. And I'd, uh, always want to take off my shoes and go barefooted early in the spring. Dad wouldn't let me for a while. One day he said, "Alright take them off." I hadn't had the shoes off

thirty minutes and I stepped on a rusty nail. Right up through the in-step. Well, Dad treated it and it was getting bad looking. So he took me down to old Dr. Reynolds. Dr. Reynolds was asking me about my chickens and calves and he was sitting there with, like a, um, small piece of wood and he was rolling some cotton on it. And he was talking to me, and he said, "Well, let me see that foot now." He dipped that in, I guess it was iodine, "well; it doesn't look too bad" and then rammed it up in there. (Ew, laughter) And uh, my mother had pneumonia one time and you know people that have pneumonia they get to a peak and if they make it they start getting better. Well, she passed the peak and then she developed a cough, a bad cough. And the doctor came up, by horse and buggy, every few days to see her and he couldn't find anything, no cough syrup ... to stop that cough. One day he said to my dad, "Hubert I want you to buy you a pint of the best whiskey you can find and a big bottle of glycerin." And he says, "You mix that fifty-fifty, when she starts coughing give her a teaspoon full." It stopped that cough just like that.

BOULTON: It worked then?

LUSK: That's right. It stopped that cough. A mixture of the alcohol and the glycerin soothes your throat.

BOULTON: What memories do you have of going to school?

LUSK: Huh?

BOULTON: How, how big was the school that you went to and what memories do you have of going to school?

LUSK: High school?

BOULTON: Yeah, high school.

LUSK: Oh, Manchester was, I road a school bus about twenty miles away and uh, well, I don't know how big it was, probably, when I graduated from highschool there was probably twenty in the class.

BOULTON: Hmm.

LUSK: And I didn't have money to go to UT [University of Tennessee]. So finally, Dad helped me with what he could and I went up and registered at UT and there was a big crowd there, about 3,500 students, now there's about 35,000. (Laughter)

MORROW: Exactly. (Laughs)

LUSK: And, uh, I stayed in a boarding house and within about two months I had three different uh, four different jobs: I worked for the bandmaster setting up chairs, I worked for the military department, and I waited on tables and washed dishes at the boarding house. Paid most of my way through school. You did what you had to do.

BOULTON: And you went there in 1937? Is that right?

LUSK: Hmm?

BOULTON: Was it 1937?

LUSK: 1937 to '41.

BOULTON: Okay. What was it like making the transition from your, your farming community to Knoxville?

LUSK: A different world.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: A different world. Yeah, there's, uh, I have two classmates that live in Knoxville now, Jim and Ann Wellbanks. He was, he had, he took engineering. He was in the engineering ROTC [Reserve Officer' Training Corps] and I was in the infantry. I had two instructors in the military department, Major Sherfield and Major Hyde. They were World War I machine gun company commanders in France and had been shot up. We had every year, of course we had a parade, we had military drill and everything. Every year, we had a visiting instructor that would come and inspect the unit. Well, one year this fellow was a major from Florida and, uh, I was in the, line like this, you know, I was in the front squadron and he was stopping in front of people. Well, I look over—Major Hyde always told us this, "If you're asked a question, give an answer. If it's wrong, give an answer, don't stand there." So this major was coming down and I said, "That sucker is going to stop in front of me just as sure as the world." He did. I broke that 03 rifle [1903 Springfield]. We had, uh, you know the serial number of a gun is right there where you can see it, engraved in the steel. We had a stencil number on the stock, we were not supposed to know that number, we were supposed to know the number on the stock. I was standing there just like a statue. He said, "Cadet what's the serial number of your rifle." I quoted off about fifteen figures. I didn't know. Major Hyde said to this guy said, "They're not supposed to know that number." This guy "very good answer, very good answer." (Laughter) I never will forget it, it was quite funny. I gave an answer.

BOULTON: Yeah. What was Knoxville like during the 1930s? Could you talk a little bit about what the city was like?

LUSK: Mostly dirty.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: You wear a white shirt and it's—coal soot all over it by noon. Coal soot was in the air just like snow. Everything used coal, but it was a pretty good ol' town I guess and—I enjoyed it, but I wouldn't want to live back there again.

BOULTON: What kinds of things did you do for entertainment when you were at UT?

LUSK: Well, uh, I played tennis. Uh, let's see, I, I was in the agricultural school, at the Ag college and, uh, we had big get togethers out there. Go to some of the dances and just you know general goings on.

BOULTON: Did you see any movies or anything like that while you were there, downtown or anything like that?

LUSK: Oh, occasionally we went. Is the ol' Booth Theatre still there, down on Cumberland?

BOULTON and MORROW: I don't think it is.

LUSK: We'd go to a movie once in a while.

BOULTON: Yeah. Do you remember the first movie that you saw?

LUSK: No.

BOULTON: No, no. Didn't make much of an impression on you? (Laughter) Did you have radio or anything like that in the valley?

LUSK: Yeah, we had radio back then.

BOULTON: Even when you were back in Grundy County?

LUSK: Yeah.

BOULTON: Ok, yeah. And were you keeping track of what was going on in Europe, anything like that ... (inaudible)

LUSK: No. The only thing I remember about what was going in Europe was when in our senior year in ROTC. Of course Major Sherfield and Major Hyde they knew what was coming. And, uh, Major Sherfield said one time, says "When you graduate as a second lieutenant and you get to the service" he said, "You salute that old first sergeant, he will teach you a lot of stuff." And that first sergeant, he was one of the greatest guys you could ever know. I had been ... fortunate enough to know that he ran the company, the commander Captain Stewart, he was, he was the commander of that first sergeant.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: (Coughs) One day, me and another boy from UT, he was in my class, he was in ROTC. We went to Fort Bragg [North Carolina] and reported to B Company in the 60th infantry and Captain Stewart was a regular army man, he had just come out of the Panama Canal, a little short fellow, we called him Jeb Stewart. He wasn't big as a pencil, but he was a good man. He looked at me one day and he knew I had no idea and he says, "Why don't you observe what we do here today." I said, "Yes sir." Second morning he said, "I want you to put the company through close

order drills.” “Yes sir.” And the third morning he said, “You will take command of the 2nd platoon,” “Yes sir.” About a week later. He said, “In addition to your normal duties you will be responsible for the paperwork of the company.” That’s the least thing we had in ROTC.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: ... One day I was sitting in the orderly room and Captain Stewart happened to come in on us, nobody ever came in, but Sergeant Gross, He was a big beer belly guy, chewed tobacco and smoked at the same time. I try to go through that paper work and try to learn it. I says, “Sergeant Gross,” “Yes sir.” I says, “I don’t think I can do everything that Captain Stewart asked me to do, except this paper work. I don’t know what to do.” I says, “I figure you’ve been around here a while.” He says, “Twenty-seven years regular Army, sir.” And I said, “I sure would appreciate some help.” He laid it down on the floor and said, “Lieutenant you just call on me.” He never would say, “I want it done this way,” he’d say, “Captain Stewart wants it done this way.”

BOULTON: Right, right.

LUSK: So, I remember that. I had the good fortune not to be a smart aleck ... If I had been a smart aleck I would have been gone, (Laughter) quick.

BOULTON: What kind of training did you receive in ROTC? And how well do you think it prepared you ...

LUSK: Oh well, we had weapons training ...

BOULTON: Hmm.

LUSK: Oh, um, history, civil war and uh, civil—World War I. We had field problems, like you go out somewhere down around where the football stadium is now, back in there. Major Hyde would say, “alright Lusk, you are the commander of this platoon here and the enemy is over there, where would you set up your gun positions?” Just things like that. Just, pull answers out of the sky. Then I went to ROTC Camp. Guys from different colleges would go to camp. I went to Fort McClellan [Alabama], which is closed now, that’s a mistake, and uh, 1939, we were in tents, ramball tents, you know what that is? It’s a tent about fifteen foot square and there were six men in them, each one of them, cot. And we had uh, an army instructor, Major Curren was our instructor, and he was an old cavalry man. he was so bowlegged that he couldn’t hit a hog in a ditch. (Laughter) But he was a great guy. We could be out on the rifle range and he be coming and in and alright let’s get a song going boys. We was all tired and worn out. And he’d have us ... And, uh, after all that we had boys at Anniston [Alabama], of course different places had different places over the country. I had one boy from Clemson in military school and another boy from South Carolina and two or three boys from Georgia in my tent, but it was very good training. And uh, Fort McClellan is now a German cemetery.

BOULTON: Oh.

LUSK: Prisoners of war were buried. And there's a—in the officers club over there, in the bar, there's murals painted on the wall back there by those Germans. I hope they didn't tear it up. But anyway, those things come and go. I wouldn't, uh, me and another boy from the Army—back then you had to take two years basic ROTC, if you were physically able, you had to take it and uh, come time to register for junior year, you had to decide whether you wanted to take the advanced ROTC or not. Me and another boy, we couldn't make up our minds, so we said, he said, "let's take it Ed." So we went down and told Major Sherfield. We says, "Major if there's anybody that won't fight for"—(microphone falls)—oh, I'm sorry.

BOULTON: It's alright.

LUSK: Cause we're fighting sons of a gun." He says, "Sergeant sign them up." (Laughs) So it was a—he was quite a guy I mean, senior year. He says, "Ed I want you to be regimental adjutant." That's the guy that's out there in front leading. Regimental commander was another farm boy; he is in that picture right there.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: On the right. You take the report from all the companies and you turn around bout face and give the report to the commander. Well, that was my job. I enjoyed—I learned a lot from those fellows. The things they taught us, when I got in combat over in North Africa came back to you like that. (Snaps fingers) He knew the training of thought.

BOULTON: So they prepared you well?

LUSK: Oh, Major Sherfield says, "fellows never try to run from artillery or mortar because when a shell hits it bursts up and out." He said, "If you're here you may not get hit, but if you start running it's gonna cut you down."

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: And they're right. What's next? (Laughs)

BOULTON: You mention some that, certainly we're gonna spend a lot of time talking about your wartime experiences, but just before we get to that, you mention some about that your senior officers ... told you that they probably thought that there was gonna be a war coming and that you'd probably be a part of it. Was that the general view ...

LUSK: Well ...

BOULTON: In ROTC?

LUSK: Yeah, in um, Hitler was going through Poland in '39. And uh, you said you saw that *Band of Brothers* [Movie]?

BOULTON: Um hmm. Yeah.

LUSK: You remember that death camp that they portrayed. You need to see it when you can. It's not pretty, but there was a train load of bodies stacked in those cars like cordwood. And those people in that camp, the people that were still living, you could almost see through their bodies, skin and bones. And the doctors came up and told the men, don't give them any food, you'll kill them. You've got to gradually feed them, like a kid, to bring them back. And uh, that kind of shook me up, but uh—what I did during the war compared to that 101st Airborne or the guys that went in at D-Day was nothing. See, I didn't go into Normandy, cause in North Africa I had to take command of a rifle company one day during an artillery barrage. And uh, a normal company is about 115 plus or minus. And uh, there was little (inaudible) came in to make sure we got the message, because shrapnel cuts phone lines. So I picked up, Major Dilley just—our CO [Commanding Officer] had been hit the first day. He was shot through the knee, a German sniper got him. So he had been taken. The CO was a reserve officer, Major, Colonel, I can't think of his name, anyway, the executive officer was a redheaded West Point major, but if I had to search the whole armed forces I couldn't have found two better guys to serve under. Now, they would eat you alive, but they were fair. In a battalion, there's about 1,000 men, plus or minus, every man loved them, because they took care of the men, and uh, this little (inaudible) came in, and I walk across this little air-wheat field, oh we was about as far as from here to that house or a little farther from the front line. See we had gone up this valley, the big barren mountain over here and then a pass and then the high ground and we was gonna take that high ground. Three or four weeks later we still didn't have it when I got hit. But anyway, I got to the company, and the shells were coming in there like a hailstorm, and I was standing up like a nut. And the old first sergeant, Sergeant Hyndes from Texas says, "Damn it Lieutenant get in that hole before you get blown away." So I jumped in this foxhole and I could see there was a bank of dirt on this side and there was a little rise about as high as that apex in that ceiling, just a little rise and then there was a swell in that high ground. They were looking down our throats for three weeks. And uh, I could see this part of the front lines and I had an M1 rifle, you know what that is?

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: I've got one up there. And uh, I could see men pulling the pins out of their grenades with their mouth and just tossing it. Well, that says they were right out there. And I scream at old Sergeant Hyndes and I say, "you got a bayonet?" He says, "Yes sir." I says "It looks like they're gonna come over with bayonets and grenades." He says "It looks like it." I says "I don't have a bayonet, but I have a M1 with two bandoliers of ammo and the first guy that sticks his head over that, over that ridge is gone." Well, the shelling stopped in about ... five or six minutes, but it seems like an eternity when you're under. And during, well, I told Sergeant Hyndes, I said, "I've got plenty of ammo, then I think you have, so I says we stay." He says, "You damn right we stay." He wasn't about to go ... I'll never forget what he said. Well, anyways—pardon my French. (Laughter) That old fellow he was from Texas, Sergeant Hyndes he was a big tall guy, and uh, the last officer to land up (inaudible). The next morning, I was up there and Sergeant Hyndes says "Lieutenant, I'm gonna tell you something. Whether you pass it on is up to you." He said, "You know that one guy we had in this company that was always getting in trouble." I said, "Sergeant I don't know the man, that wasn't my company." He says, "well yesterday, Lieutenant Decker was the last lieutenant and he was leveled. he had his side blown out." He

said, "Lieutenant Decker got a burst of the German burp gun, Schmeisser ... Schmeisser machine pistol, you couldn't just see it hit one, it'll stick. (Swoosh sound) He got a burst of that in his shoulder and he was standing there holding his shoulder and this rebel rouser, dropped his gun and started back." He says, "Decker reached and got his .45 and he says where you going boy?" He says, "I can't take it Lieutenant I gotta ... He says, "you gonna take it with my gun or a German gun, which one you want?" He went back to get his gun. I said, "Uh, what do you think would have happened," he says, "Decker would have blown his head right off his shoulders." And it would have been his right.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: So, those things you don't forget.

MORROW and BOULTON: Yeah, yeah.

LUSK: I never did say anything about it. And, uh, on the way up there that day to the front lines, I saw a little aide man, a medic sitting there with his legs crossed working on some guy that had been cut up a little. The next day when I was up there he was still sitting there. I reached over and touched him and he just dropped over. He had been hit by a piece of shrapnel somewhere, probably through the chest. Well, you see all this stuff and I often wondered, like uh, growing up Dad cut his finger or something and it'd make me sick. I often wondered how I would react in combat. Like, uh, I have, I had a Navy friend back then, an Auburn graduate and he went to the Navy. Well, thank God for the Air force men and the Navy, they do one heck of a job, those fellows have no idea of what ground combat is.

BOULTON: Hmm.

LUSK: If you're in the Navy you've got clean sheets and hot food every night. If you're in the Air Force and you don't get shot down, you've got the same thing, but in the ground forces you eat, sleep in the mud and the rain. You've got death twenty-four hours a day looking at you in the face. So, this fellow, he's dead now, he got lung cancer from asbestos and his wife is still living, she goes to our church. He and his wife were out here one time, it was back in '92 when they were doing reruns of D-Day and all that stuff.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: He says, "Ed, did you see that last night." I said, "Yeah." He said, "I want to ask you one time, how did you guys in the ground forces stand that?" He says, "I don't believe I could have handled it." Well, that hit me, he hadn't been there. I says, "Now Fred, don't talk like that." I says "You could have handled that." I said, "You, you, there's only one way to handle that, there's only one way to go and that's forward, you can't go this way and you can't go home. You get hardened to it. If a guy gets cut down beside you, you says I'm glad it wasn't me, you gotta keep going." You saw that in the *Band of Brothers*.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: So, anyway, he said, "I still don't think I could handle it." Well, that told me right then, they have no conception of ground combat. And, uh, I came back on the ship with a, two or three guys in my stateroom. One of them was in ground force combat in Italy, company commander, and he said, "uh, I decided to go on patrol with the men, some of the men that night." He said, "I had a little, a little guy that I started taking overseas with me, he wasn't as big as a broom straw, I didn't think he could kill a chicken." I said—"It's a semi-moonlit night" and he said, "I was the third man back from the patrol sergeant with this kid as the point man, everybody had fixed bayonets." And he said, "I saw that kid put up his hand, the halt sign. He had walked up on a German machine gun nest, one guy awake and two asleep." He said, "He came down on that guy with a bayonet and he decided to surrender," "comrade." The next guy surrendered. Well, the third guy started to pull a gun and he said, "that little guy lunged at that guy" and he says "I thought I saw the front sight of that M1 come out of his back, he ran that bayonet all the way through him, and he says, "He was just as cool as a cucumber." He says, "Captain, shhh, there's another one, there's another one up there." That fellow...

BOULTON: That's an incredible story.

LUSK: He says he kicked that German off the bayonet and that German was gurgling and screaming and it didn't bother him. So these things stick in your mind. (Laughs)

BOULTON: Yeah, yeah. What kind of range of emotions did you see from the men around you towards that kind of thing? You said that this guy obviously did what was necessary, but were there other people around you in that kind of situation who didn't react as well or anything like that?

LUSK: Well, all our boys were pretty hardened to it, uh, I had one lieutenant, he lives out in Colorado now, he was in charge of the cannon company [Mortar?]. He'd...he'd break silence, in other words, when the Germans are quiet you'd wonder what they were gonna do next. That's when I started smoking, but I quit twenty years ago. You smoke to relieve something. One day he said, "Ed do you think you'll get killed today or tomorrow?" Just like that, just something funny just to break the silence. But they all reacted about the same. I had some mighty good men. Well, I have a picture of them on that wall down there, that's ... company, the weapons company, the 60th infantry. I lost one of them last January though, the 22nd. I gotta card from his wife; he went all through North Africa and Sicily, and then Normandy. Roy J. Smith, South Alabama boy, dry, droll. He came to us as a new lieutenant out of Fort Benning about two months before we went overseas. And uh, but that wasn't the whole story. He had been regular Army ten years, he was a mortar expert. He could drop one in your hip pocket. And, uh, he stayed over there in the Army, the Army of Occupation and married this very fine German girl—and Jenny and I went to a reunion in Mobile, and he lived just north of Mobile and he died in the middle of January, he had Alzheimers. We went by to see him one time and he was sitting in a chair. And what Karen, his wife says is that he has no pain, he doesn't take any medicine. He's healthy as a horse. And I sat down in front of him and I took his hand and I said, "Roy, it's Ed Lusk." He raised his up just about a half way, smile and went back down. In France, he had been promoted up to the rank of major and one day he got captured by the Germans. They were walking him back to a prison compound and they stopped for a cigarette break and ol' Roy kept his eye on them and when he got the chance he grabbed one of their rifles and killed both of

them and walked back to his outfit, he left them laying. He got captured again later on, just before the war ended and was liberated of course by the Americans.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: But, uh, I met his wife, well, uh, Jenny and I went to a reunion down there back in '80, '89. Well, of course she being German, she taught Roy. you outta she them, how to waltz. But ole Roy, he was quite a guy ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

LUSK: And, uh, May of '44 had, and, I had known Jenny, she was—see I am five years older than she is—in fact, she just had heart surgery about a month ago—and uh, I was back in the back of the room at Algiers and when, when I got out of the hospital. I was in seven—they flew me from Tunisia, all the way back across, I was in seven or eight field hospitals, I wasn't life threatening, I had a piece of shrapnel right in the back of my knee, all the way to the joint. And they treat you in the front lines. The doctor looked at my leg, he shook his head, and said, "Ed you have to leave" and I said, "Why?" He said, "You have a piece of shrapnel right against the bone joint in your knee and I can't do anything about it." So he cleaned it, bound it up and opened an ambulance and the Germans started shooting at the ambulance on the way out and missed us. We got back about ten miles to a collecting station and Captain (inaudible) who was running this close to me and this big shell about this big and about this long hit right between us. He got fifteen pieces and there is a picture there and the first thing—then it dawned on me what had happened. He was, he was screaming and you could have heard him a half of a mile. I looked back and shells were still coming. From his hips down, I saw five strings of blood coming off, heart was pumping that blood and so I had to do something. The only thing we had was sulfa tablets. All the men carried sulfur tablets so I rolled him over and threw six sulfur tablets in his mouth and we didn't have any water and made him swallow it. And, I motioned for some boys, as far as from that light pole across the old driveway and they came right through that fire and took him to the first aid station and there were two front line doctors ... and the shouting stopped. I got up and started to walk. My left boot was full of blood running out of the top. I said, "That's where he bled out." On the next step, my knee did not want to work. I kept pulling my pants around and there was a hole about as big around as my finger. I got back to the collecting station and the old players were back there with five men holding him down keeping needles in him. He was cussing the Army and the doctors and everybody ... (Laughs) This lieutenant looked at me and went over there and started washing his hands and he didn't know what he was going to do, says "I couldn't do anything about it." So he took a scalpel and it was sharp and stuck it down about that deep in the back of my knee, just like you take the core out of an apple and smooth it out. He packed it full of sulfur powder and bound it up, mangled about like that. And there was a colonel standing there, surgeon watching him. Colonel looked at me and said, "Lieutenant. you're a mighty lucky man." I said "Sir, what are you trying to tell me?" He said, "Well, you have a piece of shrapnel running against that joint about as big as a big bean," but he said, "It barely missed the main nerve and the main artery." I said, "Well sir if it had hit them?" and he said, "You would lose a leg at the knee, it's just that simple." Lucky. Well

anyway, when I got back to several different hospitals and I was in the 7th station hospital in downtown Oran, big city. We had gotten Captain Freedman from the big red one from the first division in the bed next to me. He shot off his shoulder and they had his arm braced up about like this. We had two nurses on our ward and one of them was a real pretty girl and the other one was just a plain old gal. (Laughter) Well, that pretty girl, she never smiled. She was very efficient and just did her work, but she never smiled. One day one of the guys said, "We are going to make that woman smile tomorrow when she walks in door." Somebody thought up something funny and she busted out laughing and we said (Laughter) "Yeah we made her laugh" and the other old gal, she was so good. She would get her work done and come over say, "Do you want me to wash your hair? It'd make you feel better" She didn't have to do that, but she did it. And uh, when I got back to Oran there, where this Captain Freeman was, they sent me out to a convalescent hospital and it was out on a peninsula so all I had to do was walk out the back door and wade around the Mediterranean Sea. And I had, you had to get up even though I was on crutches for two months and make up your beds, go to the doctor and go get your chow on crutches. I asked the doctor one time, "Are you ever going to take that shrapnel out of my leg?" and he said, "No. We don't cut on the joint unless it is absolutely necessary." So I guess it is still in there, but the x-rays don't show it. Sometimes I have problems with my knee but this red headed major told me that came back to the States before I did said, "Ed if I ever got back to the States look me up." Well I got back to the States and when I was sent back to duty. I had lowered our combat transport to go over there I had to put stuff on the ships to take off and they signed me to the Port Oran inspecting loads of stuff going out to Italy. So that is where I decided I would write Jenny. I wrote her an v-mail and she wrote me back enough (inaudible) and I said, "Ed, it is time to go home." I came back to the States in May of '44 and we were married in August of '44 in the post chapel at Fort Benning. Well the reason I was at Fort Benning, my orders read, after I got back to the States, to take a thirty days leave and then report back to Camp Butler, North Carolina for reassignment. So I got my old '41 Chevy and drove there which is out of Durham, North Carolina. They said, "Well, watch the bulletin board because you may be here two days or you may be here for six months." The second morning in the bulletin board there was a wire to me from G-2 Army Ground Forces in Washington for me to report to the common corps infantry school without delay so I reported to the common corps infantry school. I hadn't been in before but it was school. I walked in the office ... and saluted the colonel and he replied. He said, "Oh yeah, you are going to be an instructor in combat tactics." I said, "Sir are you feeling alright?" He said "Yeah, why?" I said, "I am not an instructor" and he said, "You have been in combat and that is all we need here." So anyway, the, uh, one of the other lieutenants he had been in Anzio [Italy], he was there. Two weeks after we kinda got settled in he called us in and said, "I want you guys to compose about a twenty minute talk. I want you to talk to the whole school." I said, "Well sir I don't what I will talk about but I will say something" and they asked me to talk first. I was in a big auditorium full of officers and lieutenants through generals. I said, "Here I am a peon." I don't know what all I told them but I do remember one thing that stuck in my mind. I said "Gentlemen, we have all had good training and we have all read all of the books on field guides, but I can tell you one thing when you get in combat you throw the damn book away. You don't have time to look it up to know what to do you better know what to do right there." (Laughs) Well, Jenny and I were married post Chapel on August 6, 1944. Then I went on over to the officers club to pick up coffee one morning, me and another guy. Colonel McDonald who had just come out of the South Pacific, he saw us talking and said, "Hey Ed I think I saw a wire for you on the bulletin board and you better check it out." The same

G-2s, G-2 is intelligence, the same place. This was on a Thursday and Jenny had come out to the post to buy some groceries. It said, "You will report to this headquarters Monday morning for duty." There I had to clear the post and drive all of the way to Washington and I was like a little lost dog on the highway because I had never been to that place before in my life. A company of troops brought me on a train one time. We got a room, lucky and the next morning I went down. G-2 was in old Army War College where the two rivers fork. I walked in and looked around and this red headed man said, "Hello Ed." He had sent me to both places. It's a small world isn't it?

BOULTON: Yeah, these are fascinating stories. Just so we can get your full war experience, could you perhaps backtrack a little and talk about when you first went over to Europe, to uh, North Africa, your movement from basic training, maybe talk a little about what you did there and then what it was like actually going over there.

LUSK: Well, see I had charge of a load on a ship, a ship about 700 or 800 ft long. It was full of vehicles, bombs, ammo and the works. You had to know how to stow this stuff. In other words, you put it in reverse order from the way the colonel wanted it to come out of there. So in Norfolk, Virginia it was about half loaded and down came orders, "You will take," you know what landing mat steel is?

MORROW: Yeah.

LUSK: It is steel, corrugated steel that locks together to make a temporary airfield out of it. "You will take 300 tons of landing mat steel and your ship." And I thought, "Where in the hell am I going to put that?" This old Swedish steel ... in charge of all of the ships. I said, "Maybe he can help me." I said, "I have a problem. Here is my horse." He said "Well we can solve the problem." (Laughs) In hatch number three which is right forward the super structure, a big hatch, big depot. He said, "You give me all of the boxes of small arm ammunition that you can get together." He said, "We will stack that in there ten feet deep and then we put dunnage or boards, planks over that, then we put the vehicles on top of that." How about that? He solved my problem. He hadn't done it once before, he had done it many times, but going over...

BOULTON: When did you go over? What were the dates that you left the United States?

LUSK: We landed in Morocco on November 8, 1942.

BOULTON: Where were you when Pearl Harbor happened and what were your memories of that?

LUSK: Well I had been in the service for six months. I was at Fort Bragg.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: This, one of the officers, I had gone to lunch and came back to the parking lot in my space and this fellow and his little wife pulled up next to me and he had his radio on. The news of Pearl Harbor blared out over that radio. Of course the little girl didn't know what was happening. He looked at me and neither one of us said a word. We knew what was going on.

Now, I have a high respect for the Germans, not Hitler, but the Germans. They are smart people, very, very great people. But I have no respect for the Japs. They would cut our throat today if they thought they could get away with it and don't ever forget that because they will do it someday. Now, one day, to back up a little, the colonel and I had been up at there, well you have never heard of Battle of Kasserine Pass, it is a pass in Northern Tunisia, a mountain range and then east, northeast of there is Battle of Maknassey where I got hit. Well, Rommel almost got through Kasserine Pass. He almost got through there. Our artillery lane used them like anti-tank guns. That is what stopped him but after that he vanished, we didn't know where he was. So the colonel and I were on to a house back on the main road and down, going up this valley and on the way back I was in the back seat of the jeep with my M1 laying across my lap and the colonel sitting there and the driver here. It was getting late in the afternoon, maybe an hour before sunset. Once you hear a German plane, you can tell it from an American by the sound of the engine, pitch whine of the engine. All of a sudden, that jeep driver pulled that jeep off the road and then I heard them. I said, "That is the Germans so I got to get away from this jeep because that is what they are after."

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: So, the ground is as flat as this floor and I got maybe as far as from here to the street. I was up like this. I couldn't see them but I knew from the sound they were getting very close. I looked up at an angle about like that and there were two German Messerschmitts heading right for us. You just hope they don't hit you. Well, as I went down, I looked up and the guy on my side there were two red blazers on each wing, four, fifty caliber guns. He missed me about as far as from me to you. (Swoosh) He pulled out of the strafing drive and one of our old boys over there on a six by six truck and some of those trucks they had the top of the cab cut out and a ring mount .50 caliber up there.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: Well he saw him break out of that dive so he cut him down.

MORROW: He got him?

LUSK: He set him on fire.

BOULTON: Really?

LUSK: That German pilot bailed out of that shoot and came floating down and those infantry boys were closing in on him. He got out of the parachute harness and dropped his Luger on the ground put up his hands and said in perfect English, "Very nice shooting gentlemen."

BOULTON and MORROW: (Laugh)

LUSK: Well, he had done all they could do. Those things are the things that stick in your mind.

BOULTON: That's great. You said you went straight to Morocco from the United States, is that right?

LUSK: Yes.

BOULTON: How did you get over there? Was it a ship I presume? Was it, did your whole company move out together?

LUSK: Well, we went down and took a zigzag course. We went down towards Bermuda and then north toward England and down to North Africa. And uh, I never did get sea sick, but one afternoon I didn't feel too good and the navy gunnery officer I knew pretty well looked at me and said, "Are you sick?" I said, "I don't even think I will eat any supper tonight" and he said, "you better eat or you will get sick." He said, "Every man has got his day and this may be your day." (Laughs) So I went and ate and was all right, but one afternoon it was about two thirds of the way to Africa. We had our ship and you could see ships to the horizon and you could see the mast over the curve of the earth both ways, 850 ships. All of a sudden they discovered there was a submarine under us, a German sub. They started rolling up; you know what a depth charge is?

BOULTON and MORROW: Yes

LUSK: They started rolling depth charges off of these destroyers and the sea just boils. They were running in circles throwing them depth charges, which is a big drum of explosives and that cracks the submarine. And uh then it stopped. I asked the gunnery officer "did we get him?" He said, "Yeah, we got him." It was an oil slick. And uh, we got just off of the coast of Africa and I was the only guy that could go anywhere on the ship on the ship I wanted to because I was in charge of the load. Well we had—would be seal fights on the shores. The battleship *Massachusetts* was on the right and, uh, I think the battleship *Texas* was on our left and all of a sudden between us and the shore a little coastal ship comes out with lights all over. The gunnery officer has a phone system to every guy on the ship. He's at the top side and he can talk to anybody. I heard him say, "train all guns on that ship and if anybody appears on deck, fire." That ship just went on. They never knew we were out there. It disappeared. Well, we fed the troops starting about one o'clock in the morning. You know you had these landing nets over the side and we put all of the landing craft off of the deck into the water. And I rigged up a system so I had lights, hooded lights that couldn't be seen from the side. Like if I wanted a personnel boat at hatch number three, I would push a certain light. Those boats are out there in a circle going in a circle and they watch. Men started climbing out the ladders. Well we got about, I think the first wave had started in and over on the coast there, this little river came out there in Fort Lyautey a little town was back in there. They had 138 mm coastal guns mounted on high ground and just started firing those out. There was one that just barely cleared the rail where I was and exploded in the water. That was the first shell I ever heard and won't forget it either. (Laughs) It was a shell about that big. But we lost all—like here to the beach, there was an unusual current started from the northwest at an angle to the beach and we lost all of our landing craft, except three. The men in tanks started rolling around.

BOULTON: How many do you think you lost?

LUSK: Well, we had about ten, twelve landing craft and we lost about eight or nine, but that afternoon I heard the captain of the ship get on the horn and say, "Now, hear this, all navy personnel batting down, close all of the hatches and bat them down for sea." I went storming up the top side and said "Captain, what the hell is going on?" He said, "I don't know right now, I will tell you when I know." So they had gotten orders to close all of the hatches and to go to Casablanca. Remember, "here's looking at ya."

BOULTON and MORROW: Yeah.

LUSK: From the movie? And, um, the one ship decoded the message wrong. She pulled out that night and we passed her the next morning with a mast sticking out of the water, a submarine got her. So we went on to Casablanca. Man. that harbor was a mess. The big battleship, *James Bart*, French, was sitting at a berth, and it was sitting on the bottom. I think the battleship *Texas* put two holes through it that you could drive a car through them. Well, I had to finish unloading the ship and they had Arab crews. The French hated the Arabs. Those Arabs found a big number ten can of peaches and thought that was pretty good eating. They would drop them in half. I saw a Frenchman hit an Arab in the teeth one day and he didn't have any more teeth left. They had to stop them from ... Then I had to find my way back to Port Lyautey about 100 miles away the best way I could. I went off the ship and old gunnery officer handed me a brand new Navy Colt .45 and said, "I think you are going to need this worse than I will." So uh, I got back to ... Port Lyautey and found out we were billwaked in the cork forest with cork bark. Colonel Toffee, the CO, he said, "Keep the Arabs out of here; I don't want them in here. They will steal your hat off of your head and smile at you while they are doing it and I don't trust the Arabs at all." As a break, President Bush better do something about this oil. All he would have to do is tell Saudi Arabia you start pumping or else we are going to pull out of there and let al Qaeda have you. That would change their minds real quick. Now, one afternoon I saw this Arab come flying through, Roy J. Smith, the guy that is dead now, they guy I was telling you about, we were all in pulp tents except Colonel Toffee he had a small wall tent up there. This Arab came over to where our head quarters were. I said, "Smith, we gotta get that guy out of there." He spoke to them in broken French and the guy went this way. Well, about fifteen minutes later I saw one coming from this direction. The closer he got it was the same cotton pickin' Arab in the same clothes. I said, "Smitty your buddy is back." He didn't say a word, he just reached in his pulp tent and got his Thompson sub machine gun and took the guy by the arm and I heard two burst out of that. (NOISE) He didn't say a word just put his gun in his tent and didn't say a word. I did not ask him. I don't know if he killed him or just scared him or just scared him, but he didn't come back.

BOULTON and MORROW: (Laugh)

LUSK: All of those little experiences you know just ...

BOULTON: You were infantry right? Okay.

LUSK: Oh, I wouldn't be anything else.

BOULTON: How did you get the job being in charge of the loadingman for the ship? How did that come about?

LUSK: Well, you have seen the movie *Patton*.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: I saw it last night. I have a high respect for General Patton. I have seen him as close from here to the dishwasher at Fort Bragg. We were all out in reservations and stuff and orders came down. "All officers were assembled in the post theater for a talk with General Patton." Well, we were all sitting there and I was the second man from one of the aisles. Somebody from back in the back said "Atten-Hut." It got deathly still. He came walking down with those pearl handled pistols, those cavalry boots, polished you could comb your hair with them. He went up and talked to the officers for a few minutes and then they had a big platform built out in a whole division of some 15,000 troops in one formation, that's a lot of fellows. He talked to us and said, "Fellows we are going. I will tell you where we are going. You will know when you get to sea for three days." The one thing I well remember him saying. "Now when you get there, I want you to take the attitude that those so and so's are the cause you being there and kill every damn one of them." (Laughter) Oh, he hated the Germans with a passion.

BOULTON: So the movie is quite accurate then?

LUSK: Oh yeah, very.

BOULTON: It is, yeah.

LUSK: You know he believed, you remember that movie in Tunisia? Mostly Algheir.

BOULTON: Mm hmm.

LUSK: Of the old city of Carthage.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: And it's remnants. He said, I was here, in his mind he thought he was there. He was quite a historian.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: And, uh, there was one night when, uh, one guy read, this captain that was killed there, was a distant relative of Patton's. And it said that he went over and cut a lock of his hair to send to his mother and then they said that Patton went off to the side and prayed. He was an old man, a great guy. But I tell you ... you know, Patton's Third Army was down in Southwest of Bastogne [Belgium] and the top of brass committee was one of the unpardonable sins. Major Sherfield of UT taught us to remember one thing, never underestimate your enemy. That's what got them in trouble at Bastone. They underestimated what had been done. So, Eisenhower called George, and he says "George, I need you at Bastone, how quick can you be there?" "Well, sir, I

can be there at daylight.” “Well, that’s impossible.” “Sir, I told you I’d be there at daylight.” He cranked those tanks up and rolled them. He was there the next day. He was quite a guy.

MORROW: What was the climate like?

LUSK: Sorry?

MORROW: What was the climate like?

LUSK: In Morocco? It reminded me of San Joaquin Valley in California. There’s a, of course you have your sand dunes, and then beautiful flat valleys, long flat valleys, that runs up from Spanish Morocco all the way down towards Casablanca. They grow a lot of wheat and grapes and olives. And, uh, it’s beautiful country. Then you have the Atlas Mountains, which is rugged country, not too much grows there. And, uh, one thing I better tell you about. When I was in Oran, another guy and I rode our motorcycles out, you heard of the French Foreign Legion?

BOULTON: Yes.

LUSK: You have? Well, that’s the original headquarters, (inaudible), Morocco. We rolled up in front of that—I’ve got a picture of it somewhere—big gate, got off, the guard invited us in and took us back and the old top sergeant gave us some cold beer, we had a ball. (Laughs) And, uh, it was quite an experience, but that was the original headquarters of the French Foreign Legion. You know what the legion was?

MORROW: I’ve heard of it.

LUSK: The legion was a collection of criminals. Who were going to go into the service and wipe out your past and they were cutthroat.

BOULTON: Was it a culture shock to go into Africa?

LUSK: Hmm?

BOULTON: Was it a culture shock to go into Africa from where you’d come, especially coming so far from the Grundy County, to go over there?

LUSK: Oh yeah, you gradually work into it.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: Yeah ... like the old saying, you do what you have to do. Whatever it takes. You can’t go home.

BOULTON: Yeah.

MORROW: What were your living conditions?

LUSK: Ma'am?

MORROW: What were your living conditions? Living?

LUSK: Living?

MORROW: Yes.

LUSK: Well, oh back, I started back—I got an ex-marine friend that lives down in the valley here and last year, he called and said “Ed, would you go with me and four other marines out to the Trussville High School [Trussville, Alabama], Trussville school to talk to the seventh grade class?” I said, “Yeah I’ll go.” Well, we got out there. We talked to four different groups of the seventh grade class, ten, twelve year old kids, boys and girls. It was quite an experience. And uh, the teacher, Ms. Wood, I said, “Ms. Wood, how graphic do you want me to talk to the kids?” She said, “Whatever you saw.” I said, “It isn’t pretty.” And, uh, I started off telling them about UT and all that stuff and I went to the service, and I kinda brought up—and uh, Jim White, this marine, he was at the in the Chosin Reservoir in Korea [Korean War] where it was forty-seven below zero. And uh, they asked me to talk first. One of the little girls raised their hand and said, “Sir, did you ever get a bath?” I said, “What was that?” (Laughs) I said, “If I had enough water left in my canteen I got a sponge bath, if I had any water left. If I didn’t, I’ve gone three or four weeks, a month without a bath.” She couldn’t believe that. (Laughter) Well, Jim White—it was my eighty-fourth birthday, the day we were there—he said, “You folks listen up, this is Colonel Lusk’s eighty-fourth birthday,” So, uh, then they asked me a lot of questions about you know the food, medicine, combat, those kind of things. On the way out, we went to the cafeteria and ate lunch. Two little boys came up, grabbed me on each arm, and said, “You’re going to sit between us at lunch.” And on the way out, a little girl handed me a birthday card, I still got it, she said, “Thank you so much for what you did, for us, your talk was excellent, please come back.” I still got it. And uh, about two weeks later, Jim White called me, and said, “Ed, I got something to bring by to you.” It was a manila folder full of letters, one from each one of those kids. I got it somewhere in the house. So it’s been a long story. But, I tell you what, when I, I had five years active service in World War II and I stayed in the active reserves for twenty one years. And everybody said they’ll call you back, they’ll call you. And I said, “Hell, if they need me back, I’ll go back.” And, uh, I was in the, uh, active reserves, non-paid status. Never got a dime from them. They give you fifty points for wanting to stay in, then you had to acquire points, uh, anyway you could, I elected to do active duty. Or they offered correspondent courses, and I took correspondent courses from the Navy, Army, and the Air Force. I built up my points and got what I needed for retirement, so, hope I haven’t bored you.

BOULTON and MORROW: No, not at all.

BOULTON: Could you say some more about some of the people who were in your company, and the friends you made, and who they were and where they came from and what their backgrounds were? That kind of thing.

LUSK: The company commander was a first lieutenant, and so was I. And he was from Wyoming, he was a little short guy, oh I don't know, maybe it was Brown. He smoked one cigarette after another; he lit one cigarette off of the other (laughs). That poor little guy got killed in France, I heard. He was a good man. We, uh, Fort Bragg, took three sergeants came to us and said, "There's some stealing going on in the company" and Brown said, "Well, sergeant, you know they're not going to steal with officers around." Now, what I want you to do is set up a trap and catch these guys. Now, don't bodily harm them, but I don't want to know what you do to them. So, we heard later, through the grapevine that they caught the guy. They put him out in a jeep and took him down the road and beat the tar out of him and there was no more stealing going on. That's the way they handled that. And, uh, every officer has to take your turn as officer of the day. You form a guard team, you got stationary guards, you got walking guards, you know, at all the posts. And you post the, you relieve the old guard and you post the new guard and you inspect, make inspection during the night. I made about three inspections during the night, like ten o'clock, one o'clock, three o'clock. And uh, everything was pretty well in working order. And I went down to the guard house the next morning. The old sergeant on guard was a big guy and he said, "After you left about 3:00 we had trouble with that little guy." Coffee was his name. I said, "What kind of trouble?" Oh, he was just cussing and raising hell, just creating all kinds of ... men couldn't sleep. The prisoners had gone to breakfast. Nobody there, but the sergeant on guard. I said, "Well, why they're gone, let's inspect the cell block." We went in, they had all kinds of trash and stuff up under the mattress and I said, "Sergeant, throw every one of them out on the floor, all their stuff out on the floor, they're gonna clean it up." Well, the prisoners came back and I had something like an old dowel stick I had picked up and of course I had a loaded .45, and you don't go into a cell with a gun on you. But, I was outside about as far from as me to you (three feet) when the prisoners came back in and little Coffee he was upset because his magazines were gone. Oh, he started right towards me, coming right up that aisle, raising all kinds of Cain. And he got about as close from about me to you (three feet) and the sergeant on guard was standing here and he had hollered attention first and all the other prisoners snapped to, except this little guy. Well, he got about this close, and the old sergeant knocked him (POW). Right in the face. He knocked him about five—ten feet. Now, boy, you listen up, you want some more of this, there was no more chatter. The old sergeant looked at me and said, "I know you wanted to knock the hell out of him, but I knew you couldn't, but I could." (Laughter) He made a believer out of that kid real quick. Just the little things come back to you like that.

BOULTON: Yeah. What rank did you achieve by the time the war ended?

LUSK: Hmm?

BOULTON: What rank did you attain by the end of the war?

LUSK: End of the war?

BOULTON: Mm hmm.

LUSK: Lieutenant Colonel.

BOULTON: Lieutenant Colonel?

LUSK: I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

BOULTON: And where were you when the war ended? And what do you remember that?

LUSK: Where was I when the war ended?

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: I was at, uh—Roosevelt died, I was at Fort, Fort Benning. And the war ended—I got out in—well, I, I'll bring you up to date, I went to Washington because of that major had asked me to help there.

BOULTON: Mm hmm. And this was after you had already come back from North Africa?

LUSK: Hmm?

BOULTON: And this was after you'd come back from North Africa, yeah?

LUSK: Oh yeah. Oh, by the way, I always—my father had a cousin that lived out at Morrison, Tennessee, twelve miles away. He went to West Point, named Rogers. I never did know the man, but when I got to the, from the war college, we moved in about two weeks over to the Pentagon and it took me three hours to find my parking place that I was supposed to park in. (Laughs) That's a huge place. Anyway, uh, I had heard that the head of G-2 was a man named Rogers, Colonel Rogers. Hmm. I said that couldn't be my father's cousin. And, uh, one day I had been to the restroom and was walking back down the corridor and they had pointed him out to me in the distance and I saw him coming towards me. And got about six feet from me and I snapped to. I said, "Sir, I think you're Colonel Rogers." He said, "That's right." Well, my promotion to captain had caught up to me in the hospital and I said, "Did you ever know a man named Hubert Lusk?" And he said, "Yeah, he's my cousin." I said, "I'm his son." (Laughter) We had a little chat and he went on. A little later, Colonel Lewis, who was our immediate commander called me in and said "I need to talk with you." He said, "The Army is taking in some good reserve officers to the regular Army on a permanent basis." And he said, "I have reviewed your file and I don't think you'd have any trouble." He says, "Think about it, don't take it lightly." Well, I thought and I thought about a week, and I said alright, now, here, here you have to think, you have to think normally, I'm not a West Pointer. That's for sure. If the war ever ends I can see myself fifty years old and them saying, "You've done a fine job, but we don't need you anymore, goodbye." And there I was without a job, so I decided not to take it and I went in and said, "Colonel Lewis, I'm not going to take it." "Why?" So, I told him and he said, "I understand exactly what you're saying." So he stood up, and he said, "I still wish you'd take it." Now, whether Colonel Rogers had anything to do with it, I don't know, it doesn't make any difference to me. He could have. (Laughs) It's been an interesting life.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: I've had four major surgeries, including heart surgery, malignant prostate; I had three aneurysms in the big aorta. You know what an aneurysm is?

MORROW: Yes.

LUSK: Jenny and I changed doctors and this little guy, he says, "Mr. Lusk I'm going to examine you first, get up on that table." Jenny's sitting up there; you know how they press around and feel, don't you? He said, "I think you've got a problem." She says, "what is it?" You've got an aneurysm in your big aorta, that's the one that comes up like this and goes down. He says, "I want you to go to a vascular surgeon, they need to check you out." I went to Dr. Douglas Carmichael. I found out later that he was a graduate of Yale and his father is a vascular surgeon and his brother, they're all here in Birmingham. And he examined the same way, and he said, "You do have a problem," he said, "There's a twenty percent chance that thing will rupture in the next five years." And I said, "I'm not taking that chance, let's fix it." And he said, "Alright." See I had been cut open from my belly button all the way down, he said now I have to open you up from your breastbone and all the way down again. I said, "Well, you gotta do what you gotta do." I said, "By the way doc, what kind of PVC pipe do you put in me?" I still got a piece of it in me. It's about that big and it's like a flex hose to a dryer, made by Chemscan Corporation, up here in North Alabama. He says, "I saw the first one of those that was ever put in a person." He says, "It's five hours of surgery."

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

MORROW: ... that's where my dad's from growing up.

LUSK: Is that right?

MORROW: Yeah. That's where they're from and where they all grew up.

LUSK: Well, Jenny and I lived in Columbia, Tennessee, uh, for a while, and uh, it's a pretty little town.

BOULTON: You were mentioning before the tape ended there, um, about, Roosevelt dying ...

LUSK: Hmm?

BOULTON: About, when FDR died. What was your opinion of that? What were your feelings at that point? Do you remember?

LUSK: Well, Roosevelt was a good man. He was, uh, he was giving lend-lease to England unbeknownst to Congress. Did you know that?

MORROW: Uh huh.

LUSK: Because he knew Congress wouldn't pass it and he knew England—if we hadn't had Churchill we would have lost the war. And Roosevelt knew we had to do something. So ... he

was a great man, but he made a lot of mistakes and he knew, he knew the Japs were going to hit us. We lived in Johnson City [Tennessee]. We knew—we knew the wife of a Jap ambassador who was here. And he told Roosevelt what was going to happen.

BOULTON: Really? So, you were in Johnson City, Tennessee ...

LUSK: Yeah.

BOULTON: ... at that time? Okay. What was the general mood of the population at that time? I mean, did people, were they generally fearful that war was going to come at that point or did it just seem something that was so far off that it wasn't even a concern?

LUSK: When Pearl Harbor happened?

BOULTON: Yeah, just before Pearl Harbor.

LUSK: Uh, I don't think the people realized what was going to happen. See, we had already warned, let's see, the Japs—Pearl Harbor happened, I had already been in the service six months. Then, we went to Europe. And I think that's what brought the curtain down, when Pearl Harbor got hit. And I have a friend, he's bordering on Alzheimer's, he was at Pearl Harbor when it happened, Navy.

BOULTON: Wow.

LUSK: And, uh, he was just lucky he didn't get hit. I told the Japs, I tell you, they come from, you know the history of the Japanese?

MORROW: Uh huh.

LUSK: They come from a very barbaric, Mongolian tribe. (Phone rings) Just a minute. Did you ever see the *Death March of Bataan*?

MORROW: No.

BOULTON: I've read about it, yeah, yeah.

LUSK: Of course I wasn't there, but ...

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: Men, women, and children, and everything they marched them through the Philippines. And, anybody that fell out they would just stab with a bayonet and left them lying. Barbarians.

JENNY LUSK: Can you stop it a minute?

BOULTON: Certainly, yeah.

(Tape Paused)

BOULTON: Okay, just before the phone call, you were talking about the Bataan Death March, and, uh, your opinions there. Were there any other areas of North Africa that you served or saw action?

LUSK: No, just in Morocco and I led the battalion from Morocco all up to, around Algiers and all the way across to Tunisia, uh, Algeria. About 1500 miles. I didn't know who was around the next corner. Going about halfway by a French map and we traveled six hours ahead of the battalion and I had a sergeant from each company that we, we were going to set up here tonight. Well, the sergeant with one end was going to pick out a place for his company. And get a lay of the land, where you can dig in for defense which each sergeant did that, they went back to the main road, so when the companies came in you could always, the company commander went in. And ... one of those places was in a village, a supply officer and his jeep ran over a mine that blew his leg off and another, uh, we first made this attack on the Battle of Maknassy, K Company commander, a Texas A&M graduate. First thing that happened, he stepped on a mine and it took one of his legs off. We couldn't get him out for twenty-seven hours. A little wire that was there put a tourniquet on his leg and shot him full of morphine.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: And the next day, the little runner told me, I was trying to dig under Captain Rucker to get him down, he said, "Every time I would raise my shoulder there was a German gunner watching me." (Gun sound effect) He'd been pinned down all day, finally got him out of there that night. But, uh ...

BOULTON: Did he make it? Do you know?

LUSK: Yeah.

BOULTON: He did then. Good.

LUSK: Yeah, that Captain Rucker came back to the States and made one of the leading landscape architects of this country, he's written in a lot of these magazines. We had a 9th Division reunion at Fort Bragg some years ago, and Rucker was there. He had these crutches sitting on bands he couldn't walk without them. And, he was standing as far as from here to that corner over there. And, I was looking that way, and I told Jenny, "That's Captain Rucker." I reckon he turned to me and said, "Ed Lusk, I haven't seen you in fifty years." (Laughter) Yeah, he was a great guy. He was, he was written up in a lot of landscape magazines, and uh, talked to a lot of garden clubs, and he died about two years ago. But the man that got hit beside me, fifteen pieces of shrapnel still living, he's ninety-two.

BOULTON: Hmm.

LUSK: He wrote a piece in the 9th Division paper a couple years ago that said, "I owe my life to Ed Lusk, if it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have made it." I got him out of there ...Some other guy misquoted and said that Ed Lusk drug him to the doctor, well, that didn't happen. (Laughter) They probably drug me to the hospital. (Laughter)

BOULTON: You mentioned Rommel once; did you ever come into direct contact with Rommel, did you, no?

LUSK: He was a very smart man. He studied tactics in this country long before the war. Patton hated his guts. (Laughter) You remember that scene in Patton?

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: He said, "I read your book." (Laughter)

BOULTON: What was the terrain like in North Africa? Could you describe that and what problems it presented?

LUSK: Well, you have your—Africa is a big place.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: Where we were it was something like San Joaquin Valley in California. Then, southeast of there is the Atlas Mountains, very rugged terrain. And I went from Morocco through Algeria over to Tunisia, and it's, uh, oh typical, I guess, terrain. Valleys and farms, uh, some mountainous country, just general terrain. But, the—Tunisia is semi-desert. And uh, the Germans had been in there before we were. And you always cautioned the men if you see a knife or a fountain pen, don't touch it because it's got a little black wire attached to it and it's going to blow you away. See they'd hang stuff like that in olive trees. And cushion grenades, it just blows your hearing away. And Rommel was—he studied tactics in this country long before the war. He was a very smart man and he never committed any atrocities. In fact, uh, when the British were fighting him down in the Libyan Desert, El Alamein and all through there. He said, he would stop the battle and exchange prisoners and the British would have tea and Germans would have coffee. (Laughter)

MORROW: What did you think of the German shoulder—soldier?

LUSK: Hmm?

MORROW: What did you think of the German sh, soldier?

LUSK: Very, highly disciplined. And uh, they had a job to do and they did it. Then, uh, in Tunisia, there we were, I got hit. The artillery didn't like to fire at night because of the gun flashes, they could spot them, they could spot them from the mountains and send bombers in the next day and blow us away. Well, one night Major Dillon and I were sitting at the command post, 'bout, three hundred yards back from the front lines and, Captain Dighurst, one of the

company commanders called back. [He said], “Major, we need some artillery, we’ve been hearing movement out in front of us for about two hours.” He said, “We’re, we’re fixin to be attacked.” He said—Major said, “well you know they don’t like to fire at night, but I’ll call Colonel Adams and see if he’ll consider it.” So, Major called Colonel Adams and the artillery band. Adams said, “I’ll fire it, if you think it’s imminent.” And he said, “The company commander says he needs it now.” He said, “Where does he want it?” He says, “He wants it ten to fifteen yards right in front of the troops,” which is close. An artillery shell can kill you as far as from here to there.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: So, Dillon handed me the phone, on the CP, the company commander, he was on the other phone. He said he was firing a flare shell first, you know what that is?

BOULTON: Yeah, uh huh.

LUSK: You can read a newspaper, it is so bright. I heard the gun, boom (sound effect) that thing burst and Captain Dighurst screamed into the phone to me, “My God, the fire for effect.” Well, they’d fired about a two minute concentration out of two batteries of artillery of 105s. He said, “There’s no more movement in there.” Well, the next morning, in this little ole wheat field between us and the frontlines, there was two Germans waving a white handkerchief. And some of the boys went out there and there were their weapons on the ground. Major Dillon and I were going through their billfolds reading codes and messages and—one of them was a little short guy, a Nazi, he was a strict Nazi. He stood there just like a post, he was a statue. Major got his billfold out and he could see pictures of his wife and kids, tears were rolling down his face and he still wouldn’t budge. Talk about hard and ... And the other guy, the interpreter asked him “Where did you come from?” He said, “We were in the attack last night.” “How many were there?” “A full German Company,” 150 men more or less. “Where are the rest of them?” They were the only ones who made it through the artillery, we killed 145 out of 150 troops.

BOULTON: Wow, incredible.

MORROW: How often did ya’ll have night fighting?

LUSK: No, no, you don’t fight at night because you can’t see. Now, these boys in Iraq have these big night vision goggles, that’s high tech. (Laughter)

BOULTON: How often was there fighting in general? How long would you go between major confrontations or skirmishes?

LUSK: It just depends. It just depends on the situation. Now, we first got into Tunisia, uh, we had two or three little attacks, nothing there but some Italians and they were ready to give up quick. And they said “Oh, well, this place is highly fortified with Germans,” come to find there was nothing there. They had already moved out. But uh, it just depends on who’s there and who’s not there.

BOULTON: Yeah, yeah. You mentioned, uh, briefly about, about the end of the war. Could you say a little bit more about that? About when V-E Day was and, uh, where you were and what the mood was and how you celebrated and, uh?

LUSK: Well, uh, hey Jen.

JENNY LUSK: What?

LUSK: Where were we on V-E Day?

JENNY LUSK: We were in Washington D.C. in a hotel room.

BOULTON: Yeah. (Laughs) Did you celebrate?

LUSK: Well, we was, we was ...

JENNY LUSK: No, no. We were in that little apartment that we had. No, we didn't celebrate. He wouldn't, he wouldn't go out on the streets and celebrate.

BOULTON: No?

LUSK: Yeah, yeah. That was in '45 wasn't it?

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: Yeah. Yeah, I got out in December '45.

BOULTON: And then you said you stayed in reserve for quite a long time?

LUSK: I had five years of active service during World War [II], then I stayed in active reserve, well, five from twenty-two is what, seventeen.

BOULTON: Right, right. Does that mean ...

LUSK: Seventeen more years in active reserve.

BOULTON: Now, what does that mean? What did you do during that time? Does that mean you were just eligible to be called up? Or did you have to assemble periodically?

LUSK: Well in that day, they gave you fifty points for the initiative to stay in reserve, then you had to, you had to acquire, I forget how many it was, per year. You had to get 100 points per year or they'd kick you out. So, you—luckily I stayed in, it helps. And, uh, well, I take a lot of medicine, and then Jenny does too. I can go to Maxwell Air Force Base [Montgomery, Alabama] to the drug store and get our medicine free, it helps.

MORROW: Yeah.

BOULTON: What did you do immediately after '45 when you got out? Did you start looking for work, did you use the G.I. Bill or ...

LUSK: Well, I, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I had majored in Soils and Soil Chemistry at UT Ag [Agriculture] College and our teacher was a big, tall, lanky guy from Minnesota and he was a brain. His mother started teaching him calculus and physics when he was twelve years old. (Laughter) He always criticized the way they taught chemistry over at the main campus. He says, "You can't teach chemistry that way, you must understand it." He was a great—he was one of those teachers who could get it from him to the student. There's very few of them. I had a botany teacher who was the same way. Uh, I had three years of botany under Dr. A.J. Sharp. He tried to get me to major in botany, but I had already started soils. So uh, Dr. Sharp, he always led a wildflower pilgrimage in the Smokies in the spring when all the flowers were blooming. And, Jenny went up there with some of the girls and she told him one day, said, "I know you don't remember my husband," but I sent Dr., Dr. (Sharp?) a plant from Morocco. I put it under cellophane and sent it. She said, "He sent you a plant from Morocco." He said, "It's in the lab." (Laughter)

BOULTON: Still there?

LUSK: Anyway, he was one of those that could get it from him to the student. He was a great teacher. After her trip up there, I got a card from him thanking me. And he said, "The old man is dying of cancer, but I've had a great life." And he was cremated and his ashes are on his desk in the botany department. (Laughter) Yep, yep.

MORROW: Did you use your major for anything?

LUSK: Hmm?

MORROW: Did you use your major for anything? Did you use your major in ...

LUSK: Well, back up. I went back to UT when I got out of the service and I asked Dr. Winters, I said, "Doc, I don't know what I want to do." He said, "Well, why don't you come back up here for a quarter and review some of those senior soils courses. And, by the way, there's a new book, new course I want you to take, it's over on the Hill." I said, "What?" He said, "It's a chemistry course." I said, "Now doc, I've been in the service five years and wasn't any good with chemistry to start with, I couldn't even balance an equation." And he said, "I think you can handle it." I said, "What's the name of it?" And he said, "The title of it is atomic structure, by Dr. Smythe." (Laughter) I went in that class and there was seven people in that class besides me. The rest were girls majoring in chemistry. And I was like a lost dog in high weeds, I couldn't even follow what the prof was talking about. One day I went to him and said, "Doc, I better drop this thing, I can't, I don't even know what you're talking about." He said, "Oh, come on, hang in there, you can do it." I think he gave me a passing grade just for staying in it. (Laughter) But, then I took a job with the old U.S. Bureau of Soils and a combination of that with UT experiment stations making soils and maps. Now, a lot of folks think that soils is dirt, but it's not just dirt. The smallest particle of soil is almost microscopic; the largest part is a coarse grain of sand.

Now, which has the most surface? If you have a cup full of each one, which has the most surfaces? The small one, because each soil particle has a magnetic force around it, plus or minus force. That's what holds fertilizer. A clay soil, red clay is heavy. It will hold fertilizer a lot longer than sand, of course sand leaks it out. And, there's, those are the little things that Dr. Winters would always—there was only six of us in the senior soils class, and come the end of the quarter and he said, "Gentlemen, I'm supposed to give you an exam. I'll either give you an exam or I'll give you a grade, I know what you know." He knew what we knew.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: And, if we elected to take an exam, he'd give you six questions, answer—seven questions and answer any six questions and he'd walk out of that room. And, if you answered six questions you had covered the quarter, I will assure you. And, one of his famous questions was, "What is pH?" You know what pH is?

MORROW: Mm hmm.

LUSK: Let's see, how did he put it? I think his description was, it is a measure of the hydrogen ion concentrate, content, of an illiquid.

BOULTON: (Laughs) You still remember that?

LUSK: Yeah.

BOULTON: Yeah. How had UT changed in the time from when you were there before the war and after?

LUSK: What was that?

BOULTON: How had UT changed? I understand there were a lot of veterans that came immediately after '45, was there a strong veteran presence on campus?

LUSK: Yeah, well, Jenny was there in '41, right after I—when she was there she was a freshman—after I was in service. And uh, she said most of the boys had gone to service, and, uh, when I was there, there was a whole mixture, oh we had a lot of fun. Just, uh, going to school, trying to make your grades, hoping you didn't get kicked out. (Laughter) Jen.

JENNY LUSK: Yeah?

LUSK: What was it like there at UT in '41 and '42 when you were there?

JENNY LUSK: '41 was fine 'til Pearl Harbor Day and then everybody started enlisting, and volunteering and leaving and the next year we had to vacate the girl's dorm and the cadets moved in, the air force cadets moved in our dorm. So we had soldiers marching. And I took a course in automobile mechanics, learned to drive an ambulance.

BOULTON: Right.

JENNY LUSK: Learned to repair the motor. And, we were knitting scarves and socks and mittens. For all the men because they didn't have enough clothes. When you saw *Band of Brothers*, you saw how they didn't have any clothes when it snowed.

BOULTON: Right, right.

LUSK: They didn't have enough food, they didn't have enough ammo and they didn't have the right clothes at Bastogne.

BOULTON: Yeah. Was that common at UT? Did they have all the students doing that, the ones who stayed, trying to contribute in some way to the war effort?

JENNY LUSK: Well, all the people wanted to volunteer.

BOULTON: Right, so it was just volunteer, it wasn't compulsory or anything?

JENNY LUSK: Oh, no, it was not compulsory. That is against our freedoms to make it compulsory.

BOULTON: That's right, yeah. (Laughs)

JENNY LUSK: But, the people at home were also doing the same thing. The mothers and the women at home were—also tying and ripping up sheets making bandages. There was not enough bandages, gauze, of course there was no medicine.

LUSK: And, uh, of course ...

JENNY LUSK: We were very ill prepared for that war.

LUSK: During the war the rationing came, you got tickets for so many gallons of gasoline, you got sugar, sugar was rationed ...

JENNY LUSK: Butter, you couldn't get butter, no silk stockings, no stockings at all at that time. Girls were barelegged and cold. It was cold in Knoxville all winter. We wore skirts too, we didn't wear pants to school.

BOULTON: Yeah. I grew up in Wales [United Kingdom], and my grandmother used to tell me all the stories, she had her old ration books over there, so yeah, they had similar problems over there, I think.

JENNY LUSK: Oh, I think the whole world had similar problems.

BOULTON: Yeah, yeah, definitely. Did you, uh, join any veteran's organizations or anything like that after you came back?

LUSK: I used to belong to the American Legion when we lived in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and, uh, I belong to the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] here and now. All of my friends down here are marines; in fact, I need to pay my dues on that. (Laughter)

JENNY LUSK: You belong to the Retired Officers Association.

LUSK: I belong to the Retired Officers Association. In fact Jenny, that call I got a while ago, yeah—that little girl with the CRSC, Combat Related Special Compensation, I have a fifty percent VA disability, because when I take these hearing aids out I can't hear anything. When you have ten pounds of TNT blow up right next to you, your hearing is gone. But these are great. I got them from the VA [Veterans' Affairs]. If I had had to buy them they are about 1,500 each.

BOULTON and MORROW: Yeah.

LUSK: And, uh, so I got, uh, I'm supposed to get some extra pay one of these days, if they ever get it worked out.

BOULTON: So, the VA has been a good, a good resource for you?

LUSK: Yeah. I went down to the—first you go see a primary doctor and I told him my story and he said, he was a young fellow from over at UAB [University of Alabama at Birmingham] and he said, “You going to get hearing aids, I'll see to that.” And um, so then I went to the audiology department, the VA, and those little girls down there, they really know what they're doing. They took care of me; they did all kinds of hearing tests. So I got them, they even furnished batteries for them.

MORROW: What medals did you get?

LUSK: Hmm?

MORROW: What medals? Medals? I can see them; I just don't know what they are. (Laughs)

LUSK: Well, let's see, the top left one is a Bronze Star and the next one is a Purple Heart. Oh, by the way, we had one officer at the reunion down at Mobile, he was in the second battalion, and he came as a guest. One boy said, “Hey slick.” He's a native of Selma, Alabama, ended up as a battalion commander. “Hey slick, is it true that you have twelve purple hearts.” He said, “that's not true, I've only got eight.” (Laughter) That second one from the left is a Purple Heart, that one over there, the one with the yellow is being in the service before Pearl Harbor. And the others is, the top center is the Combat Badge, you don't get that unless you were in combat, period. I'm more proud of that then I am any of the rest of them.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: And, uh, some of those on the, uh, the middle on the left are UT rifle trophies.

BOULTON: What was the Bronze Star for?

LUSK: I think this can answer that better than I can. (Went to get medals and certificate)

BOULTON: Oh, okay. These are your accommodations, right? Okay. It was 1962 when you got this? Is that right? Okay. Why did it take so long? Is that normal?

LUSK: Well, I, uh, had been reading in some of them magazines and I said, "Well, I'm supposed to have that." So I just wrote the Army and they sent it to me.

BOULTON: Oh good. Was it for a specific incident?

LUSK: Hmm?

BOULTON: Was it for a specific incident that you were awarded it? No, just a ... Yeah.

LUSK: I spent twenty-five years with Prudential Insurance Company.

BOULTON: That's what you did? When did you start working for them?

LUSK: I went, I went from soils in Clarksdale, Mississippi, there was a man there, who was in my Sunday school class who worked for Prudential. And uh, he said, "Ed, they're, they're looking for guys like you. You were raised on a farm and you talk the farmer's language." So, I went with them and spent twenty-five years and redid farm loans, home loans, motel loans, the works. Purchased properties and stuff like that.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: Very interesting. I was my own boss. (Laughter) The old man that hired me was from Columbia, Tennessee, an artilleryman in World War I. And, uh, he, uh—I had written the commander, a regional manager in New Orleans and he wrote me back and said, "I don't have an opening, but I think Mr. Figures in Birmingham is looking for a couple of men." He called me one day and said, "We would like you and your wife to come over one day, we would like to talk with you." So, I came over here and went up to the office and Mr. Figures and two of the production managers. And they talked to me in the terms of why I should take the job. I said, I told Jenny, "I hope I can get the job."

BOULTON: Yeah. (Laughs)

LUSK: So, uh, Mr. Figures said, "Ed, you'll never get rich working for a big company, but I've found that my twenty years with Prudential those checks come awfully regular."

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: So, uh, he said, "Let's go over to the hotel and have lunch with your wife (inaudible)." He said, "Now, while you're here, I want you to go up on the second floor and get a preliminary

exam, physical, because we're damn sure going to hire you because they'll approve you."
(Laughter) So I spent twenty five years with them. He always taught me, said, "We work from
can to can't, but if you get your work caught up, I expect you to go fishing." And, he said, "If
I'm in your territory, I'll go fishing with you." And, he did.

BOULTON: Yeah. (Laughs)

LUSK: So, he was a great old guy and, uh, I took early retirement because they were closing
some offices. And, met a lot of nice guys. Had one guy, Bill Rivers, uh, general manager out at
the Jacksonville office, Jacksonville, Florida.

BOULTON: Uh huh.

LUSK: Big, tall thin guy and every so often some of those home office people would come
around your territory and look at the loans you made, would look at the property. And, you
would drive them. The visiting man sitting here and they would send you out cards for a house,
record cards, picture of the house, your appraisal, all of this. And, you would make a dry run.
You don't want to try to find the house with the general manager and you can't find the house,
that's just embarrassing. (Laughter) Well, they didn't like, they wouldn't make a loan on a
house if it was close to a school, too noisy. They wouldn't make a loan on a house that had a
double yellow line on the street that indicates too much traffic. So in Bristol, Tennessee, I had a
broker with me, he, he knew, he knew, what we wanted and didn't want. He brought me a set of
plans one day and said, "Ed, I want you to look at these plans, I want to borrow a little money."
I said, "Let's go look at the lot." He drove me all the way around, come in the back way. He said,
"Ed, there's the lot right there, nice, nice lot. I looked down the street about two blocks and there
was a grade school. I said, "Dalton you know better than this." He said, "Well, look at how much
loan he wants. He only wants a fifty percent loan." I said, "Well, I'll send it in, but they're going
to turn it down." So, I had to take a picture of the house, just the lot. Low and behold the next
trip, that card was in the ones to be inspected. That house was finished, I made the inspection,
beautiful house. The guy worked for Bristol Steel, he had a lot of steel structure in that house. I
said, "Well, fifty percent loan, that guy's not going to ever let us have that house." So uh, I drove
Mr. Rivers. He was sitting there, on the other side of that car and I came up to that house and I
said, "Mr. Rivers." He said, "Oh it's nice, it's very nice." He looked down the street. I said, "I
know what you're looking at, you're looking at that school down there." I said, "Would you have
turned it down?" He said, "Oh, hell no, make em like that every day." (Laughter) Fifty percent
loan.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: Yep. Oh, you had a lot of fun; you had a lot of headaches. (Grunts)

BOULTON: Now, you were in the service or in reserve at least through Korea and Vietnam
then?

LUSK: Huh?

BOULTON: You were there during those periods then?

LUSK: Well, well, Korea.

BOULTON: Korea? Yeah.

LUSK: Let's see now, remember the Berlin Blockade?

BOULTON: Yes.

LUSK: Well, I was, at that time, was at Fort Benning at a three weeks course, active duty.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: And, one night, me and another guy, Captain, were over at the Officers Club having a couple of beers. And this Berlin Blockade, it was just hot.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: I said, "Hey, do you realize that our orders to return home could be canceled before daylight?" He said, "Yeah, I know." That guy had made every invasion of Europe either by parachute or submarine or riverboat. He said, "I don't hanker to get shot at anymore." I said, "I don't either." Luckily, we didn't get called. (Laughs)

BOULTON: What was the opinion, or the mood in the service about the Korean War? I mean, how—did it change from World War II? What were the dynamics there?

LUSK: Well, I don't really know, uh, there was a lot of, as I hear it from other people that were there, it was cold, cold. And, my son's wife's father was in Europe and also in Korea. He said, "Ed, we had, the Chinese would come over in waves. The first waves were armed, the second wave wasn't armed, they would pick up the arms of the guy that had been mowed down." He said, "They'd come over by the thousands." And, you had, I understand you had a lot of officers who shouldn't have been officers and a lot of men who didn't care for nothing, wasn't any good. Vietnam, both of them, we could have avoided, in my opinion. If we had told, the head knocker of Vietnam, look we don't want a thing you've got, you just let these people in South Vietnam run their own government and you stay out of it, meet us tomorrow at twelve o'clock and let's talk about it. If they didn't send, if they didn't meet, send 1,000 bombers in and take half of Hanoi out, burn it. They'd have met the next day. They'd have met the next day. Same thinking the same would go either way. Whenever you see a bombing raid and the early ... of bombs, that gets their attention. Oh, by the way, we used to have, you know where Leeds is [Alabama]?

MORROW: I've heard of it.

LUSK: Down this highway, right at where Atlanta Highway is. There was three Medal of Honor winners from Leeds. One a captain, an Air Force pilot, and two sergeants. They were, they're all dead now, but one of the sergeants was at our Fourth of July picnic down here at the city in town

hall. And he was burned. And one of the fellows said, “Hey Fred, would you mind telling one of the fellows what happened to you?” He said, “No, I don’t mind.” He said, “I was in a B-29 bomber heading to Tokyo with a load of bombs.” And he said, “I was in the lead bomber,” you know.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: “And every so often I was supposed to throw a white phosphorous grenade out, so the others could focus in on it.”

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: And he said, “All under the deck were bombs.” And he said, “One of the grenades got away from me and exploded in my face, it blinded me.” And he said, “I was trying to find it. I knew I had to get it.” Says, “I finally got my hand on it and crawled up to the pilot and said, “Open the damn window, quick.” He threw it out. He said, “I woke up the next morning in some hospital in the Pacific.” He said, “This nurse came in and said, “Sergeant you’re getting the Congressional Medal of Honor tomorrow.” He said, “I thought she was pulling me leg, so I just laughed at her.” He said, “The next morning, General Curtis LeMay, head of all Air Force in the Pacific come walking in with that big stokey cigar and said, “Sergeant, you did one hell of a job” and he pinned the Congressional medal of honor on his pillow. He said, “not only did you save the men, but you also saved a very expensive airplane. Now, what else can I do for you Sergeant?” He said, “I looked at him and said, ‘General I have two brothers somewhere in this Pacific and I’d like to see them.’” And the General smiled at him and said, “They’ll be here tomorrow.” And he did.

BOULTON: They did. (Laughs)

LUSK: That’s a pretty good story.

BOULTON: That’s a great story. Yeah.

LUSK: Yep.

BOULTON: You’ve got any questions you want to ask?

MORROW: Um, no, I think he’s pretty much covered everything ...

LUSK: Hey, look now, I don’t know whether. Let me have that sheet right there. I don’t know whether you want this or not. No, not that, that’s yours.

BOULTON: This is the biographical summary.

LUSK: This, this is the biographical schedule here; I can’t give you this one.

MORROW: I think I may have a copy. That’s what I was looking for.

LUSK: Now, this, this gives every place I was, Bronze Star and all of that stuff. And, this gives details of combat, this right here, Battle Maknassey.

BOULTON: Oh, good.

LUSK: In other words, the only way I'll let you have it is if you go up there and make a copy and bring me this one back.

MORROW: I think I have it.

LUSK: Oh, do you?

MORROW: I think I have a copy of both of them.

LUSK: Well, Yeah, yeah. Where did you get this, from UT?

MORROW: Yes sir. (Laughs)

LUSK: Yeah, that's right. Now, this is some stuff added to it. Now, that's the last page of that. That's a picture of the shell hole I got hit in.

BOULTON: Oh, wow.

LUSK: This was in Tunisia, it has directories here, see April 8, '43. This is my ... my M1 was standing there.

BOULTON: Is that the same M-1 that you've got upstairs, or is that a different one?

LUSK: Hmm?

BOULTON: Is that the same M-1 that you've got here, you said?

LUSK: No, it's not.

BOULTON: Different one, okay.

LUSK: No, I got this one from a civilian marketing group. Um, Captain Colquin was laying right here and I was right here and that shell hit right between us. He got fifteen pieces and I got three. And, it was enough to blow this house away.

BOULTON and MORROW: Yeah.

LUSK: And, that is an article that was written in our county paper, I didn't know I had it, but I did. I just stuck it in here. And, that's the general countryside in Tunisia, that's an old dry wash creek bed, this is me slashing a piece of bread, and that's the temporary cemetery in Tunisia.

BOULTON: Right.

LUSK: By the way, every once in a while, we had, we put the chaplain to work, burying the dead, rolled the bodies up in a blanket, in a mass grave. They were moved later.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: But, uh, Major said, "Ed, let's go take a look." We went over there and he pulled the blanket back and from here up there was no head.

BOULTON: Have you ever been back to North Africa?

LUSK: Sir?

BOULTON: Have you ever been back to North Africa?

LUSK: No.

BOULTON: No, never wanted to?

LUSK: No, I've seen enough of those Arabs.

BOULTON: Yeah. (Laughs)

LUSK: That's a picture of my rifle team. I'm going to put this back together like I had it.

BOULTON: You've already mentioned some pretty extraordinary stories, what would stand out as your most vivid memory of the war? Would it be the shell?

LUSK: What was that?

BOULTON: What would be what's your most vivid memory of the war? Was it when the shell went off? Yeah, that was it.

LUSK: Well, the, um, I had a major, I mean a colonel in California who wrote me some years ago. He said, "Ed, I want to get you to give me your opinion of Colonel Toffee and Major Dillon, your COs." Well, I wrote him and told him that I couldn't have found two better guys to serve under. And uh, he says, "By the way, I was back east, not to long ago, have you ever been to the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning?" And, uh, in fact he called me. I said, "No." He said, "If you haven't been, you need to go." And, uh, he said, "They might like to have some of your paraphernalia from the war." So I wrote the curator of the museum. It's in the old hospital building if you go in the main post on the hill. I said, "I have a couple of things that probably wouldn't qualify for the museum, like a bed roll that's got blood all over the back. I've got a field jacket that's got sixteen shell holes across the back, and, uh, couple other things." I said, uh ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

LUSK: And I went in sorted to death. I said, "I have some stuff out here I have been asking if you want my stuff." He said, "Sir, what's your name?" I told him. And he called upstairs and the lady asked him, "Ask him if that's Colonel Lusk?" I said, "That's me." His secretary had just had a leg operation, she said, "That damn Army doctor didn't know what he was doing and I am in misery. (Laughter) So anyway, she said, uh—Z. Frank Hanner was his name—she said, "Mr. Hanner is conducting a class of new officers around to show them what their predecessors have done, so I don't know if he'll get through in time to talk with you or not. But Jenny and I were wandering around there. And somebody tapped me on the shoulder. He said, "I know who you are and why you're here and maybe I can get through (inaudible)." So he wrote me a letter that said I would like a brief résumé of your service and, uh, a picture if you have one. He said, "Now, you have to sign this form stating that you have donated to this museum and that you will not want get it back." I said, "I don't want it back." So anyway, he wrote me a letter that said I have your display up on the third floor and I think that you'll be pleased with it. And in a glass case, about this thick and about ten feet long and I noticed up back there, he had my resume printed in English printing, where you could read it. And it was very nice. And it had my bedroll there and my field jacket and, uh, and some other things. And it was very, very impressive. And up on the top of this case was a bust of General Patton. Well, anyway, we went on out and I told Jenny I wanted to take another look. And I went back up there. And there, two burr-headed soldiers, with crew cuts standing there. And I said, "Fellows, I don't mean to be bragging, but that guy in that picture is me." He said, "Colonel, can I shake your hand?" I said, "Yeah." I said, "What rank are you?" He said, "special forces." I said, "I want to shake your hand." And he said, "We just been reading about you." And it was quite an experience. So these little things add up.

BOULTON: Now, you have children, is that correct? That's right?

LUSK: Sir?

BOULTON: You have children?

LUSK: Have children?

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: Oh yeah.

BOULTON: Now, have you taken them to see the display?

LUSK: Well, I took my daughter in Huntsville [Alabama] and her son, whose father got killed in Iraq. And uh, my daughter in Boston, by there some years ago. In fact, my daughter in Boston was a music major, a violinist. She started taking violin in the third grade in Knoxville.

MORROW: I started playing when I was four.

LUSK: Huh?

MORROW: I started playing violin when I was four.

LUSK: Well, she took to it, we transferred down here, Suzy went to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, and she hated the band because she could never get her practice rooms for the violin. (Laughter) She wouldn't go to a football game, but she, uh, got her Masters degree at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and that's where she met her husband who is an opera singer, Frank Kelly. You never heard of him, but anyway, he's a pretty good tenor voice. He sang all over the world, and, uh, they spent a year in London at the Royal Conservatory of Music. And they came back, and they both had jobs up in New York, and uh, she decided, well, when she was at Tuscaloosa, her teacher, Dr. Cartwright, arranged for her to go to Yale for summer school. And she did. She got on the plane with her violin and her pass, and found her way off to Yale. And then she was supposed to go from there to Switzerland to study over one of his friends, but she called me from up there and said, "Daddy, I'm not going to Switzerland." I said, "Why?" She said, "I'm not that good." She said, "When you get up here, you find out where you are. I am not that good period." But then she went back to school and got her Masters degree in Botany and Biology and she had been working with Harvard University for twelve years now. She was head of the, uh, Ware Museum [United Kingdom], where they have plants from everywhere and she made a map by computer of every plant and its botanical name and where it was on the grounds. And two years ago, she spent nine weeks in Tibet collecting plants for Harvard and she gave a talk down here at city hall about a month ago. They couldn't believe it when she went a month without a bath. (Laughter)

BOULTON: But you could relate.

LUSK: (Laughs) And uh, but, now she doesn't work for Harvard anymore, they have put her in charge of all foreign expeditions.

BOULTON: Wow.

MORROW: That's impressive.

BOULTON: Yeah.

LUSK: Good promotion. She would like to be out of that cold weather forever, but she can't afford to quit her job. (Laughter)

BOULTON: Is there anything that you wish we had asked you that we haven't? Any other memory or opinion, or ...

LUSK: Well, you've just about wrung it out. (Laughter) I don't know of anything right off. I can't think of anything. I hope I haven't bored you.

MORROW: No, not at all.

BOULTON: No, it's been a wonderful interview, thank you. Well, if you've got no more, then ...

MORROW: I do have one thing. What was the wildlife like?

LUSK: Ma'am?

MORROW: What was the wildlife like in Africa?

LUSK: Well, for one instance, uh, pair of battalion commanders, Colonel Toffee. He was the type of guy who knew everybody in a little town within three days. So in Port Lyautey he had met this fellow who invited him to go wild boar hunting. Well, something came up and Toffee couldn't go, so he told Captain Kent to take me and go fulfill the obligation. So we took the jeep and went into Port Lyautey and picked up this Italian. So we was following him, and most of the company was Air Force, so he saw the handwriting on the wall and we was just trying to (inaudible). So we took off out towards the Atlas mountains. It's very rugged, deep gorges and everything, but a lot of tabletop land. We ran on to this Arab, who was driving some sheep and this Italian asked him if he had seen any wild boar tracks up this morning. He said yeah, that he saw some. So we gave him some cigarettes if he would get in the jeep and show us where the tracks were. Well, it was level land, except for this deep ravine that ran all through there. Well, I had my M1 that I had then, I had eight rounds. Every other round was a tracer and the other four was armor piercing. So Captain Kent said, "Ed, I'll take this side over here and you take this top and we'll move gradually down each top." We could see each other about as far as this house over there (100 feet). And uh, we put the Arab right in the bottom to stare at the hogs. (Laughter) And I loaned this Italian my .45 and he was about halfway up on my side. And we moved off, about forty or fifty yards, just gradually moving and I heard this Italian empty that .45 as fast as he could pull the trigger. (Laughter) He ... told me later, he said, "the hogs came this way, this way, and this way, then I pow, pow, pow." (Laughter) And I saw three hogs coming up the slope about as far as from here to that tree over there (twenty-five feet), but I drew down on one of them, I fired, he dropped. I had seven other rounds, so I went back up, and the others were going off of the bank, so I just squeezed them all. The last one I just broke his left front shoulder, that leg was just, but that didn't stop him, he just kept going. And I went down there, and that Italian was "El senioro!" And uh, this, uh, Captain Kent had seen a jackal. Do you know what a jackal is? Go off in the bushes. He told the Arab about it, so the Arab pulled out this long, curved knife, a ... knife. We heard a scramble and that Arab came out with that jackal, and he said ... (Laughter) Well, we took that hog back to the camp, and the medic said, "Well, most likely it's very good meat, but we can't take the responsibility of feeding this battalion bad meat, you know there might be parasites of something." So we gave it away.

BOULTON: So, you never got to eat it?

LUSK: Huh?

BOULTON: You never got to eat it? (Laughs)

LUSK: No. I've eaten wild boar up in the Smokies.

BOULTON: Yeah, yeah. That's about it.

LUSK: I hope your arm gets better.

MORROW: Me too. (Laughs) It'll be nice to be able to use it again.

LUSK: You have a very nice smile.

MORROW: (Laughs) Thank you.

BOULTON: Well, thank you very much this has been a great interview. We really appreciate it.

LUSK: Oh, well, I hope I haven't bored you.

BOULTON: Absolutely not. No, it's been wonderful, thanks.

(Tape Paused)

BOULTON: Alright, you were going to tell us one more story before we leave?

LUSK: Well, I was walking around on the front lines, talking to the men heading back to the battalion command force. Officers sat over there. And I heard battery artillery fire. We report toward our headquarters. They had sounded like it was ours. It came in (sound effects) It was within a twenty yard radius (inaudible). So Sergeant says, "Are you alright?" Yeah, sounds like artillery is charging. We started walking again and I heard it again. Some foreign observer had spotted us with field glasses. "Ah hah, I have fun." Go back to the gun position. Four more rounds right around us. Well, by that time, I had walked; I had walked oh (inaudible). I said, "Well, I'll walk along this and they fired again. (Sound effects) I was laying in that ditch while all four rounds exploded. A piece of shrapnel just cut through us. (Sound effect) Neither one of us hit. Something told me to move. I argued with myself. Well, I moved from about here to that tree over there. Well, I heard it again, three guns (inaudible). Well, that time I was glad I had moved, three rounds exploded and I felt the other round hit the ground ... Then I thought of a time cue, three seconds, well, I sweated blood then. Well, I finally got up enough bearings to turn around and look. This close to my head was ... Another one of those close calls. Well, I'm still around, I'm still here.

BOULTON: Thanks again.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

