

So Long Soldier Boy

Interviewer

So I'm ready. Are you ready? Paul Andert: I'm ready. Interviewer: So let's start with the real basics, like your name, where you were born, when you were born. Paul Andert: I'm Paul Andert. I was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1923, January the 2nd, and, well, I was raised in St. Louis. And I could go into my mother was French war bride, and so my dad and my uncle were in World War I. And so he went back to France and got her after the war and brought her to the States, and so they had she had four boys, and of course, I was one of them.

Paul Andert

And the Church well, he went to the Veterans Hospital and he died in the Veterans Hospital, so the Church decided it was too heavy for her to have four children, not speaking good English or anything. So they took over put two of us in an orphan home, the two older ones, and the two younger ones stayed home with her. So we served our grade school years in the orphan home learned discipline Catholic orphan home lot of discipline. And so anyway, went to Hadley Vocational School. At Hadley, I was three years there learning the printing trade, and one of the teachers told the principal

Interviewer

Look at me.

Paul Andert

Huh?

Interviewer

Look at me, okay?

Paul Andert

Okay.

Interviewer

That's how we want to do it.

Paul Andert

One of the preachers one of the teachers told the principal that I was on the floor making faces at her, and I was never on that floor. But anyway, had me turn in my book and they were going to let me go, and so my teachers that he had them write up about me wrote good things.

Paul Andert

So he had the teacher come down, and he said, He couldn't be the man, and she says, I'll never apologize to him. So he says, Well, I'm reinstating you. And I says, No, you won't. I quit. So I quit. And he said, What are you going to do? I says, I'm going to join the Army.

Paul Andert

So I told my mother, "Going," and she says, "So long, soldier boy." She didn't think they'd take me. I was too little. 17 years old, 117 pounds, 5'7".

Paul Andert

And so I went down there and they said, "You can't be 18." I says, "I am. I was born in 1922." And they said, "Well, take these papers to your mother, and if she signs them that you were born in '22, we'll take you." So I forced her to sign them, and she did, and so I enlisted. And that was in May '40, and I was a volunteer, of course, then. They didn't have the draft or anything at that time.

Interviewer

So let me back up for one second. So do you know what your father died of?

Paul Andert

They originally called it "shell shock," and that's about the only name they had. And they were giving him treatments for it, and during one of the treatments, he died, and so that's all we knew. And she worked a long time, my mother did, to get a pension from the VA, and she did get one, but I don't know how much it was or anything like that then. So that helped her some, and

Interviewer

So how old were you when he died?

Paul Andert

We went. "I must've been," let me see, "seven years [old]. My youngest brother was seven years beyond me, or later than me, so that would've been about seven years from 23 would make it," I mean plus 23. That would be 1930, about, "yeah, 1930. And so we spent from," the eight years in the orphan home, and went to high school.

Interviewer

So shell shock is what they call PTSD today.

Paul Andert

Well, that's what they say it is today.

Interviewer

Do you remember, "I'm just curious. I've been doing some work on PTSD.

Paul Andert

Say it again.

Interviewer

Do you remember your dad? Did he have trouble at home with

Paul Andert

He apparently did. Of course, we were so young at the time, you know, and he used to—well, he worked for the Post Office, and he would—sometimes he wouldn't come home. And so she got my uncle that was in the service with him and the VA together, and they got a hold of him and put him in the whatchacallit, and they said he couldn't survive in civilian life without the proper treatments. So— They were both in the Meuse-Argonne [offensive], the uncle and the dad, so that was it.

Interviewer

All right, so you went into training. You enlisted, and they let you in.

Paul Andert

Yeah. Well, it was 1940, so we were regular Army. So we didn't have boot camp or anything like that. You trained within the unit that you joined at Jefferson Barracks, the Sixth Infantry. And I had a corporal named Hog-jaw, we called him, and every time I got out of step, he'd kick me in the rear end, because I was a little guy, and treated me so—you know, had me clean spittoons and all this. He says, "I'm going to make you want out of this Army." And I told him, "No, you won't do that."

Paul Andert

And even one time they put me in a trash barrel and tied the thing down and rolled me down a company street—cobblestones. I hit a tree and come flying out of the barrel, and that's when I grew up, that day. I got into those guys and boy, I started beating up every one of them. I was a wild man, and I said to myself, "You have to grow up or you're not going to make it," so I grew up.

Interviewer

Whatever happened to Hog-jaw, do you know?

Paul Andert

Hog-jaw turned out to be, unfortunately, a coward. He couldn't—he was so strong on the stateside, but when he got over there, he couldn't handle combat, and so they put him with the chaplain, going around marking graves afterwards. That was Hog-jaw. And so anyway, I didn't use a lot of last names, because people—when I wrote the book, there was a lot of people that had relatives alive. And if somebody did something, you might use their initials or something, but you didn't want to say, "So-and-so was killed because he did this stupidly."

Paul Andert

That would be terrible on a family, so I didn't use the full names. But yeah—and then we—well, we had guard duty and things, and I was on guard duty one time when they said, "If the prisoners get away from you, you serve their time." They used to say that in those days. And so I had a shotgun with a bayonet on it, and 17 years old, and these two guys were really tough that I had with me. And they told me, they say, "When the day's over with, we're going to take that shotgun away from you and we're going to stick it up your rear end." That's what they told me.

Paul Andert

So when the day was over with and I had to have [to] take them back, they come at me, and I said, "Halt," a couple times, and then I decided I got to do something. So I shoved the bayonet into one of the guys and tore his shirt all up and everything and he started screaming. Everybody come running, and they said, "Well, what are you doing?" I says, "He was going to stick that thing up my rear end, and I'll be darned. I got him."

Interviewer

So this was in stateside?

Paul Andert

Stateside, oh, at Jefferson Barracks"

Interviewer

This was stateside? It was"okay.

Paul Andert

During training, yeah.

Interviewer

Wow.

General George S. Patton in the Flesh

Paul Andert

And yeah, a lot of funny things happened during that deal. But anyway, we got the new weapons. We were using M1 Springfield rifles and Enfield rifles. And we used wooden stakes for machine guns, "cause we didn't have any, and eventually we got the mortars and the machine guns and that after we got to Fort Benning. We moved to Fort Benning as part of the Second Armored Division then. They made us a part of Patton's Second Armored, and so he was a brigade commander when I got there.

Paul Andert

And then he became the major general in charge of the division, and there's so many stories about him you wouldn't want to" [laughs] but, well, anyway, one of the first things that happened with him was that he was" I was" you'd give men a 10-minute break every hour in peacetime. So we're digging" I'm teaching them how to dig foxholes and trenches, and so during their break, they're all sitting up on the bank. And I decide I want to get a little exercise, so I get down there with the shovel. Patton comes along, and I says, "Oh my God, I got it." And he says, "Who's in charge here?" "Jump out of the hole, and I says, "I am, sir."

Paul Andert

He says, "You are a lousy SOB," he says, "if I ever, ever catch you doing something like this while your men are watching you," he says, "you've had it, you know? And so that ended all right. But then he used to inspect us every" not all of us, just certain units" on Saturdays. And this one Saturday he was inspecting us, and I was a weapons platoon sergeant then. We had weapons platoons in those days, but they changed them.

Paul Andert

But anyway, he comeâ€”I had a guy that knew he was coming, and he says, â€œI want to see him.â€ And I says, â€œWhat you do, you go to the latrine and you stay in there until heâ€™s gone, because youâ€™re sloppy and you look like the dickens. â€œAnd I donâ€™t wantâ€”â€ looked like hellâ€” â€œAnd I donâ€™t want you standing in the formation.â€ So here comes Patton, and we are in formation, and here we go, and that son of a gun left the latrine and got in the line. Patton comes up to him and he looks at him and he looks at me, and he says, â€œSergeant,â€ he says, â€œbust this man.â€ I says, â€œSir, heâ€™s already a private.â€ He says, â€œWell, make him a corporal and then bust him.â€ Then he goes on, you know.

Paul Andert

He was quite a character, and he would talk to us in the boxing bowl.

Paul Andert

We had a boxing bowl there, and he putâ€”I got the pictures that wide of 10,000 men in there and him talking to us in October â€™41. And he would tell us how we were going to fight, and it wasnâ€™t according to the Geneva Convention. And of course, he always denied whatever he said. He says, â€œI didnâ€™t say it.â€ And so the things he told us wasâ€”we liked it what he told us. But we knew it wasnâ€™t kosher, or whatever you want to call it. We knew it wasnâ€™t there. And he would say, â€œWhen you get prisoners,â€ he says, â€œget a bunch of them together, tell them to take off their shoes and run, and then shoot them.â€ Thatâ€™s what he told us.

Paul Andert

And soâ€”and then he denied he ever said anything like it. But I says, â€œWell, hell, thereâ€™s 12,000 men heard him.â€ But heâ€™d deny that stuff. And his speeches were cleaned up pretty good withâ€”thereâ€™s some cuss words in them, but not near what he said. And if he walkedâ€”if he drove along the road and he saw two men walking, heâ€™dâ€”this was in peace at the Statesâ€”and he would say, â€œWhoâ€™s in charge here?â€ And of course, in the beginning, we didnâ€™t know what to say. We said, â€œWe donâ€™t know, sir.â€ He says, â€œThe man that has the lowest serial number is in charge.â€

Paul Andert

I never want to see two men anywhere that the other one doesnâ€™t know the otherâ€”whoâ€™s in charge.â€ That was one of his major concerns in the States. Somebody is in charge all the time. There was never no one in charge, so we learned a lot from that, too, you know.

Interviewer

Sounds like you had a different philosophy from him, thoughâ€”like he didnâ€™t like the idea of you working while your men watched.

Paul Andert

Thatâ€™s right.

Interviewer

Whereas you felt that would probably make them like and respect you more, that you were okay with that.

Paul Andert

Well, I feltâ€”at that time, I felt like if I did it, they knew that I could do what they could do. And so I did a lot that way. I would lead the first patrol, or I would always want to be the leader and notâ€”because I knew that made them want to go, because they knew Iâ€™d do it. And so thatâ€™sâ€”well, I got that in the orphan home. Theyâ€™d give us so much discipline that I knew that I had to do something.

Interviewer

So did you like Patton? Was itâ€”I mean it sounds like you knew him.

Paul Andert

We liked him. We always said, â€œOur blood and his guts,â€ is what it was. And we liked him because he taught us the way to stay aliveâ€”keep moving. Never stop. The guy that stops eventually gets shot.

Interviewer

And so we did it in Africa, we did it in everywhere elseâ€”even after he wasnâ€™t our commander any more we worked that way.

Paul Andert

And you meet the line of resistance, and you put up a fight there, and if itâ€™s heavier than you are, go around this side or go around that side and get behind them and come back. And never stay hereâ€”get away, go aroundâ€”and so thatâ€™s the way we fought most of the war that way, except in the Siegfried Line, where we were stuck for 17 days in the rain and the mud. But other than that, we were always moving.

Learning to Hate

Interviewer

So let meâ€”so tell me what is a weapons platoon? How many people were there in it, andâ€” Paul Andert: Yeah. Interviewer: What did they do? Paul Andert: The weapons platoon we had in those days was similar to the regular infantry. They had three rifle platoons and then a weapons platoon, and a weapons platoon had the machine guns and the mortars. And then thatâ€™s where I first became a platoon sergeant, in the weapons platoon. But then what they did, they changed the armored infantry into armor, and so then we ended up with five half-tracks, five circler machine guns, 50 calibers, and mines, and concertina wire, and all that. We carried all that stuff and pulled an anti-tank gun.

Paul Andert

So I had five half-tracks, and we had the antitank gun, and each platoon, then, was a weapons platoon on its own. Each platoon had a machine gun squad and a mortar squad and three rifle squads. So instead of 36 men in a regular platoon, I had 48, plus the half-tracks and all that stuff, so. And then he [Patton] had a rule: every man is to know how to use every weapon thatâ€™s in that platoon; plus every man is a driver. If the driver gets shot, somebody can take over the vehicle. Every man was a radio operator with the radio we had in the command track. And we had to go through all that in the States, training the

guys to be familiar with all those things.

Interviewer

That sounds like it was good advice.

Paul Andert

It was, and it was a lot better training than the regular infantry got. And that's why we had less casualties. We did have less casualties. In 30 months, we had less casualties than an Infantry division would have in 11 months, because we were trained differently, we were equipped differently, and we moved differently. And we got to the rear as many times as we could, and so that was the way we did that.

Interviewer

So what is a half-track? I'm not sure of what it is.

Paul Andert

A half-track is a vehicle—it's a truck in the front and tracks in the back, and armor around them. Not heavy armor, only quarter-inch steel, and then they had a shield for the driver and that. But yeah, we had five of them in my platoon, and 17 of them in a company. And they—the mortars was good to have because that was our own artillery. That was so when we got out on a breakthrough, they called it, and you're way out here, if you had a machine gun—you had two machine guns if you were on foot. You had 15 of them if you were on a half-track.

Paul Andert

But you had two machine guns and a mortar beside your riflemen, so you had your own little artillery with you. You had your own machine guns with you. Whereas the other regiments were not equipped that way—the Infantry regiments were not equipped that way, so I was glad that I was in the Armored division, because it was more active, I guess you might say, because we were always moving. And so of course, one of the things that they always got onto us about—people get onto us about today yet—is you were so vicious, and why were you so vicious?

Paul Andert

And I could say this to—what I usually tell them, I says, "Well, we went into the war being taught the Geneva Convention and the Articles of War. But when we got there, and we start facing the [German] SS and the Afrika Korps, they were dirty, dirty, and they would shoot us even—if they would practice giving up and run out with their hands up, and the guys would run out to bring them in, and they'd kill the guys that'd go out. They pulled all kinds of tricks like that on us.

Paul Andert

And then they'd put—on the mines, they would change the sharp to sicker and the sicker to sharp, where if you saw the mine and you didn't know whether they tampered with it, and the safe was on or the fire was on—you didn't know. And then they'd put an antipersonnel mine underneath that one, so you lift that one up, you got blowed up by the one underneath it. But they—anyway, we got dirty, too. We decided that we can't win unless we get down there and let them know, "We could beat you guys any time, you know? And so that's why we—in Africa, we learned that lesson.

Paul Andert

And Eisenhower and McNair visited us while we were there, and Patton was upâ€”came up to the front for a while. He did work in that for about two months, and then he went back for the invasion of Sicily, to train for that. And so did we. Some of us were loaned to the First Armored to help replacements for them because they lost 1,000 vehicles in the Kasserine Pass, and so we had to revive that Kasserine Pass and fight on up into Tunisia, and then we reverted back to the Second Armored Division then so we could go to Sicily.

Paul Andert

And so anyway, the most interesting thing in Africa, you know, Eisenhower told usâ€”McNair visited with Eisenhower â€”cause the British were angry at us because theyâ€”d been fighting since â€”39. We were fighting â€”42. We were new. They knew what to do. We had to learn what to do. So they criticized us a lot, the British did. And so McNair and Eisenhower, when they start questioning the guys at the front and that, they said, â€”What trouble with you guys, you havenâ€”t learned to hate.â€” Now, thatâ€”s the word they gave us. â€”You have not learned to hate.â€”

Paul Andert

And so I often think back of Eisenhower after he became President and all thatâ€”he wouldnâ€”t talk like that, you know, â€”you have to learn to hate.â€” Oh, he wouldnâ€”t do that. But anyway, Patton was tickled to death that they said that, because he wanted us to hate. He wanted us to do all those kind of things. So thatâ€”s why we learned in Africa, and we were different than the ones on theâ€”weâ€”in the Normandy invasion. We had entirely different training than all of these new guys that were in for the first time. We were different.

Paul Andert

We fought differently, and we were called â€”Rooseveltâ€”s butchersâ€” in the American press. I got copies of the editorial where the writerâ€”I think it was Don Whiteheadâ€”wrote that the Germans called us â€”Rooseveltâ€”s butchers.â€” And the reason they did is we would shoot anybody thatâ€”d shoot anyâ€”if one of our men was killed, weâ€”re going to kill all of you, is the way we used to pass the word on.

Interviewer

Why do you think Churchillâ€”and Iâ€”ve read what youâ€”ve said about this. You just mentioned that Churchill wanted you guys to go into northern Africa.

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

And that FDR went along with that. Do you think Churchill wanted that to toughen you up? Why do you think he wanted to do that, rather than goâ€”

Paul Andert

I think that Roosevelt and Churchill and Eisenhower, all of them wanted that. The Russians didnâ€”t want that, and some others didnâ€”t. They thought we ought to go right to



Europe.

Paul Andert

But we weren't prepared. We didn't have the proper equipment—the boats and all that. We didn't have the LSTs and that. So that was all in development, and so I was at the Casablanca Conference, incidentally, when Churchill and Roosevelt and Patton and Giraud and that bunch met there at the Casablanca Conference. And I was my platoon was honor guard at the Sultan's palace during the Casablanca Conference.

Paul Andert

So the Sultan of Morocco gave me a badge off of one of his troopers, you know, just for being there, as a souvenir. And so I always cherish that, and so anyway, that was interesting, cause I got to see all those guys. And then, of course, I got to talk to Eisenhower and [Omar] Bradley and them later, in England. But anyway, it was a good, good feeling to know those guys.

Patton's Speech After Pearl Harbor  
Interviewer

So I want to go back now to your platoon—you're back stateside. So did you go through a lot of the war with the guys that you met when you were training stateside? And then another question related to that, which is in your stories, you often find, in Europe, somebody that you knew back in the States, and that helps you a lot in your ability to deal with them.

Paul Andert

Well, the only—actually, we were—it was—we were a pretty small group at that time, in 1940. And there wasn't—there wasn't anyone that had any experience, other than a few that were in World War I. Had a Sergeant Dempsey that used to talk to us about World War I. But he—I never mention too much about him in the book, but we used to listen to him every once in a while tell us about World War I. But we actually did not have much of people being able to tell us much about war or fighting. We really didn't have it, and so we had to learn by doing it.

Paul Andert

And of course, Patton had World War I experience, and a couple others of our officers, the senior officers, had World War I experience. But we didn't always get to be with them, you know. And they sent me to motorcycle school when I was in Fort Benning for three months, to learn motorcycle riding. I didn't want to do it, but I was a volunteer, so I had to go. And so one day while we were doing the scout work, going up the road in these motorcycles they put up a white flag—that's the enemy. So you were to swing your motorcycle around, fall down behind it, pull the tommy gun out of the scabbard, and aim it.

Paul Andert

Here I am, I'm aiming this tommy gun, and I'm aiming it over a gasoline tank. What in the hell is this, you know? And so some of the guys got to complaining, and they say, "Hey, that's not the way to do this," you know. And so they did away with the jeep—I mean with the motorcycle and went to the jeep, but we still had a few. When I went back to Benning, I rode motorcycle for—well, General Hines, but he was a Major Hines then. I rode motorcycle for him.

Paul Andert

But then we changed, and when we helped to form the Third Armored Division, I moved up then—I could go to platoon sergeant, weapons platoon then, regular platoon then, so I was a platoon sergeant pretty early. Because by the time we got—well, I was a platoon sergeant in 41, during the Louisiana maneuvers, Tennessee maneuvers, Carolina maneuvers. I was a platoon sergeant during that time, so that was interesting.

Interviewer

So while you were training, did you get a lot of news of the war? Is that something that you were able to follow?

Paul Andert

Oh, yeah. We—they brought us up to date pretty good. Of course, it was slow coming in those days, you know. It was only the press, and you didn't have television. You had radio, but our company—each company only had one radio, so that was like 177 men, one radio, and be in a day room, they call it. There'd be a pool table and a radio, and that was your day room.

Paul Andert

You could go and listen to the radio, or you could shoot pool in the States. And so we got the news usually on Sunday—we would go sit down and they'd have a recap of the week's news or something like that. But we didn't get much, really. We really didn't get much news. But they kept us so busy anyway, Patton did, because he had us in the field so much, you know, doing things that he thought we ought to do, or know what to do.

Interviewer

So were you—were you eager to get to war, or were you just as happy to wait until—

Paul Andert

—Cause I was so gung-ho, I was eager to get to the war, until the first bullet.

Interviewer

Well, let's get to that later. So do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Paul Andert

Oh, yeah, sure. I was—we were asleep in the barracks at Fort Benning, and some of the guys come running up there and they said, "The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor."

Paul Andert

So the only thing for us to do was all get up and go to the day room, to the one radio, and hear what was going on. So that's where I heard about it, and they—I had—several of us had passes December, for Christmas. That was all nullified right then. No Christmas—no passes of any kind. And so we, you know, just got down to studying what we could of the war, and doing our drilling and range firing and bayonet courses and all that stuff. But yeah, we didn't—after Pearl Harbor, we were kept more or less

informed than we wouldâ€™ve been, and a lot of training, of course. Training, training, training all the time.

Interviewer

Do you remember Rooseveltâ€™s â€œDay of Infamyâ€ speech? Did you hear that on the radio?

Paul Andert

Yes. Yes. They replayed that several times, so it probably was a replay that we heard. But yeah, and General Patton, on December 8th, wanted on the radio, so WRBL, Columbus, Georgia, put him on the radio. And we were told, â€œYour generalâ€™s going to be on the radio,â€ so boy, we all rushed to hear that. And so he started out, and he says, â€œThose lousy sons of bitches,â€ and they cut him off the air. We said, â€œThat was our general, and thatâ€™s the way he talks.â€ You know, â€œthose lousy sonsâ€â€ General Patton.

We Knew What Had To Be Done

Interviewer

So when did you go overseas? You got on a boat and you went overseas when?

Paul Andert

What?

Interviewer

When did you goâ€”when did you start, head for Africa?

Paul Andert

We started to head for Africa in Novemberâ€”October, â€™42, we started to go there, and before that time, in July, Churchill and Roosevelt talked, and they were going to send the Second Armored Division to Africa in July. But they decided, â€œNo, we want them for the invasion of Africa, and not in the Libyan desert.â€

Paul Andert

We didnâ€™t want them there, and so they took all of our tanks and gave them to Britainâ€”the Grant tanks, and so we got the Shermans then. And so we went to Norfolk, Virginia, to get ready for the invasion. Weâ€”some of us sergeants were taught on the Navy ships on how to load the ships, because we had to load our own ships. So we loaded our own ships, and they wereâ€”while we were loading the ships, we would chain the tanks down good, â€™cause we were going to sleep around them in the ship. And so when we started out, as we were boarding the ship, first of all, they put us onboard the ship. Andâ€”Harry Lee, it wasâ€”the CIA or the CIC was on ground there, and they would check each one of us as we went on.

Paul Andert

And they would sayâ€”you wouldâ€”theyâ€™d give you your last name, and you could say, youâ€™d have to say, â€œPaul J.â€ and your serial number. And they checked every one of us that got on the ship, and they put me over here, and everybody got on the ship. The company commander come to the railing, he looked down there, and he says, â€œWhat are you doing there? You belong up here.â€ I says, â€œThey kept me here.â€

So he come down, and they says they kept me because my grandmother was still in France, and we were going to have to fight the French. And so I says, "What?" I don't care if my grandmother's Gisette, I says, "I want to go."

Paul Andert

And so they let me on the ship, but then the ship went out to sea, and it broke down. Had to come back and be reloaded on a Titania—the name of the ship: Titania. And it was new, and it was being painted, and Patton was on the Augusta, the cruiser Augusta, so he flew back in to supervise it, because our ship was an important ship for the Safi invasion of French Morocco; so he wanted that done right away. So he had us put those tanks in the hold, and we were just dumping those tanks anywhere and didn't get them chained down right, and the tanks would go like this, and so we'd get on top of the tanks and sleep on top of the tanks so we wouldn't get crushed.

Paul Andert

And then while he was doing that, hollering and all that, one of the men fell off the scaffold that he was painting, and he died—and he was killed. But it took us three days out to see to catch up with the convoy, and we caught up with the convoy, and so—and then we had a semi-hurricane at sea and made everybody sick, and so when we got to Africa, we were not feeling real good. But we knew what had to be done, and so Roosevelt said he wanted to give a speech to the French before we landed, and so he got on some kind of a program to where he was telling the French, "We are American soldiers. We come here to help you, and we want to help you win the war and restore France."

Paul Andert

"Cause French was already Vichy French then, so they were going to fight us, or were told to fight us by the Germans, and so he says, "We're going to land, and we're not going to fire, but if you fire, the order's going to be 'play ball' and we're going to fire back." So we go out and we're heading to shore, and a French battery opened up on us, and so they was: "play ball." And the battleship Texas, old World War II battleship, was there, and he blew out the French emplacement—he blew it out. And so we had to take the town of Safi. And some people from the Ninth Division were there with us, and we took Safi, and then we moved on to fight the Foreign Legion that was coming up from Marrakesh.

Paul Andert

And so we were to stop them so they didn't interfere with Casablanca, and so we were able to scatter them out into the hills and that, 'cause we had better weapons than they did, and even though ours were antiquated somewhat, because we got better ones later. But—and then the Air Force helped us. The aircraft carrier Ranger sent some planes in, and they dive-bombed the convoy coming up from Marrakesh, and they scattered them out pretty good.

Interviewer

So tell me, before we keep—move forward, tell me about the landing and about the first bullet.

Paul Andert

Yeah. Well, we—first of all, as we're landing we go down rope ladders, and we're

pretty dizzy from the hurricane at sea and all that, and so some of the guys fall off the rope ladder and there wouldn't be a lighter underneath yet. They keep pulling the ladders in and out, and so they drowned—they go right down now.

Paul Andert

And they were equipped to go like this and take all the load off of them, but they'd panic and they wouldn't come back up. So we lost some guys that way. So then we go in, land on the beach, and moving towards the houses and that there and they start firing at us. And I hit the ground, and zing, you know.

Paul Andert

I says, "What in the hell are you doing here," is what I said to myself. "You didn't have to be here. You lied about your age." You know, "What are you doing here?" And so suddenly I woke up—what I'm doing here is I'm the platoon sergeant, and those guys are waiting to see what I'm going to do. [Laughs] So we got up and we moved and took out the town, and it wasn't—I think there was about 30 or 40 Frenchmen there that were firing at us, and we took them out. And then that's—and then after that, we were told to go to the highway and stop the Foreign Legion that was coming up.

Paul Andert

And so anyway, a couple of times, the French Morton bomber—old-style World War I type, I guess, almost—they come over the convoy and over the port to Safi, and they'd drop a bomb every now and then. And one time we're on the ship helping to get the tanks off, and we took cover, and after the plane went away, we looked what we took cover behind. We took cover behind Bangalore torpedoes. We were—and it's, "What the heck," you know, just things you do. But anyway, yeah, and so Patton was hollering, "Get up here. Get up here to Casablanca." They was having a lot of trouble there.

Paul Andert

And so we headed towards Casablanca, and we found out our 37 millimeter antitank guns we had, they were nothing but paint removers, and so we dropped those. We knew that we couldn't knock out any German tanks with a 37 millimeter, so we left those on the side of the road and went on up. And we got as far as a town called Mazigan, and the French were posed outside of town, and they said they were going to really resist us the next morning, so General Harmon sent the guy up there and he says, "We're going to tear you apart in the morning, so you better decide what you want to do."

Paul Andert

And so that was November the 11th, and so the French gave up. The French gave up, and so we went on, then, through—and then at the same time, Casablanca, the French gave up at Casablanca. So anyway, then we went into the Cork Forest, they call it, where we were prepared to—our first job was to keep the French—keep the Spanish from joining Hitler and come down and attack us as we were going across. You know, Spanish Morocco was here, and we were going this way, and so General Harmon, our commander, he invited the Spanish generals to come and visit the division.

Paul Andert

And he showed them all the equipment we had and that, and they decided they

werenâ€™t going to attack. So you know, so we went on up into Africa. And one thing there I got in the book that I donâ€™t know whether you have a note on it or not. I helped deliver a baby on a â€œForty and Eight.â€ We were on a train going up to the front, andâ€”to help relieve the Kasserine Passâ€”and we stopped every now and then because of air raids, and we had anti-aircraft guns on the tankâ€”on the flatcars. And so one time we stopped, we went under the bridge, and there was three women there.

Paul Andert

One was pregnant, and the other two were trying to help her, so they needed somebody to get them to a town. So I had them get on the boxcar with us, and so the baby comes, and theyâ€”I have the flashlightâ€”everybody else stood up and faced away, and Iâ€™m holding the flashlight while theyâ€™re delivering the baby. And it was Muslim women, you know, and next time we got to a town, we let them out and join the town. But that was interesting, and so some of the guys start calling me â€œdoctorâ€ after that, but it was just to hold the light. First time Iâ€™d seen anything like that, of course.

Interviewer

So I want to ask you about the Casablanca Conferenceâ€”the more substantive issue at the Casablanca Conference that you sometimes talk about, which wasâ€”

Paul Andert

Oh, yeah.

Interviewer

FDRâ€™s insistence on unconditional surrender.

Paul Andert

Yeah. Thatâ€™s where Roosevelt brought that upâ€” unconditional surrender. Churchill was opposed to it at first, and some of the other guys were, too. They says, â€œWell, that will prolong the war, because they wonâ€™t be able to give up in small groups. A whole army, if they wanted to quit, they couldnâ€™t quit, â€™cause it was unconditional.â€

Paul Andert

And Roosevelt didnâ€™t agree with them at all. He says, â€œWe want to fight this war that they all give up at the same time, and itâ€™s one treaty, unconditional, and no conditions for anything other than our conditions.â€ And so Churchill in his memoir said he finally gave in to that, but he was opposed to it at that point. And of course, Stalin didnâ€™t come to the meeting because he said he was too busy fighting in Russia, and in the first place, he didnâ€™t want us attacking Africa. He wanted us to come across the [English] Channel, and we werenâ€™t ready yet, so.

Interviewer

So what did you think about the unconditional surrender?

Paul Andert

Whatâ€™d I think aboutâ€”

Interviewer

What about unconditional surrender.

Paul Andert

Tunisia?

Interviewer

No "unconditional surrender.

Paul Andert

Oh.

Interviewer

Did you think

Paul Andert

Oh "it didn't bother us at the time. We didn't analyze that at all "we just "if that's what he wanted, that's what we do, you know "that type of thing. We didn't actually study that till later, as they start giving up when we got into Germany, and they told them they had to give up as a group and not individual units. So we never thought about it. "my guys, they were concentrating on this enemy and getting rid of him more than anything else.

Interviewer

Okay. So you went "after you "Casablanca surrendered, the French surrendered in Casablanca, you got in these boxcars and "or you went to Algeria first?

Paul Andert

We went to "we went from Rabat "that's in Algiers "no "that was still in Morocco. We boarded the cars, and then went on up "in this narrow-gauge railroad "on up towards the front. When we got a certain distance from Kasserine, they unloaded us, and then we moved up on foot then. And "but something about "at Casablanca, I was a company guide, they call it. My name began with "A. "I always got his with company guide, this or that or that.

Paul Andert

And so they had me go to the wharf at Casablanca to meet the rest of the division that had come in to tell them where our bivouac area was. And I'm standing on the wharf looking at the ships out there, and here was the Jean Bart battleship, French battleship, blown up here, and there was the cruiser Jeneau over here, blowed up, and some voice behind me says, "How would you like to ride on that little thing across the ocean?" And it was a sea-going tug, and I said, "I wouldn't like to ride on that."

Paul Andert

And he says, "Well, why don't you go out with me on that to meet the rest of the division?" And I turned around and it was General Harmon and General Gaffey was with him. General Gaffey, all spit and polished, Harmon in combat, and Gaffey didn't want that. He didn't believe in enlisted men being friendly with generals, you know, and so I

went out there with them, and so I did get to do that.

## Killing With a Trench Knife

Paul Andert

So then we did go up into Kasserine area—we did sort of relieve that area, and some of us joined the Sixth Infantry for a while. And that—when I had my first experience of leading a patrol where we had to kill people. This colonel of this battalion, he says, “I want you to send out a patrol and find out what you can about who is moving in and out of the front lines on the German side, whether it’s Italian or Germans. See if you could distinguish this.” And he says, “Don’t get into a fight unless you have to. This is a reconnaissance patrol.”

Paul Andert

So I got back to the platoon, and I’m looking at these guys and I’m saying, “Ain’t nobody going to lead this patrol if I don’t, ‘cause they won’t go.” So I said “I took three guys, and we went, and we got through. We got over there where we could hear what was going on. We were very close, and we could hear the Italians talking, and we could hear the Germans talking, and we could tell from that that the Germans were getting ready to evacuate, and the Italians were moving in.

Paul Andert

So I says, “We got the information we need. Let’s go back.” But the doggone—one patrol outpost was in our way, a German outpost. And so the only way we could get through was get rid of them. Otherwise, it would take—it would stir up the whole front. And so Cermak and I—another one of my sergeants—we each picked a German that was facing the other direction, and our trench knives, and we were going to do them in. And it was the first time we’d ever done anything like this, you know.

Paul Andert

I have this trench knife in my hand, and I’m thinking—the trench knives that we had when we came here had brass knuckles and a spike on them. They made us turn them in because they were against the Geneva Convention. But we could use the knife, but not the brass knuckles or the spike. So I’m looking at this thing and thinking, “Doggone it.” So I did my man, he did his man, and—worked beautifully. I didn’t know how it was going to work. I just prayed that it would work, and I run the knife across and so forth, and laid him down.

Paul Andert

So after we got away from it for a little ways, we sat down to take a breather, and I told Cermak, I says, “You know what? I asked God to help me kill that bastard.” And he says, “Well, I want you to know I did, too.” And so, you know—and so we got back, and the colonel, he said—asked us what happened, and I told him, and he says, “Well, that’s good to know, ‘cause we’re going to attack that hill, and if we know they’re Italians, it’s going to be a lot easier for us than if it’s Germans.” And so we could do it quicker. And so anyway, he looked at me and he says, “Where’s your sidearm?” And I says, “I lost it.”

Paul Andert

I didn’t have it with me, and I lost it while I was out there. I said to him—he says,



“In the first place,” he says, “how come you led the patrol when I told you to send a patrol?” And I says, “Well, sir, General Patton says you never push spaghetti. You pull it.” And I said “and he demonstrated this with spaghetti. He says, “You take the spaghetti and you try to push it, and it just curls up. You get in front and you just run it all over.” And he says, “You got to pull the spaghetti.” So the colonel got a kick out of that, you know.

Paul Andert

He put me in for the Legion of Merit, which was not a combat decoration at that time. So eventually they gave me a Bronze Star for heroic service in Africa, oh, months later, when I was in England. I mean not in England “in Normandy. But anyway, we went into, went on into up toward Tunisia, and then they relieved us to go back with Patton to prepare at Arzu for Sicily. And so that “when we prepared for Sicily, and “

Tell Rommel I Read His Book  
Interviewer

Do you want some water?

Paul Andert

I can take a little bit “here, I got it right there.

Interviewer

Okay, please feel free. You want me to get it for you?

Paul Andert

Am I going to run you over?

Interviewer

No, no, we “re doing good “we “re faster than I thought. I actually wanted to go back a little bit, though, since you “re very good at setting the stage. The Kasserine Pass situation, that “you were sent up to Kasserine because we had some problems up there.

Paul Andert

Right.

Interviewer

And that was “that was where the first fighting with the Germans was, is that right?

Paul Andert

Yeah, right.

Interviewer

And so when you got there, what was that experience like, where you saw real, a result of real battle there?

Paul Andert

Yeah. Well, the experience was that in the first place, our commander who was with us, with 2,000 of us, right away noticed that we didn't take the high ground at Kasserine Pass. The First Armored Division took the passes. The Germans had the high ground. They could look right down, and that's how come they attacked and destroyed so many of them, and captured so many of them.

Paul Andert

And so we the first thing we had to do was take the high ground, and then we could use the pass. But that's when the Germans pulled these tricks on us about giving up, playing like they were giving up, and then three of them would come towards you. And our guys, again, not experienced with Germans, would run out to bring the prisoners in. They'd drop to ground, machine gun on the back of the third guy, and kill our men. And so we says, "Well, this is not going to work. We got to get dirty, too." And so that's what we did, and that's when they got into saying you got to hate the enemy and you got to fight. And the British were very upset with us, as I said before, because we were green.

Paul Andert

But the First Armored Division, I knew that General Orlando Ward, and he was reluctant in a lot of things. And he finally got relieved, and in fact our general took over the First Armored, and so we lost our general at that point and had a new general to go to Sicily. But he took it over, and so they relieved him and they relieved General Fredendall, who was the Fourth Division commander, because they were not aggressive enough, they said. But they're in a way, they didn't know what the hell was going on, either, because they were supposed to fight a clean war, if you wanted to call that, and it wasn't it had to be a dirty war.

Paul Andert

And so Patton knew how to fight a dirty war, and so did Harmon they were that kind of guy. So after we relieved Kasserine Pass, we moved on to take a couple of hills that were there that we were able to. Well, the one that the Italians were on, that's when I had that that happened before the killing the outpost guys. But the hill that the Italians were on, if we attacked and we knew they were Italians, we knew they would give up pretty quick.

Paul Andert

So they put you be in the lead, and I always if I was going to be in the lead, I carried a tommy gun. That really knocked them down, so I would carry the tommy gun. And you go up the hill there, and started firing and that, and the Italians would holler, "Peisan, friend, you know, and that, so they'd want to give up. But before they one of the holes where the guy hadn't given up yet, his hand come out of the hole, and I fired and I blew his hand off with this 45 but anyway. And then they had us practice taking hills with fixed bayonets, and that was the most dangerous thing, because we had fixed bayonets that were the old ones.

Paul Andert

Patton insisted we take the long ones. We never changed we always had the long bayonet. The others had the short. And so we'd take a hill, but these guys would hit each other with the bayonet in the dark, so what we had to do is sheathe your bayonets.

Let the man in front do the firing, and then when you get up there, if you have to have the bayonet, then fix it and use it. But we very, very few times had to use a bayonet. We didn't like to use it. We'd rather shoot them than use a bayonet, of course.

Interviewer

So who was the general for the Germans at this point?

Paul Andert

Huh?

Interviewer

Who was the German general?

Paul Andert

Oh, well, Rommel, and then he got sick and he got sent back to Germany. And then they sent him back to try to help the evacuation of Tunis. But Rommel was in charge of the, of course, the Africa Corps, and a lot of people had the thought that the Africa Corps was big, but it was just a corps of a couple of armored divisions that he had. But he was very aggressive and he showed up as being a great fighter, and he knew how Patton—he knew the move all the time.

Paul Andert

And so he took advantage of what we didn't know, and he knew how green we were, you know, American troops, and so that's why he did that at Kasserine Pass to start with. And then we came back and redid it, but he was in charge at that point, and then I know he was relieved, and I forgot who they put in place of him. I probably have it in the book, but I've forgotten the name, who they put in place of him.

Interviewer

So did he—so Rommel and Patton were kind of similar. They were similar.

Paul Andert

Oh, yes, absolutely. In fact Patton used to say, "Tell Rommel I read his book." That's what Patton used to say. Rommel apparently wrote a book about tank warfare before the war, apparently, and he says, "I read his book, so that's what I know." So—and he'd always say, "I challenge him to get in a tank by himself and to meet me on the battlefield, just the two of us, and we'll decide the war." That's the way, you know.

Shooting in a Church

Interviewer

All right, so you left Africa.

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

Did Patton leave with you? I mean did heâ€”you all were on the way toâ€”to whereâ€”you were going?

Paul Andert

No, heâ€”Patton went with us. But just before that, there was an incident that I ought to talk about, because they wereâ€”the LSTs, the new ships, landing shipsâ€”we first got those while we were practicing for Sicily. And they took ballast to go across the ocean, you knowâ€”theyâ€™d ride good. But when they got to the Mediterranean, they let the ballast out so they could be above the water, so they could open the doors.

Paul Andert

And so we were out on an LST in the Mediterranean to practice taking Arzu, and they holleredâ€”the captain of the thing, he says, â€œTorpedo.â€ And weâ€™re all thereâ€”there we areâ€”this damn thingâ€”and the torpedoes went under the ship. And it turned out that what they didnâ€™t know, the Germans didnâ€™t know that the LST was down in the water and they could hit it if the water was in there. But we let out all the ballast and the water was up here, and the torpedoes went underneath it. And so that was an interesting story, you know. But anyway, Patton didâ€”he was right with us when we went to Gila in Sicily.

Paul Andert

And thatâ€™s whereâ€”the thing I always rememberâ€”well, first of all, the Navy, when they let us off at Gila, theyâ€”our coxswain took us as far as he wanted to go, and he got scared, so he stopped the thing and lowered the ramp down. And we thought, â€œWell, weâ€™re where we could get off.â€ So we charge off, and my radio operator was in front of me, and he wentâ€”he sunk. And I reached down in the water, and he put his hands on top of mine, and the ballastâ€”I went swish like this, and brought him right back up on deck. He was a little guy, but he come up anyway.

Paul Andert

And so we had to pull a gun on the coxswain and say, â€œPut that door up, take us in closer.â€ And he says, â€œI want to get back to the ship,â€ and we says, â€œNever mind getting back to the shipâ€”we want to get on dry land.â€ So we landed there and took the town of Gila, and theyâ€”we gotâ€”the First Battalion of our outfit got associated with Darbyâ€™s Rangers, the Fourth Ranger Battalion, and we were commissioned to take Butera, a town on a mountain. And you could see it from the seaâ€”it was about nine miles outâ€”in from the sea, but they could fireâ€”the British battleships could hit the town from the sea.

Paul Andert

And so weâ€™re attacking this town at night, and all during the night theyâ€™re firing on the town, so that weâ€™d say, â€œHere comes another boxcar,â€ â€”cause thatâ€™s whatâ€”it was zhh zhh zhh, and the whole mountainâ€”when it hit the top of the mountain, the whole mountain would shake. Weâ€™d say, â€œWeâ€™re not mountain climbers,â€ but they made us mountain climbers. We had a chaplain, Baptist chaplain, and he wore his helmet way down like that, and he was only about that big. And heâ€™d keep saying, â€œNow, boysâ€”now, boys,â€ â€”cause we were just cursing up a storm. And one of the guys says, â€œLike boys, hell, Chaplain,â€ he says.

Paul Andert

When we die and we go to heaven, St. Peter's going to say, "What did you serve," and we say, "The infantry," he's going to say, "Go on through. You already served your time in hell." So that's the first time I heard that. So we got into the town, we took the town, and that's where we run across a lot of dead bodies and that. We had Italians and Germans. We had to move them off the road so our tanks could get up, so we just dragged them across the road so our tanks could get up. And had a big battle in a church, a Catholic church—they're all Catholic churches in Sicily.

Paul Andert

And at one of the altars, they had a machine gun set up. And they told the townspeople told us, "They're in the church." So we went in there, and right away the machine guns cut loose, the German machine guns. So we're throwing grenades, firing machine guns—we tore that church completely up. And the guy that went up the left side, he got them, and he—of course, he killed them all. And I says, "What'd you do?" He says, "I got rid of them." He says, "They were—they shouldn't be shooting in a church." But we—you know, we shoot up the church. And the funniest thing happened.

Paul Andert

As we're leaving the town, we ran across an Italian captain of artillery, and he had a battery, and he was laughing. He says, "Come here," and he pointed his guns—he turned his guns around facing the Germans as they were retreating, and he had his battery firing on the Germans. So that's how much the Italians wanted to fight in that war—except for Mussolini's—what they call them—Fascists—the White Shirts or whatever they call them—we've forgotten. That group wanted to fight all the time. But these guys didn't want to, and so then, of course, then we went on all the way around, up into Palermo, and—

A Bunch of Country Boys  
Interviewer

So what—what was the mission in Italy—Sicily? What were— What was—

Paul Andert

The mission in Sicily was to take the airfields that they dominated the Mediterranean—the German airfields dominated the Mediterranean, and we were to get those airfields out of there so the invasion of Sicily—I mean for Italy could go on. So the main job was to rid the airfields, and I got it in the book. I had a lieutenant that got drunk all the time. He didn't know what the hell he was doing. And so at one of the battles, we were going up to fight, he was drunk, so I said, "Just put him in the ditch over there."

Paul Andert

And so they did, and we went on, and my company commander finally caught up with me, and he says, "Where's Lieutenant So-and-so?" And I says, "I don't know." He says, "The hell you don't. You dumped him in the ditch back there." He says, "Have somebody go back and get him." So we brought him back, but he was drinking all the time. He didn't know anything he was doing. And so anyway, we took Palermo, and then went across and was right near the boot of Italy when we were assigned, then, to go to England, and not go to Italy. Some other troops were going to Italy, so we turned in all of our equipment and got ready to go to Italy, and—I mean to Norman—to England.

Paul Andert

And we were wondering whatâ€™s going to happen now? We have no equipment or anything, and we later learned they gave all of our equipment to the French Second Armored Division that they named after usâ€”and so all of our equipment went to them so that they could get in on the relief of Paris, eventuallyâ€”General LeClerc. And so we went out the Mediterranean, and weâ€™re headed west. And we says, â€œHey, weâ€™re going homeâ€”west is home.â€ Three days later, weâ€™re going like this, and they say, â€œYouâ€™re going to the United, all right, but youâ€™re going to the United Kingdom.â€ So we went down through the Irish Sea and on down to Bristol, England, and went in there, and so we knewâ€”

Interviewer

So before we go to England, I want to ask youâ€”before we go to England, I want to ask you a couple of things.

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

Didâ€”the drunk lieutenant reminds me of a question I wanted to ask. Wereâ€”to be in battle the way you were in battle requires what we civilians would call bravery and courage.

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

And Iâ€™m wondering didâ€”did most of the guys get over their fears, and were they able to be brave, and those who were unable to be, did youâ€”how did you feel about them?

Paul Andert

I have to say this: my guys were a bunch of country boys. And we cared for one another, and we were such a tight group. And I had one or two guys that got scared, and especially when we got to Germany, but before, early, I didnâ€™t have any of that. Of course, the advantage I had is that it was conscripted service, and in the infantry, they put mostly unmarried guys. I had only one married guy, and he was in headquarters. And so I didnâ€™t have to worry about if I sent this guy this way or that way, heâ€™s got children at homeâ€”whatâ€™s going to happen to him, you know?

Paul Andert

So we were able to function without worrying about home front, and that was one of the major things in World War II for the infantry. We were able to function without worrying about mothersâ€”not mothers, but wives and kids at home. â€”Cause that wouldâ€™ve really been a tough one, â€”cause, you know.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Paul Andert

Too bad, I mean—and so later on in Germany, when we get to that, I did take a couple of guys back to the dispensary and say, “These people are out of it. They’re going nuts.” And they used to tell me—they did tell me, “An enlisted man cannot get combat fatigue” only officers. Take him back. And I’d say, “Like hell I will—they’re staying right here, and I’m going back, and they’re staying here,” and so I didn’t take them back. But that was something that really started to turn me against being in the infantry about how they treated us. I used to say, “You treated us like we’re just dogs.” But we were a group that were proud of ourselves, yeah.

Interviewer

You sound like you’re so sensible. You’re such a sensible man, and you had the courage of your convictions. You know, not—you know, a lot of people would be—when the guy said, “Take the infantry,” you know, these guys with fatigue, “back”—

Paul Andert

Right.

Interviewer

They would’ve done that.

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

But you knew that that was not the right thing to do, either for them or for the platoon.

Paul Andert

Yep, and it—I guess it was a gift, because—and in a bringing up, being, having a rough life to start with, and being able to cope. Quitting high school and telling them how I felt and all this, you know, it all kept carrying on, and I had lieutenants—dozens—not dozens of them, probably seven or eight of them—that all ran off on us and left us to do the fighting and that. But I didn’t blame them—I blamed the Army for not properly indoctrinating them, at least until they gave them to you, or don’t give them to you at all, because—and then they want you to take a commission. I said, “No, I will not.”

Interviewer

Did they offer you a commission?

Paul Andert

Oh, yeah, twice—three times—once when I got out of the Army. They wanted me to stay, take a commission, and go to Japan, and I says, “I’ve had enough of this.”

Interviewer

So there’s a story you have to tell about the air drop of the paratroopers in Sicily.

Paul Andert

Oh, yeah. That was in Sicily, and we hadâ€”whenâ€”they told us a certain night at a certain time, the aircraft coming over will be friendly. Theyâ€™ll be C-47s with paratroopers. But the problem we had is the Germans still occupied the airfields. And they were bombing the fleet every day, every night, and we were worried aboutâ€”will they remember that at this certain time thereâ€™s going to be friendly planes? And so they notified everybody and all that, and so weâ€™re on Gila, weâ€™re sitting in Gila.

Paul Andert

And the time came, and to letâ€”the German Blenheim bombers had just been over maybe an hour and a half beforeâ€”a lot of anti-aircraft fire. So here we come, and weâ€™re holding our breath, and the first group of planes fly inâ€”nothing happened. Second group of planes, somebody got an itchy finger. One man firedâ€”the whole convoy and fleet fired. We shot down 22 of our own C-47s. We gathered in the next morning over 82 bodies, bloated up, of paratroopers, and besides that, altogether, they told us that we killed 232 paratroopers altogether. And they did not tell the people in the United States until October, and it happened in July.

Paul Andert

And we said, â€œWell, why didnâ€™t they tell them?â€” They said, â€œWell, we donâ€™t know how the people would react,â€” because that was the first major friendly fire killingâ€”a major one. And it wasnâ€™t to be the last one, but it was the first one, and it really got us. But we had to get over it pretty quick, because the Germans were there. We had to get them out of there, so, you know, we just had to do it. And very disturbingâ€”I neverâ€”some people say, â€œHow can you remember this?â€” I say, â€œHow in the hell could you forget it,â€” you know? You canâ€™t forget things like that. But yep, that was the friendly fire, the first big one, yep.

The Best Officer That I Ever Served Under  
Interviewer

So all right. All right, so now youâ€™re in England.

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

You go to England and itâ€™sâ€”when is it? Itâ€™sâ€”is it inâ€”when isâ€”when do you get to England?

Paul Andert

Yeah, we got to England. First of all, we hadâ€”Churchill had a letter on each seat in the train car welcoming us to England, and they wanted usâ€”they did not want the Germans to know that they were moving so many troops from Sicily to England to prepare for the invasion.

Paul Andert

The First Infantry Division, the Fourth Infantry Division also were with us, and weâ€™re and they took us to a barracks there that they move all the British out and put us into some



barracks. And we were supposed to not talk about who we were or where weâ€™re from. And so it worked for a while, but the word finally got out, andâ€™but weâ€™d practice in England. And first we had the flu, though, and so we were allâ€™we didnâ€™t go to a hospital.

Paul Andert

They treated us in the barracksâ€™and so we had the flu. And then we got over that, and we did have some good time with the British girlsâ€™good timeâ€™real good time. [Laughs] Yeah. And I had three girlfriends there, and one of them wanted to hide me out so I wouldnâ€™t go back toâ€™and I said, â€™Aw, I got to go back. I love you, but I got to go back.â€™ She wrote me after the war for a little bit, but anyway, yeah.

Paul Andert

We had a lot ofâ€™we trained with the Britishâ€™the NCOs, which I was one, of course, non-commissioned officer. We went to bayonet training with the British. We went to their combat school, how to take weapons away from people and how to throw a hatchet and bury it in a guyâ€™s back, which I never had to do. But all this kind of stuff theyâ€™we were taught how to do those different thingsâ€™how to kill a man with just one strike of your hand and all that kind of stuffâ€™and so we got good training there. We had a captain that was fromâ€™West Point graduateâ€™Captain Berra, whose nephew was Yogi Berra, the catcher on the baseball team.

Paul Andert

And he was from Dago Hill in St. Louis, we called it, and I was from St. Louis, so we got along pretty good together. But weâ€™not in formation or anything, but once in a while weâ€™d meet and have a good conversation or something like that. And he used to tell me, â€™Youâ€™re lucky youâ€™re from St. Louis, or Iâ€™d bust your ass.â€™ He used to salute like this â€™cause he hurt his hands at football, and heâ€™d salute like this, so all the guys started saluting him like that. And he called me into the R&A room, and he says, â€™You get the guys to cut out that.â€™ He says, â€™That imitation of me.â€™ He says, â€™I want a proper salute from them. Do you understand that?â€™

Paul Andert

He says, â€™Iâ€™m going to bust you if you donâ€™t get it out to them to stop it.â€™ So, you know, things like that. He wasâ€™we played football, and heâ€™d get on the other team, and so when youâ€™re doing sports, heâ€™s the same as you are. And I was the quarterback on the other team, and he always wanted to be on the other team because heâ€™d bury me in the ground, â€™cause he was a professional and I, you know. And one time I gotâ€™I decided, â€™Iâ€™m going to fix him.â€™ And so he buried me, and I laid there, and he tried to get meâ€™I played like I was out. So he calls the medical team, and they come there.

Paul Andert

And I waited till they got there and put the litter on the ground, and I stood up and I said, â€™Whatâ€™s going on here?â€™ He says, â€™You son of aâ€™â€™ But, anyway, you know, we had â€™he was a good man, good fighter. He did real good with us in Normandy, but he got promoted to a major and he got killed. â€™Cause heâ€™he always wanted toâ€™he was a leader, and he was a battalion executive officer, which usually helped the battalion commander, but he was always out in front of the battalion commander to find out what was going on. So he got killed, and he was buried on the day my son was born, in St.

Louis, on November the 3rd.

Paul Andert

They brought his body back to the United States in November the 3rd, 1948, and they buried him the same day my son was born. And he was probably the best officer that I ever served under. He was military, he was good, and he was understanding and he was passionate also, so he was a real good man. But anyway, we trained on Salisbury Plains, and messed up the plains. And we had to pay the government had to pay the American government paid so much for damaging the Salisbury Plains.

Paul Andert

And big rabbits on the plains, and they wouldn't let us shoot them, but we'd run after them and throw our helmets at them trying to get them, but we never got them. And then one time, we were antiaircraft firing and they were pulling a target a plane pulls a target, and you're firing. And we kept missing, and they said, "You're not leading the target enough." So some dumb guy shot the airplane down, so the buy bails out, and they said, "Second Armored Division, no more antiaircraft fire" no more. We're going to assign quadruple 50s with you guys. No antiaircraft firing except the antiaircraft people. You're not allowed. And so we never bothered. Aircraft we just took to the hole. But yeah, that was

Chatting With Ike

Paul Andert

So tell me about the visits from Eisenhower and Churchill and Bradley. Paul Andert: Oh, yeah, we prepared for we were told Eisenhower was going to visit us, and so we prepared for that. We had it took us a week. Put green stuff on our boots and all, our leggings. We called ourselves "Blanco" because this green stuff was called Blanco, so we called ourselves "Blanco B." And so B Company was at the radio at the train station at Tidworth, so we're all lined up here, and you're usually there an hour before the guests come. Train comes in and we're all at ease, they call it, and they had fixed bayonets, these long bayonets in the picture, in the book.

Paul Andert

And so anyway, Churchill came out of the back of the train, and Eisenhower and Bradley and that bunch are up at the front of the train, waiting for him, and he's out here going up and down the line looking at us. And so when they found out he was already here, then they called us to attention. And then Eisenhower came down, and they opened ranks, you know, like they do, and so they could see, and he comes down the row of guys and I'm standing over here outside of the left side of the platoon. And he says, "Kind of young to be a platoon sergeant, aren't you?" And I says, "Yes, sir." He says, "You lied about your age, didn't you?" And I says, "Yes, sir." He says, "Well, where are you from?" So I told him,

Paul Andert

and then he told me he was from Abilene, Kansas, and he talked a little bit and then went on. And the colonel was right next to him forgot his name for a minute but anyway, he says, "I heard what he said, you know, and you lied about your age." He says, "We always thought you did in the first place, you know" the battalion commander. But anyway, that was a nice thing to happen, you know? And then Bradley, when he

visitedâ€”the same time they visit, they went to our shooting range and all that to see what all we had and that. And so we demonstrated for them and that, and of course I had talked to Bradley at Fort Benning when he was just a majorâ€”brigadier general, when we put on demonstrations for himâ€”

Paul Andert

I talked to him then. So we used to teach them how to float rafts and all this stuff, the officers candidates. But anyway, Bradley and then of course Churchill, heâ€™d just look at you and heâ€™d say, â€œNever, never quit.â€ Thatâ€™s his favorite story, you know, and I ran into him about three or four times, but I never had a open conversation with him, you know. And of course Patton andâ€”he was common ground for us. And Churchill and Eisenhower and old General Clark and, well, the regular generalsâ€”Gaffey and all that bunch. I had interchange with them a lot of times, because of different occasions that we had to be near them. But yeah, that was good.

Interviewer

Did you like Eisenhower?

Paul Andert

Yeah. Oh, yeahâ€”yeah. Liked him very much. I think he wasâ€”of course, the reason he got the job, he was level-headed, and he could work with people. Patton would never have been a guy that would work with anybody. Heâ€™d tell them all to shut upâ€”heâ€™s going to do what heâ€™s going to do, so he wouldâ€”Churchillâ€”and he had rough times. He had times when he had to give in to what he didnâ€™t want to give in, all of that. And then he had that case, Summersby, with his chauffeur, and they accused him of having an affair with her. And of all things, a French General visited his wife, Beatrice, andâ€”not Beatrice. His wife was Minnieâ€”

Interviewer

Mamie.

Paul Andert

Mamieâ€”and he visited her and assured her that her husband was not having an affair with Kay Summersby. A French general did that, and I was surprised. I read that later. But yeah, he was accused of doing that, but he was a good man, and we needed somebody like that, who was more I guess youâ€™d say partially political by then, as well as war-minded. And soâ€”he was a pretty good president, tooâ€”yep. Yep.

Interviewer

So I was wondering, did you used to write letters to your mom and your brothers?

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

All the time, or rarely, orâ€”

Paul Andert

lâ€™d just say, "Everything is fine here. I'm doing great. I hope you all are doing all right. Your loving son, Paul." And that's all I'd write, because they'd censor them and they'd cut them all out of there. At first, in Africa, I started to write things that we were doing, and so they'd cut them all up, so "and this lieutenant" always a lieutenant that was with you that would censor your letters, you know. And we didn't like that in the first place, but anyway, then they could write anything they want to, 'cause they censored their own mail. But anyway, yeah, and I had a nun, an aunt that was a nun, that wrote me all the time while I was over there.

Paul Andert

And she wrote nice letters, and I heard from her regularly. My mom, I'd hear from her regularly, but she didn't have too much to say. She didn't know what to say, really. And so yeah, we'd get mail maybe once a month, and sometimes you wouldn't get it at all. You'd come home when I came home for Christmas '45, I got Christmas '44 mail at home, so some trinkets they'd send me and all that got all the way back to the house.

Interviewer

Interviewer: Now, were your brothers in the military? My brother was in the Navy, my older brother. He went in later, because he was working for McDonnell Aircraft and they were working on fighter planes and things like that. But he says he finally got embarrassed because he was a fairly young guy, and they'd look at him and wonder why he wasn't in the service. So he says, "I decided, aw, hell, I'll just" "so he went in the Navy, stationed in the Azores, mostly, out on these little "not PT boats, the ones just above them, that weren't destroyers, either. But they were just jump craft that they would go out and hunt for submarines. And so he was in the Navy. The other two brothers were too young.

D-Day

Interviewer

Okay. So should we talk about D-Day? Paul Andert: About? Interviewer: D-Day? Paul Andert: D-Day. Interviewer: The landing at Normandy "the invasion. Paul Andert: Yeah. Well, on D-Day we were classified as armor. On the other two invasions, we were infantry that landed on the ground. On this one, we were to land with "well, again, advance party with General Rose, so I didn't get to do what the other guys did.

Paul Andert

But we had to go in with "right behind the 29th Division. And the Second Division, we went and joined the Second Division, Ailes' group, and went in with them, and our job was to find a place right away to bivouac the tanks and get all of the waterproofing off of them so they could move. And so we went in on the 7th, and what "and there was a lot of crap going on on the beach then, of course. One guy froze to these iron things, and he was just "and I thought he was dead. And we come up to him and I touched him and that "I was going to take him off and take him to the med station or something.

Paul Andert

But he was alive, but he was frozen, and we had a hell of a time getting him off of those metal things and picking him up and getting him on the beach. But the sporadic fire was going on, but not much, when I got on the beach, and so then we went to the bivouac area with General Rose. And soon as the tanks got in there, which was about the 8th or 9th, we

pull all the stuff off and got on them and went up to the Vire River, 'cause the paratroopers needed help. And so our first job was to relieve the paratroopers at the Vire River, and so that's what we did.

Paul Andert

And I can remember some guy that was a paratrooper said to somebody "said it to Al later on" he says, "I was a paratrooper there." Bonner was his name, and he says, "I want to tell you," he says, "when those tanks showed up," he says, "they were Second Armored Division." He says, "They had their patches on," he says, "and we were really glad to see them," you know, so it made us feel good, you know. But anyway

Interviewer

So what was the "when you got onto the beach, what was the scene like? When you first got onto the beach, after the "after the 29th Division" Paul Andert: Yeah. Interviewer: What was the scene like? I mean was it " Paul Andert: Oh, there was still some bodies laying around, and not many, 'cause they were picking them up and that. And there was every once in a while, some shooting would go on, but we didn't know exactly what direction it was coming from and that. And planes were overhead, mostly ours and that, and so we didn't get involved in much.

Paul Andert

We didn't get involved in any hand-to-hand fighting there "we didn't, because we were right behind them. But the 29th Division was really slaughtered, 'cause they were new. Now, the First Infantry Division was over here, and they were in Africa and Sicily, and then the 29th was here, and we came in behind the 29th. And they were pretty well almost destroyed, and they had to rebuild them fast. But that was tough for them "an invasion like that one. Really tough "and so we were there "but we weren't there when the first shot was fired.

Interviewer

So you have written about the hedgerow fighting. Paul Andert: Oh, yeah. Interviewer: Can you tell me about that? Paul Andert: Yeah. Well, after we left the Vire River "after we left the Vire River, we moved back towards the hedgerow country. And so we had to clear the hedgerows, because they were squared off portions and they would be hiding out in all these places, 'cause it was trenches and then hedges. And I remember the first hedgerow we went into, and we carried M3 rifles with a telescope on it, so that, you know, we could view, same as you would with binoculars.

Paul Andert

So I took the M3 rifle from a guy, and I'm laying down viewing the hedgerow in front of me. And I'm going like this with the rifle, and wow, there's a guy aiming right between my eyes in a tree. Whoomp "I went down. Everybody else went down. Pyu "the bullets coming up "and that was, you know, luck. And so I called my mortar. I was always glad to have that little 60 millimeter mortar. And I said, "Go down that row of trees over there." And the people start falling out of the trees, and some of them were women, French women, that were firing at us that became companions to the Germans, who were there since '39 to '42. So some of them had French girlfriends, and so they got them to be with them.

Paul Andert

And whatâ€”we turned them over to the French, and the French shaved their hair off and made them live in France in their hometown, always with their heads shaven so the people knew they were traitors. And that hurt them worse than anything elseâ€”they had to be showingâ€”hair showing. And so we eventuallyâ€”you could hearâ€”these hedgerows were so close, you could hear the Germans talking, and I guess they could hear us talking, too. And what we decided is that we need to break the hedgerow, and one of our guys, according to the bookâ€”I didnâ€™t know himâ€”put the bulldozerâ€™s blades on the end of a tank, and the tanks would go break the hedgerow out.

Paul Andert

And we says, â€œOne other thing you doâ€”when you get in the middle of that hedgerow, point your cannon down this way and fire it. Point your cannon down that way and fire it, â€™cause theyâ€™re down there.â€ And so that helped us a lot, too, in the hedgerows, to have them. And then we moved on to Colmont to relieve the British at Colmont, and so that was another deal, and I donâ€™t knowâ€”weâ€”at Colmont, they needed the Seventh British Desert Rats, they called them, to go to Caen to help Montgomery. He couldnâ€™t take Caen. So we went, took their position over, and when they took their position over, again, Iâ€™m â€œA,â€ Andert, so Iâ€™m the guide.

Paul Andert

So I go meet with the British and say, â€œWhat area are you leaving, and Iâ€™m going to come in here and my men are going to be in here at a certain time,â€ and that, â€œand weâ€™re going to do it under darkness.â€ â€œFine.â€ The next day they tell me, â€œWeâ€™re not going to do it under darkness. Weâ€™re going to do it in daylight.â€ I said, â€œWhat?â€ They said, â€œWeâ€™re going to do it in daylight,â€ and I said, â€œWell, thatâ€™s going to be a lot more difficult. Theyâ€™re going to know whatâ€™s going on.â€ So weâ€™re going to do it in daylight, so I had to get the guys ready to move in. And they were moving out, we were moving inâ€”all kinds of noise, and the Germans sitting over thereâ€”and they never fired on us, though.

Paul Andert

And they knewâ€”what they thought, we found out later, that we were all new guys coming in. We werenâ€™t going to be experienced, so they can attack us after we got set. Well, they were wrong, of course. But anyway, this British officerâ€”I saidâ€”the company commanderâ€”I said, â€œCanâ€™t you get them to quiet down a little bit?â€ He says, â€œI want to tell youâ€”if you were in this war since 1939,â€ he said, â€œyouâ€™d know that these guys donâ€™t give a damn.â€ And he says, â€œIf they get shot, they get shot.â€ He says, â€œTheyâ€™re going to do what they want to do, and they fight like they want to fight.â€ And he says, â€œI donâ€™t have much control over them.â€

Paul Andert

And so he says, â€œand when youâ€™ve been in a war that long, youâ€™re going to think the same way I do.â€ And so the guy thatâ€”I put my antitank gun on the road, and my antitank gun didnâ€™t get there yet. So thisâ€”I says, â€œHey, wait a minuteâ€”donâ€™t move that yet.â€ And he says, â€œThatâ€™s all right, blokeâ€”Iâ€™ll take care of it.â€ He moves the gun out. He stands in the middle of the road with his field glasses, looking down the road. I says, â€œWhat are you doing?â€ He says, â€œThey wonâ€™t come. They wonâ€™t come.â€ So I did get my antitank gun in, butâ€

Paul Andert

And then they did attack us right away after weâ€”but we knew what to do, and we had a group in the back, a squad in the back, and then the others on line, and we said, â€œEverybody, stay in your holes when they come. Stay in your holes. Let them even get past you, and start shooting them as theyâ€”and when they get up to the hill, wait for them to be chased down, and then kill the rest of them when they come down.â€ And so thatâ€™s the way we fought that particular battle, but we were down in the holes, and they gave me a new lieutenant. He lasted about five hours in the battle. He jumped out of the hole, and I says, â€œWhat are you doing?â€ He says, â€œIâ€™m going to meet those guys when they come down.â€ I says, â€œDonâ€™t you do that.â€

Paul Andert

So he jumps out of the hole, and heâ€™s got his rifle and heâ€™s swinging it at people and that, and one of these little knee mortar grenades hit him on top of his helmet, blew his helmet down right to here, and he was just black and blue all over the face. And we tried to get his helmet offâ€”we couldnâ€™t get it off. And so we had to have him evacuated, so thatâ€™s I lost that lieutenant with only about maybe a couple hours with me. But he wouldnâ€™t listenâ€”he wouldnâ€™t listen, and soâ€”and then Fourth of July came, and we had â€”serenaded Germans on the Fourth of July.

Paul Andert

They call it â€œserenade.â€ All artillery pieces open up on them to celebrate the Fourth, and then the British said, â€œWe want to celebrate, too.â€ They didnâ€™t realize the Fourth of July was celebrating getting rid of them. And so theyâ€™re firing across the front, and weâ€™re out here, and theyâ€™re back here, and theyâ€™re firing across here. Well, some of their shells landed in our area, and everybody says, â€œWell, they knewâ€”they were getting even with you.â€ But that wasnâ€™t the caseâ€”they justâ€”they forgot we were out here on the peninsula. But anyway, that was the Fourth of July, and I was writing a letter to my mother in the hole, and all this shells started coming in.

Paul Andert

But anyway, then we moved out to the Cerisy forest, and the Cerisy forest, we were to prepare for our Saint-Lo breakthroughâ€”and Cobra, they called it. We got haircuts. They said, â€œEverybody get a haircut, get cleaned up a little bit.â€ And every one of us had one man in our platoon we called the barberâ€”whether he knew how to cut hair or not, he cut hair. So everybodyâ€™d go to him and heâ€™d just whack them off. And then they said, â€œPut on camouflage suits,â€ so we put on camouflage suits. And so after a while, they decide, â€œHey, we canâ€™t do thisâ€”the Germans wear camouflage suits.â€ And so they said, â€œYouâ€™ll be targets from both sides.â€

Paul Andert

And so they told the guys to take off their camouflage suits, so the units behind us took off their camouflage suits. But we were already moving, so weâ€™re in camouflage. So we take Saint-Lo, and we go on through. And we start getting strafed by British aircraft because weâ€™re in camouflage, and we get shot at by some of the 29th that was moving down. And weâ€™re saying, â€œHey, somebody tell somebody that we got camouflage suits on,â€ you know. And so we all through that, till I got wounded, we were in camouflage. And so when I got wounded at St. Denis le Gast, I was in camouflage, so they treated me like a German prisoner when they got me to England.

We're Not Going to Separate  
Interviewer

So how did you get injured—what happened?

Paul Andert

Huh?

Interviewer

How did you get injured—what happened?

Paul Andert

Oh. Oh, yeah, well, we were—we took St. Denis le Gast, and that was almost cutting off the Cherbourg peninsula—that's what we were to do. And we were on this end of town, and somebody else was on the north end, and I was told to move my men to the north end of town —cause they were breaking in on that end—we had to check both ends. I couldn't move my antitank gun —cause my vehicle to move it was parked in a safe place.

Paul Andert

So we're all running up the street, and some officer stopped me and he says, "Who are you?" And I said, "Second Platoon, Company B, Forty-First." He says, "Good. Go up there. They're breaking in. Stop them." He says, "Stop them." So I says, "Okay." So we're running up there, and all of a sudden I'm thinking, clank, clank, clank—those are German tanks. I know it. My men don't have a damn thing to stop one of those tanks. So I turned around and I says, "Get out of here—everybody get off the road, and we'll assemble on the other side." And so here I am, against a wall, and I couldn't get out of there. There's this wall here, and I'm saying, "What the—how do I get out of here?"

Paul Andert

And here's these German tanks coming and the first tank came around the corner, and like they always did, they fired. So he fired, and I'm against this wall, and the blast comes right about here somewhere. Lift me up off the ground, put me on top of the wall, and knocked me on the other side, and put a fragment in my leg. And so I'm laying down on the other side—I can't walk, so I crawled around the rest of the night with a—and we gathered the guys together and put up some mines and protected the road that we were supposed to protect and that. And we were able to defend the town that night.

Paul Andert

And next morning the company commander comes looking for me, because the officer I had, they report to CP every—every time you get settled, the officer goes to the CP. He doesn't stay with you. So you're in charge, and so I didn't have an officer at that time. So they come back looking for me the next day, and they said, "Where's Andert?" And he says, "Well, he's laying over there. He got hit last night and he wouldn't leave." And so, they picked me up and took me to the station, and so they put me on an airplane and sent me to England. And two MPs were on the plane with me, and I was wondering, "What the hell is those guys doing there," —cause they were treating me as a prisoner of war and I didn't know it.



Paul Andert

And so I get to England and I'm in the ward here and Americans are all over there, and I raise up in bed and I says, "What the hell is going on here?" Two of the nurses run over and they said, "You're an American." I says, "You're damn right," and I pull out my dog tags. I said, "You people don't even bother to look." And they said, "No way. You were in camouflage. The MPs were with you. They were holding you for interrogation, and we treated you like the enemy. We treated your leg, and that's all we did." And so, boy, I blew up all over that hospital"sent me to two psychiatrists. The first one said, "You're crazy." I said, "No, I'm not."

Paul Andert

And so he says, "I'll send you" so they sent me to another one, and he says, "You're not crazy," he says, "but you've been in three invasions. I'm sending you home." I says, "You're not going to do that." And he says, "What do you mean? What do you want to do?" I says, "I'm going back up there with my guys." And he says, "You're crazy"you really are." And he said, "Why you doing this?" And I said, "Because we're a bunch of guys that hang together, and we're not going to separate. I'm not going home and sit there and wondering what happened to my guys over there, so I'm going back with them." So he says, "You'll go back."

Paul Andert

So they got me back, and I went back, and then went on through again until we went to Siegfried Line, and then that was the biggest mess, I guess, of all, and when we got into Germany, "cause they were defending it very strongly. And we"the pillboxes, of course, faced us, and so the backs of the pillboxes faced Germany. And they had some beautiful pillboxes. They had some layers of beds in them and everything else, you know, and we had to use flamethrowers to get them out of there, though.

Paul Andert

And so the British gave us the flamethrowers, hand ones, and also they loaned us a couple of Churchill tanks that had flamethrowers on them, and we could hit the slot in the pillbox and it'd chase them all out, "cause as soon as that flamethrower got in there it cut all the air off and they had to evacuate. And so when they evacuated, we'd shoot them as they run out, and so we took the pillboxes that way. But it started to rain"sixteen days, they told me, it rained, and mud"oh, mud everywhere. And so we couldn't move. The 88s had us zeroed in.

Paul Andert

We were stuck in a defensive position, you might say"the first defensive position I guess we were ever in. I don't remember. And so we had to perform differently there in defense, and we'd try to move, and as soon as we'd try to move, the 88s would cut up and we'd have to withdraw. And so, anyway, several things happened in the Siegfried line"I don't know how much questions you have on that, but one night"well, this was something happened before that, though. They fired on us very heavily and my"I lost two squad leaders got killed.

Paul Andert

And then I appointed one of them as squad leader, and he says, "I don't want this

job, and I says, "You got it." He was just a sergeant first—I mean a private first class. I says, "You got it. You go over there and take over." And so he was, "I don't want this job." I says, "You got it." And so anyway, my lieutenant and I were pretty close together, and he was a good lieutenant—Woodbury. And shells came in, and suddenly he got hit right here. And I'm here and he's there, and his blood come pshoo all over here, and I—right away I said, "Stop the bleeding—must stop it." No time to get a Band-Aid or anything.

Paul Andert

reached down, got a big handful of mud, and plopped it right on it—stopped the bleeding. And then I had them put a bandage around the mud and all, and take him back that way, and later on they told me that if I didn't save his eyesight, I sure saved his life, because he had them both. And he was part of the Woodbury family—Woodbury soap—I don't know if they're around anymore or not, but he wrote me afterwards thanking me. He says—he says, "The mud saved my life." So I tell the guys, "There's all this mud around here—somebody gets to bleeding real hard, use the mud, you know, 'cause that's the way."

Paul Andert

So when that happened, this guy I put in charge of the tanks, of that squad, he's over here behind this tank, and they got pretty close to the tank with the 88, so he backs the tank up and runs over this guy, Dynamite Dean, I called him, and he got buried into the mud. And so I turned him in as killed in action, because I swear he was dead—tank back over him. And so anyway, four months later he shows up at my front door in St. Louis, and I run down, the doorbell rings, I open it up, and I says, "What the hell are you doing here? You're supposed to be dead." That's what I said.

Paul Andert

And he pulled up his shirt, he says, "See these tank tracks," he says, "and I got several knuckles in my backbones and all that." And he died about three years ago. He lived a long time after, with that. But anyway, we got back to this thing, and we went out on a—they told me, "We need to put booby traps out in front of the tanks so we know when the Germans are coming." Because at night, they probably would try, and so I picked a radio operator and say, "You and I are going to go out and put these booby traps in no-man's land."

Paul Andert

And so we're out there with the grenades and the stakes and the wire and that, and we hear this Kraut patrol out there. And I says, "Stop right here and not say a word—we just freeze." So we froze until they went past, and so I turned around to say, "Let 'em go." He's gone. I'm by myself. And so I says, "Well, I could put out a few more traps." I put out one more and I says, "You're crazy—get out of here, you know?" And so I rushed back to the lines and I went, made a mistake—you're supposed to go back in the same way you went out. I went out by some tanks, and they fired their machine guns. But they couldn't pick me out—they just heard the noise. And so I disrupted the whole front.

Paul Andert

"Cease firing." Cease firing, I'm hollering, and I'm running. I woke everybody up. The guy in the tank comes out and he says, "What the hell are you

doing out there?â€”A I said, â€œWasnâ€™t you told I was out here?â€”A He says, â€œNo, nobody ever told us there was a patrol out there.â€”A And so I said, â€œWell, Iâ€™m the only patrol that was out there.â€” [Laughs]â€”A But then the guys got crazy, and one of my guys got crazy in the hole, andâ€”well, a lot of them were getting that way from all of the tension and the bombing and theâ€”not bombing, but the artillery fire all night long and that, and thunder and lightning and rain and mud.

Paul Andert

So the guy crawls over to me and he says, â€œSo-and-so over in that hole over there has gone nuts.â€” Heâ€™s beating his head in with his helmet.â€”A So I says, â€œYou go in this hole.â€”A I went over there with him, and I said, â€œWhatâ€™s the matter?â€”A He says, â€œThe shells are falling all around me.â€”A I says, â€œIâ€™m right here with youâ€”theyâ€™re falling around me, too.â€”A And I says, â€œI tell you whatâ€”relax a little bit, and Iâ€™ll take you back.â€”A When the things quiet down a little bit, Iâ€™ll get you to the aid station.â€”A So I got him to the aid station, and thatâ€™s when they told me an enlisted man canâ€™t get combat fatigueâ€”you take him back.

Paul Andert

And I said, â€œWhat do you mean?â€”A They said, â€œOnly officers could get combat fatigue.â€”A And so I said, â€œHe stays here.â€” Iâ€™m not taking him back.â€”A So I stopped by the CP to tell the company commanderâ€”I mean the first sergeant.â€”A I says, â€œNow Iâ€™ve lost this guy, that guy,â€” gave him the killed-in-actions, including Dynamite [Dean] at that time.â€”A And he says, â€œDid you get the men I sent up to you?â€”A And he sent two men up to me during the night, and I says, â€œWho did you send with them?â€”A He says, â€œI didnâ€™t send anybody with them.â€”A I says, â€œYou sent two brand-new men up to the front with no guide.â€”

Paul Andert

He says, â€œYeah.â€”A I says, â€œTheyâ€™re dead.â€”A He says, â€œWhat do you mean?â€”A I says, â€œWell, thereâ€™s a lot of firing went on,â€” and I says, â€œthey never ever showed up, so they walked right into the enemy and got killed.â€”A I never seen them.â€”A And so I got real mad at him, too, then, so.â€”A Anyway, we finallyâ€”they gave us a break, and the 84th Division came in, and they put them in the line so we could withdraw and get ready for the Ruhr River Valleyâ€”Ruhr River campaign.â€”A So weâ€™re back having a rest period.â€”A So they send the medics up to give us lockjaw shots, they called them.â€”A So theyâ€™re shooting us in this arm, and wiping the arm on this side, so finally I say, â€œHey, wait a minute,â€” you know.

Paul Andert

They saysâ€”I says, â€œYouâ€™re shooting them in that arm, but youâ€™re treating this arm.â€”A And they said, â€œWell, weâ€™d better getâ€”weâ€™ll get both of them over on that side, then.â€”A And I says, â€œWhatâ€™s the matter with you guys?â€”A I said, â€œWe want to get out of here.â€”A We donâ€™t want to stay here,â€” you know.â€”A And so they got the shots.â€”A Then they brought the kitchen up, full of knackwurst wienersâ€”beautiful.â€”A Boy, was I hungry.â€”A I look at those wienersâ€”and so weâ€™re in the line with our mess kits, ready to go, and all of a sudden somebody hollered, â€œIncomingâ€”â€” German shells coming.

Paul Andert

I turned around, everybody was running to a hole, and I said to myself, â€œYouâ€™re

going to get the wieners no matter where that artillery lands. And so everybody took off. I had four jackets on with four big pockets, and so we filled the pockets with wieners eight pockets, just shoving them in each pocket. And after I shove them in all the pockets and close the jacket back up again because we wore two. We wore our stripes under the first one, so the Germans wouldn't know we were a leader if they spotted us. And so because the guys knew us.

Paul Andert

And so when the artillery let up, it went past us, and the guys all come running up there to get the chow on, and they says, "Where are the wieners?" And the mess sergeant says, "He got them." I said, "You ran to the holes, I ran to the wieners." And so I had eight pockets full of these big wieners, but I ended up sharing them with them. But it was funny, and so that was one of the funny things that happened. The school kids like to hear that, you know.

My Plane Crashed and My Boat Sank

Paul Andert

And so then we got ready to go back up to the front. They sent a new lieutenant up, and he had pink britches and cavalry boots on oh. And he says, "Who's in charge here?" And I'm sitting there with the guys, and I'm passing liquor out to them. They gave me the officer's liquor ration because I didn't have one, so I'm putting it in canteen cups, giving it to the guys. He says, "What do you got there," and I says, "Liquor." He says, "Well, where'd you get that?" I said, "The company commander gave it to me." And he says, "I want to tell you something," he says, "I want to have reveille in the morning." I says, "What?"

Paul Andert

He says, "I want to have reveille in the morning." I says, "We don't do reveille up here. We rest so we can fight again." And I says, "And another thing, Lieutenant take off those cavalry boots and those big britches, because you're going to get it the minute they see you. You know, that's stupid. And so he goes back and reports me, and it turned out the company commander told me, "I told him to go back and listen to what you had to say and go with you guys." The first battle we got into when I got wounded the second time, he ran away, so they never called the guy over that took my place.

Paul Andert

I'm laying on the ground there, and he says "I says, "Give this to the lieutenant" the field glasses and the map and that. And he says, "I don't give anything to him" he run off. He's gone, you know? So what I had done, another guy and I, we went up to some barbed wire and put Bangalore torpedoes in the wire and set the caps in them and run the thing over to our hole so we could set off the Bangalores to blow the wire. And put them up so that they blow downward if there was any mines there, they'd blow the mines up and the tanks could go through.

Paul Andert

And so that was my job that night, and so I got hit on the way back to the hole, so I never made it back to the hole. Somebody else had to fire the thing.

Paul Andert

But that's when I got it the second time, and some colonel "Colonel Siegenwright" I knew him when he was a captain "he was a medical officer. So he come up after a while with two aid men, and he says, "What are you doing here when the front is way up there?" I said, "You SOB. The front was right here," when I was laying here. [Laughs] He laughed because he knew me, you know, and so they sent me back to Holland, sent me to England, plane crashed in England.

Paul Andert

Oh, and first of all, they were bombing Holland, and they didn't want us to stay there, so they gave me two German prisoners to carry me into the warehouse where they were going to treat me. And these "the buzz bombs start coming over, the prisoners drop me, and they ran and hide. So they come back afterwards to pick me up, and I told them, I says, "God, if I had a gun, I'd kill the both of you for leaving me laying here," you know. But anyway, they decided, "We can't leave you here. We're going to fly you to England." I just had a flesh wound, so I thought I could stay there, but no. So they flew us to England. We crashed. It wasn't a bad crash. The plane come in like this "C-47s" they took a lot of beating.

Paul Andert

And then we stayed with the British girls in a British airfield, it was. They were manning the field, and so we had a lot of fun that night. I mean couldn't do anything except let them pet us and all that, but "and then soon as they found out where they were" where we were, the Army come and got us out of there. And because I was recovering just from the flesh wound, they had removed that, they took me to a replacement center, and this colonel at the replacement center, the first thing he said to us, "Don't think you mean anything to me." He says, "You're just going to do what I tell you."

Paul Andert

So we thought, "Oh, boy" do we have something here. Next morning they put me on KP [Kitchen Police]. I'm to peel potatoes. So they sent me there, and there's a thing of potatoes there, and I picked up one of those potatoes and I'm looking at it, and the mess sergeant comes over. And he says, "Let me show you how to peel those potatoes." And I says, "How many numbers in your serial number?" And he said, "Eight." And I says, "There are only seven in mine, so take this potato and you know what to do with it, and I'm leaving here." So I took off "I went AWOL. And so that colonel put me on report, and had me up for court martial for going AWOL, deserting.

Paul Andert

And I went to the port and got a ride across the channel with a captain of infantry that was taking new men over, and he was glad to talk to me, and so he says, "I'll take you with me." And so we got sunk in the English Channel then "an LST" good thing it was an LST "hit us, and they don't have the sharp bow. They have a bow like this. So they picked us up out of the water and got us up on the LST, and I was halfway up and I had to tell them to send somebody down to help me up the rest of the way, "cause I wasn't quite healed yet.

Paul Andert

And so this captain says to me, he says, "I didn't do you any favors," he says, "cause if you'd have drowned out there, you would've been a deserter from the American Army." And I would've, "cause nobody knew where I was. And

so I got over on the other side, and hitchhiked on the Red Ball Highway and got up to the front, to my outfit. And I was there tilâ€”I was there til Marchâ€”fought in the Battle of the Bulge, the Ruhr River. And they still had me on court-martial list in England, and when my General White found out about it, he got real mad.

Paul Andert

He says, â€œTell them weâ€™re too busy fighting a damn war up here, and heâ€™s here. â€œGet his records back here. Get his thing taken care of and put in the right place.â€ But they took my solderâ€™s deposit, this colonel didâ€”it was only \$90.00, but it was a lot at that time. And we had a separate card in your billâ€”in your service record. Well, he took it out, and I tried to get it, but they said it was, â€œYour soldierâ€™s deposit was removed, so we donâ€™t have anything to give you.â€ So I thought that son of a gun, he got even with me, you know. But anyway, we went on several more big, big fights, but what else you got?

Bridges, Brits, and the Bulge  
Interviewer

Well, howâ€™lâ€™mâ€™after the Siegfried Line stuff, there was thisâ€”there was the Adolf Hitler Bridge.

Paul Andert

Yep.

Interviewer

And then there were a number of towns that you had to go into.

Paul Andert

Oh, yeah.

Interviewer

So those stories.

Paul Andert

Yeah. The Adolf Hitler Bridge is where weâ€™General Hines, who was a major in the States, and we knew each other, his combat command was to get across at the Hitler Bridge.

Paul Andert

And he got us across, but the bridge was blown up behind us and there was no way he could get a tank across. So he was smart enough to know weâ€™d get annihilated over there without anything, so he had us withdraw. So theâ€”our outfit was really the first one across, but there wasâ€”we didnâ€™t accomplish anything, so we wereâ€”we withdrew, and we went to the town of Krefeld. And in Krefeld they had a zoo, so we let all the animals out of the zoo. They tried to find out who did that, and â€œwe donâ€™t know.â€ And then weâ€™the stores were all closed, so we took a park bench and threw it through the window of one of the stores, one of the bars that was closed, and got all the beer and stuff we could get, you know.

Paul Andert

And my radio operator, he laid on the floor and took a hose from one of the kegs, and he stuck it in his mouth and he just laid there. And anyway, Krefeld, we had a pretty good time there. And so then we had to move up to the British sector and cross at theâ€”on the British bridge to cross over into Germany. And then we went down into Bonn and those places where the Saar Valley andâ€”to destroy their manufacturing and thatâ€”thatâ€”TM's what we were supposed to doâ€”Cologne and all those places in there we got involved in.

Paul Andert

And so theyâ€”they had many thingsâ€”well, Pattonâ€”we heard all about this later, but he was an ornery cuss, a real one, because he wanted to be the first to cross, and he didnâ€”TMt get credit for that, the bridge at Remagen, butâ€”â€”TMcause the First Army got credit, but he took credit, and he sent some of his officers over to rob the material for bridge crossing from the First Army. And General Hodges found out, and him and Hodges got into it, and they got him to mess away with the First Armyâ€”TM's material, â€”TMcause he wanted it for his outfit. So, you know, he was a character.

Paul Andert

But I had heard all about that later, but anyway, we then went into this deal of taking town after town, and our job was to just keep moving till you run out of gas. And soâ€”well, before that, though, we got into the Battle of the Bulgeâ€”what am I thinking of? I got back in time, when I went AWOL, 22nd of December, and it started the 16th. So I run into my outfit on the 22nd, and I got tickled.

Paul Andert

The colonel says, â€œWhat are youâ€”you donâ€”TMt have any equipment or anything with you.â€ I says, â€œI had to come this way.â€ And I says, â€œDonâ€”TMt worry, sir. The first dead man, Iâ€”TMll have all the equipment I want,â€ and thatâ€”TM's the way we got equipped, you know. And so we fought in the Battle of the Bulge, at the Cellesâ€”Celles, the Meuse River, and fought the Second Panzer Division, and weâ€”TMd fought them before. Andâ€”but we were able to annihilate them this time, and we were credited with whipping them.

Paul Andert

And our General White was our combat commander at that time, because we had two combat commanders in the division and then the division commander. And he knew the British had an airfield on the other side, but he had no radio contact. So he sent a Piper Cub over to the British airfield to tell the Typhoonsâ€”their tank-knocking-out planesâ€”that they could help us, and the Piper Cub led them back to the battleâ€”the Typhoons, the British Typhoons, and they helped a lot in destroying some of those German tanks and that. The British had a brigade across that we didnâ€”TMt know, across the Meuse.

Paul Andert

A lot of people didnâ€”TMt know this. And the British colonel of the brigade came to our colonel and he says, â€œYou blokes are shooting up my men,â€ and they saysâ€”they say, â€œWell, we didnâ€”TMt know you were here.â€ And they said, â€œWell, weâ€”TMre over hereâ€”weâ€”TMre doing this and that, and youâ€”TMre shooting us,â€ and he was laughing at the same time. But he said, â€œYou blokes are shooting up my men.â€ But yeah, we wentâ€”after the Battle of the Bulge, of course, we went back through all the way

back to the Ruhr River and crossed the Ruhr River at Linnich.

Paul Andert

And then our job was to go on breakthroughsâ€”form different teams and go on breakthroughs. Take one town after anotherâ€” five different groups of tanks and infantry moving on their own til they run out of gas. Get as far to the rear as you could, take as many towns as you could, and we had a loudspeaker on one of our tanks and so we had a guy who could speak German. So we come across a German town in the daylight, and we were able to call for the mayor to come out, and weâ€™d have him come out and tell him, â€œIf you get the people to put up white flags in the town, and donâ€™t shoot, weâ€™ll go through the town and spare the town.

Paul Andert

Have the German troops evacuate, â€™cause weâ€™ll fight them on the other side.â€ So the mayors would go back, and some of them succeeded in doing that. One of them didnâ€™t succeedâ€”the SS wouldnâ€™t leave town, and they hung himâ€”they hung him in his office, and we found him hung in his office. And the mayors would tell us, â€œWell, the first thing you need to do if weâ€™re going to give up is shoot the church steeples, because if you donâ€™t blow out the church steeples, their lookouts are in the church steeples and theyâ€™re directing their artillery fire down on you.â€

Paul Andert

Soâ€”and they said they did that because they figure Americans wouldnâ€™t shoot churches, so we changed our attitude. We shot the churches right away, and, you know, had to blow the steeples off of them. And so weâ€™d just keep going, and sometimes weâ€™one time we ran across a rail car that had railroad guns on it that they were taking somewhere, the Germans was. They didnâ€™t even know we were there. We blew up the cars with the railroad guns on them, and go into a train station, and people going back and forth, troops going back and forth, not even know weâ€™re there. Weâ€™d just shoot up the whole place, the whole train station, civilians and all.

Paul Andert

And then weâ€™d go on toâ€”we went across a German airfield near Magdeburg, and the German fighter planes were taking off, and our tanks would sit there and pow, lâ€™ll get that one, pow, lâ€™ll get that one, you know.â€ And we noticed the anti-aircraft guns were piled up with sandbags pointed to the sky, but they start kicking out all the sandbags, and we knew they wanted to aim those anti-aircraft guns at us.â€ So without saying anything to anybody, everybody scattered out and went for those things and used the bayonets and killed those guys and those anti-tank whatchacallits before they could lower them on us.

Paul Andert

And the Air Force guys, the German Air Force guys were real nice.â€ They gave up to us, and they says, â€œWe willâ€”weâ€™re out of the war.â€ We quit,â€ you know.â€ â€œYou destroyed our planes and all that, and we give you our word of honor, we quit,â€ â€™cause we couldnâ€™t take them because we had to keep moving.â€ And so we left them there with their airfield and the blown-up stuff.â€ And went on and crossed the Elbe [River], eventually, and couldnâ€™t get across.â€ We got across, but the tanks couldnâ€™t get across.â€ So weâ€™re across, trying to build a bridgehead, move the artillery, their artillery, back.â€ But the German ME-109s were just in use then, so they were coming in blowing the bridge up.



Paul Andert

As soon as theyâ€™d set a pontoon down, theyâ€™d blow it up, and so we couldnâ€™t get anything across.â€™ So weâ€™re way out here on the other side of the Elbe, and thisâ€™my colonel is with me, the battalion commander, who I knew as a first lieutenant.â€™ Heâ€™s with his group, and these German tanks, we hear them.â€™ And he says, â€™Those are German tanks,â€™ he says, â€™stop them.â€™ I says, â€™I got a bazooka over here.â€™ And he says, â€™Well, use the bazooka.â€™ I said, â€™But the one fire from the bazooka and thereâ€™s more than one tank, theyâ€™ll know where the fire came fromâ€™those guys are dead.â€™

Paul Andert

And he says, â€™Well, stop the tanks,â€™ and he run off with his men to the rear.â€™ And I thought, â€™Well, the colonel, and Iâ€™m a sergeant,â€™ so I waited till he got out of sight and I says, â€™Withdraw.â€™ I withdrew my menâ€™I wasnâ€™t going to get them all killedâ€™went back to the river and we started a little thing.â€™ And the next morning he called me for a meeting, and he says, â€™Iâ€™m ashamed of you,â€™ in front of all these men and my new company commanderâ€™I just got him.â€™ And he says, â€™Iâ€™m ashamed of you.â€™ And I says, â€™For what?â€™ He says, â€™You ran away.â€™ I says, â€™Sir, you ran before I did.â€™ Youâ€™re a colonel, Iâ€™m a sergeant.â€™

Paul Andert

I says, â€™You took off and left me there to fight something I had nothing to fight with.â€™ I saidâ€™and so he shut up right then, because his men were all sitting there going like this.â€™ They knew they went with him.â€™ And the company commander later, he says, â€™Boy, Iâ€™m surprised he didnâ€™t give you the riot act.â€™ I says, â€™I know that man,â€™ and I say, â€™he had no business doing that.â€™

Paul Andert

And then this same lieutenant, the next night he gotâ€™I mean the same company commander got killed.â€™ Stryker was his nameâ€™he was with us from the beginning of the warâ€™Captainâ€™ Lieutenant Stryker, and then he finally ended up being the company commander.â€™ And he got killed because he didnâ€™t listen.â€™ He wanted to go into the town to find out what was in that next town, and I said, â€™Donâ€™t do it.â€™ Iâ€™ll send a patrol out and weâ€™ll see whatâ€™s there.â€™ So he and the executive officer, together they went in by themselves.â€™ He got killed in the town, and the executive officer come running out, and he got shot in the mouth, and so we bandaged his mouth up.

Paul Andert

And so I get a call from General Hines on the other side of the river.â€™ They got the call, but theyâ€™he says, â€™Whereâ€™s your company commander?â€™ I says, â€™Heâ€™s dead.â€™ â€™Whereâ€™s your executive officer?â€™ â€™Heâ€™s here, but heâ€™s shot in the mouth and itâ€™s bandaged up.â€™ He canâ€™t talk.â€™ And he says, â€™Well, who are you?â€™ I says, â€™Sergeant Andert.â€™ He says, â€™What are you doing there?â€™ I says, â€™Cause guys like you put me in stuff like this,â€™ you know. He says, â€™You need to withdrawâ€™withdraw.â€™ And it was when Roosevelt diedâ€™12th of April.

Paul Andert

And so I said, â€™Well, what about the battalion behind us?â€™ He says, â€™Oh, I pulled

them out last night. And I says, "You mean we're over here by ourselves?" He said, "Yeah." He says, "I want you out of there." And so he said, "But you got to protect yourself as you get out." So I stayed there with one machine gun crew, and we were the last ones to leave. And we shot all the prisoners we had, 'cause we didn't want them in the water with us. And so we got over on the other side, and the artillery guys were drunk. "What are you guys doing?" You're supposed to be supporting us. "Well, Roosevelt died, and blah, blah, blah, and so my guys start beating up our own artillery."

Paul Andert

And so we got locked up in a house, and they locked us up. And lieutenant "a colonel" another colonel that I knew as a first lieutenant, who was with me on maneuvers, was at SHAEF headquarters then. And they sent him down to see what the problem was, and he says, "What's going on?" And I told him, you know, and he says "he says, "What you need, to calm down." And he says, "The supreme headquarters are sick and tired of the way you guys are acting." I says, "You tell the supreme headquarters for me I've had enough of this." And I says, "I am tired of supreme headquarters."

Paul Andert

He says, "I'll never tell that." And he says, "What you need to do is calm down." He says, "The war's almost over, and you need to be calm." So he had everybody else leave the room except me and another new company commander, and the company commander says, "I don't know how you got away with that." I said, "Because I knew him, and I knew things he did in the States that a lieutenant was never supposed to do." And he knew me "I knew him." Luck out "so many places I lucked out."

Paul Andert

And so anyway, we had one more fight after that, in the Killenbreuer Forest. And that's where I shot the last guy I shot and took his helmet. I always wanted a German helmet, but I never had a chance to carry one, 'cause you didn't want to be caught by the Germans with a German helmet on you, 'cause that's the only way you can have one, because infantry had to carry their own stuff. And so I shot him and I took the helmet, and so I had that to come home with.

Paul Andert

And we went on to 60 miles from Berlin, and General Simpson says, "I could be in Berlin overnight," and Eisenhower said, "No, the Russians are taking Berlin." I want them to take Berlin. And he knew that the two Russian armies that were taking Berlin were fighting each other to see which one would get the credit for it, and he didn't want us in the middle of two German-Russian armies fighting each other, plus the Germans in the middle. So we stayed "Patton" didn't "they didn't move until after the war, and they moved into Berlin."

Paul Andert

But I was home already. I got home on points. The war ended on the 9th of May, and they went right away, "Take a commission and stay and do this" "you're regular Army." And I says, "I don't want it." And they would tell you "they would say, "Well, you're regular Army. We thought you were in it for life." And I says, "I

quit. I'm not in it for life anymore. So I was home.

Interviewer

I think we might be out of space here—this is so peculiar—so let's stop for a minute.

Paul Andert

Yeah.

Interviewer

This is great. I'm just about done. There are a couple more stories I want to

Paul Andert

Okay.

Interviewer

Get to, but let's relax for a minute, because—this is not behaving in the way that

Paul Andert

I need to take a quick pee.

Interviewer

[Break in audio]

What War is Like

Interviewer

And, that looks good.

Paul Andert

Okay, we can start with there was the—as we take towns, one of the things that we were taught, and we didn't—we ignored it sometimes, of course. They always do. And we went into this one town, and we settled, stopped, right in the town. Not supposed to do that. And the tanks up in front and the half-tracks behind them, and as I'm standing there in the half-track, looking up front, there's a girl walked up to the tanks, and the tank guy gets out and sits on the thing there trying to patronize with her or whatever.

Paul Andert

And she shot him, and they—of course, she was killed, too, but the mayor of the town later told us that one of her kin—I forgot what it was, a husband or whatever—was just killed by us, so I could see that, you know. And then as that was happening, I was observing some boy—he—I don't know how old he was. He's probably 11, 12, 14. But anyway, he was backing up towards us. And I hollered, "Halt. Halt." And he wasn't stopping. And so after he got—I figured I'd better do it right now, so I shot him. And when he turned around, he had a Panzerfaust like this, and he was going to pop that right into my vehicle.

Paul Andert

And weâ€™d have been about nine of us killed and the half-track blown up if I hadnâ€™t had shot him. And the mayor says, â€œYou did the right thing. Heâ€™s a Hitler Youth, and he was domineering the town.â€ And so, you know, it turned out to be a good thing to do. And then during our excursions from one city to the other, we were told that if you run into a town and you see a fire, go to the fire, because the SS particularly were putting political prisoners and Jewish people that they were moving out of your way, so to speak, in the barn with the animals and setting them on fire. Close, lock the barns up, and set the people on fireâ€”and the animals. And rush to the barn right away and see what you could do.

Paul Andert

So this town we come across, we saw the fire, and so the first thing you did, we went to the barn and let them out, and the people running in all directions, and animals, too. But one of the things about that is we had a duck and a rabbit that we had as pets with us, and watched them play every once in a while, and we loved them. But some of the prisoners thatâ€™out of this barn, were so anemic that they grabbed the rabbit and they started tearing him apart to eat him, and we had to stop this.

Paul Andert

And somebody says, â€œWell, what happened to the duck?â€ And I says, â€œThe duck mustâ€™ve been smart,â€ but he mustâ€™ve got away, because I never saw the duck again. But we used to have a lot of fun with this duck. But in the meantime, after that situation, people told us thereâ€™s a guy hiding in a barn, the leaderâ€™that he never got out, heâ€™s in the barn. So we went in the barn and shoving bayonets into haystacks, and this SS colonel come out, and he says, â€œIâ€™m a colonel in the SS, and I demand to be treated according to the Geneva Convention.â€ And Private Archer is right here by the side of meâ€™he just reached out and he just cocked himâ€™knocked him flat.

Paul Andert

And he leaned down and he looked at him, and he says, â€œIâ€™m just a PFC in the American Army, and I donâ€™t give a damn about you or the Geneva Convention.â€ And so we got him up and the townspeople were reallyâ€™the German people in this town were really upset at him for what heâ€™s burning the town and everything like this. And they kind of wanted him, so we gave him to herâ€™to the townspeople. And the next morning, as we were leaving the town, he was laying on the side of the road naked, full of bullet holes, and we just go by and say, â€œGood deal.â€

Paul Andert

It was the greatest thing, you knowâ€™made you feel great that we did that to that guyâ€™they did it to him, because. But theyâ€™the SS was, of course, very violent, and they thought that they were the pure Aryan race and all this, you know how that was. And though I did not get to witness a lot of the concentration camps, because the war ended on the 9th of May, and on the 13th of June I was home and out of the Army, â€™cause I had enough points. And they wanted me to stay, and I says, â€œIâ€™m out of here.â€ And so I got out, and then when I got to Jefferson Barracks, they said, â€œWell, donâ€™t you want to go to Japan?â€ I says, â€œHell, no.â€

Interviewer

Interviewer: So Iâ€™m curiousâ€™so how did you celebrate the end of the war? When you foundâ€™when the war was over, did you guys all celebrate?

Paul Andert

No, there was nothing. Well, weâ€™yes, we didâ€™I doâ€™reminded me of something. We got together, a bunch of us, and we had a new company commander again. And so we go to where heâ€™TMs laid up, and the first sergeant is following usâ€™â€™Donâ€™TMt you do this.â€™ And so we go up there and we get him out, pull him out and throw him in the street. Weâ€™TMre just having a ball, and he took it good-naturedly. He says, â€™œl just got here.â€™ He says, â€™œl know you guys have been through hell.â€™ He says, â€™œlâ€™TMm not going to report you guys or anythingâ€™I know,â€™ you know.

Paul Andert

But we didâ€™we just raised a lot of hell and celebrated. Andâ€™but then weâ€™they were getting ready for several things that the division was going to doâ€™parade here and parade there. And those of us that had points were already headed for home, and I figured how many days it was that I was out. It ended on the 9th, and the 13thâ€™well, 33 days after killing people I was on the streets of St. Louis andâ€™that was strange. And they still had bond rallies at the banks and that, and theyâ€™TMd have these machine guns firing blanks to draw people and all this.

Paul Andert

And lâ€™TMm walking up towards the bank with my mother, and suddenly lâ€™TMm laying in the streetâ€™they fired the machine guns. [Laugh] And people looking down at thatâ€™and so I start getting used to that. But I had a hard timeâ€™I walked the streets of St. Louis. Oh, I used to walk maybe 10 miles and turn around and come back 10 miles, and just not knowing what I was looking for. I just trying to get acclimated, I guess. And butâ€™

Love and Tragedy  
Interviewer

So how long did it take for you to start to adjust [after returning home]?

Paul Andert

How long did it take me to getâ€™

Interviewer

To adjustâ€™to get back intoâ€™

Paul Andert

I donâ€™TMt think I ever adjusted until I met the gal I married.

Interviewer

And how long was thatâ€™when did you meet?

Paul Andert

Wouldâ€™TMve beenâ€™we got home in â€™TM45, and that wouldâ€™TMve been in October â€™TM45.

Interviewer

Okay.

Paul Andert

It took from June to October, and she was great help, and she had been working in a munition factory. I'm doing this because she died just recently.

Interviewer

Oh, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Paul Andert

I'll be all right in a minute. But anyway, it's she had a lot to do with it, and I moved—we moved all over the country. And she went everywhere. We owned 23 different houses and all that, and I just was getting into the—and they'd say, "Where are you going now, Paul?"

Paul Andert

I'd say, "Well, I'm going out to Tucson." And they'd say, "Where you going to work at?" I don't know—I'll find out when I get there. And I'd just go and find a job, work in a veterans' hospital for a while—worked in the Long Beach Veterans Hospital in California for a while. And then I finally settled down in the lumber business. I liked the lumber business. They're good people—low pay, but good people. And so we—I finally worked up to be a merchandising manager and traveled nationwide for Lonestar Industries and that, and so I did very well. And—but yeah, I have a lot to be thankful for, really, you know. Really.

Interviewer

Yeah. How many children do you have?

Paul Andert

Three. Well, my wife had two girls when I married her, two and three years old. And then the boy was born in '48, and he was born on the day my Captain Berra was buried in St. Louis.

Interviewer

Right.

Paul Andert

And he died—he drowned in Alaska. He was a park ranger in Alaska, and in '89, just before they were to come home—he was coming home for the winter. He and two other guys went out on Butte Lake, which was forbidden, and they were fishing, and their boat capsized and they drowned.

Interviewer

Oh, my.

Paul Andert

And then my one daughter died in 2008. So anyway, I guess I'm sure down enough.

Interviewer

Oh, that's okay.

Paul Andert

Yeah. But yeah, I make myself real busy, because we've been to the Air Force Museum. And I'm going to talk to Oral Roberts University on the 11th of November, and got some schools to go to and all this. So we'll continue doing those things, get away, do them, 'cause I got a houseful of 65 years of memories.

Interviewer

Right. So you had mentioned that, "in one of the things I read, that you had a disability that you allow for or something?"

Paul Andert

Yeah, I, "oh, I was, they classified me as 20% disability. That was automatic if you were wounded, and so I stayed on that 20% until the year 2000, and I was, I was retired then. And Al, for one, encouraging me to go to the VA [U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs]. You know, "you're having trouble" and all that, 'cause I'd been wounded twice, and so I had my records all reopened, and they went through everything and some of the hospital records they didn't have, I had. And so they eventually classified me as 100%.

Interviewer

Really.

Paul Andert

Yeah, and so I get like \$2,500.00 a month, "something like that from that. And then my Social Security"

Interviewer

Right.

Paul Andert

So I can live as long as that keeps up, you know. I don't have a problem. And we didn't have hardly any pensions in the lumber industry, "they didn't have pensions. So I get \$32.00 a month pension from the lumber company"

Interviewer

Uh-huh.

Paul Andert

After about 30 years, 36 years, something like that, but,

Interviewer

That's amazing.

Paul Andert

They didn't have it at that time. Most of these guys were just poor guys just forming their own company, and then they joined a block that I was working with. And so a lot of these men were just barely getting along themselves with their companies"

Interviewer

Right.

Paul Andert

And so we were helping them with their companies"

Interviewer

Right.

Paul Andert

And that.

Let It Roll

Interviewer

Can we also talk about "you might not want to talk about this" your medals? Paul Andert: Oh. Interviewer: Just the Paul Andert: Well, I got the first Bronze Star for Africa, for doing that patrol deal and leading the patrol and that's what that was really for. And then I got the Silver Star for at St. Denis le Gast for being wounded and crawling around all night with the guys, and so I got the Purple Heart at the same time for that one. And then I got the second Bronze Star at Pont Brocard, where that happened before St. Denis le Gast.

Paul Andert

When I had that in a book where we set up our roadblock, we call it. And we went out, and two of us went out in front to see what's out there, and we heard Germans out there. So right away, I had the tommy gun, so I just sprayed that area, and hearing "Ach, ach," and all that going on, you know, and he firing his rifle. And we run back to our cannon and our roadblock on the way back, he run a lot faster than I did. So he got there, to the gun, before I did, the antitank gun, and he fired the damn thing with me still running and the tank gun right over here, it was and here I'm running here, and that blast came right by me.

Paul Andert

And it blinded me, so I was blind, and I ran into a building that was on fire, and they said they pulled me out of it. And so they got me to the radio, "cause the company commander was on the radio, and he says, "Andert, what the hell's going on up there?" And I says, "As soon as I can see again, I'll tell you." And so anyway, I was credited with bringing up two machine guns, and I laid behind them myself "I don't know why I did this. I don't know why. And I figured the guys protect the flanks, and I'm going to lay behind these two machine guns, and anything coming up this road's going to get it.



Paul Andert

And so they came, and so I had 500 rounds and a trigger on each hand just going like this, you know. And Germak was over here firing the antitank gun every once in a while, so they gave me a Bronze Star for that. Andâ€”but anyway, one of the guys, they say, â€œHow close did those guys come to you?â€ I says, â€œWell, the one of them fell about eight feet from me.â€ Thatâ€™s probably the closest they got that night, butâ€”oh, and I got to tell you this. At that same battle is when they sent aâ€”a reporter came up, and he was from Time magazine, and I think his name was Lindseyâ€”he was famous.

Paul Andert

And I see him there, just between battles, and I said, â€œWhat are you doing here?â€ He says, â€œIâ€™m going to take a picture of the next fight.â€ And I says, â€œYouâ€™re an American?â€ He says, â€œYeah.â€ I says, â€œYou put that camera down and pick up a gun, or get the hell out of here.â€ And he says, â€œIâ€™m going to takeâ€”â€ I says, â€œYouâ€™re not going to do it. Get the hell out of here.â€ So he took off, and later on after the second battle, the division commander came up, General Brooks, and he says, â€œI want to see the sergeant that chased the reporter off.â€ And I thought I going to get it, and he come over to me and he says, â€œGood job, sergeant.â€

Paul Andert

He says, â€œWe donâ€™t want reporters picturing battles. We want them to picture the aftermath. But you men have to fight, and you donâ€™t need to be fighting with a guy with a camera taking your picture while youâ€™re fighting, â€”cause youâ€™re going to do things to preserve your life that is not going to look good on camera.â€ And so that was the theory in World War II. Now, now, of course, theyâ€™re following them around with a cameraâ€”oh, thatâ€™s murderâ€”but yeah. Every once in a while I think of another little thing, but you know it could go on and on.

Interviewer

Thereâ€™s another thing Iâ€™m interested in. You talked aboutâ€”in an interview I heard, you talked about how you and some of the other guys were trying to compete for numbers of enemy killed.

Paul Andert

Oh, yeahâ€”thatâ€™s another one.

Interviewer

And then you decided not to do it.

Paul Andert

Yeahâ€”right.

Interviewer

So what was the thinking behindâ€”

Paul Andert

Well, we justâ€”being gung-ho in Africa, first starting out in Sicily, we decided weâ€™ll

keep a count. Let's see how many you personally kill, and how many I personally kill. And so I had 128, and some of the guys had a hundred or less, or whatever, and so when we got to England and Normandy, we just decided to stop counting, because there was too many of them and we weren't going to do that anymore anyway. So yeah, I had 128 at that time. And so yeah, we did have a counting deal going, and so that made us shoot more, too.

Interviewer

Which is "was maybe not the best thing?

Paul Andert

I got to get more "I got to increase my score. That's awful. That's awful. But you know, the real thing is "I try to tell people you got to realize that you were a savage when you were fighting, and you became a human being afterwards. And you sat down and thought whatever you just got finished doing and all that, you were human. But over here, you weren't that way. And just like I say in the book about the guy, a guy that dropped a Faust in one of my half-tracks toward the end of the war, and he killed I think seven guys.

Paul Andert

And so I was livid about it, "cause the war "and so I pulled "an enemy soldier off of a jeep that had given up and I was trying to kill him, and they pulled me off of him. And they says, "Let's go find the guy that fired the Panzerfaust," "cause his hand would be cut, always. And so we went looking for him, and we heard shots coming from a building, and so we went up there, and they had already caught him. And so this guy's body was here, and there was guys lying on the floor over here and over here.

Paul Andert

And every once in a while, they put another bullet in him, and his body'd roll this way. And then they'd put a bullet in his body'd roll that way. So I come up and I'm shooting at him, too, and so then we're sitting there and we're looking at this, and I'm saying, "That's somebody's son, husband, or whatever, and look at what war has done to us. Look at what those guys like Hitler and that bunch brought onto us." And then we joined them, because we had one thing in mind: win. Win. Win, win, win, win "that's the only thing. There was no capitulate, give up, let them go, none of that "win.

Interviewer

Well, it's what you said earlier "you had to learn to hate.

Paul Andert

Â Hate, yep.

Interviewer

Â You had to learn to hate.

Paul Andert

Â Hate "you have to hate the enemy.

Interviewer

Â So.

Paul Andert

Â And it wasâ€”it got to you for a bit, and then you had to let it roll, boyâ€”let it roll, or youâ€™d never make it.

Interviewer

Right.

Paul Andert

You had to let it roll, and so we did, andâ€”huhâ€”yep.

Interviewer

So I have two last questions, which weâ€™re asking people. Do you know where youâ€™re remembering when you heard about 9/11?

Paul Andert

Oh, yes. I wasâ€”my wife and I were sitting looking at the television that morning, and we were in Monroe, Louisiana, and I remember I was watching it. And the first one hit the buildingâ€”we saw thatâ€”and then, by God, the second one came and hit the building. And we were right there during the newscast that morning when it happened, â€™cause we used to listen.

Paul Andert

You know, today I hardly look at a television.Â Butâ€”Iâ€™m too busy cleaning house or taking care of my cats.Â And I got two cats and I take care of them, and I had a turtle and he died.Â He was 27 years with us, and he diedâ€”my fault, â€™cause I wasnâ€™t feeding him right.Â But anyway, so those two little guys, theyâ€™re something else, the two cats, and she loved them. Anywayâ€”I canâ€™t think ofâ€”thereâ€™s probably a lot of little, tiny things that went on, you knowâ€”there always was. Andâ€”well, Iâ€™m not going to say this on camera.Â We had favorite sayings we would say to the enemy whenâ€”when we were in a fightâ€”favorite sayings which are not forâ€”not for a camera.

Interviewer

Not for public consumption?Â [Laughs] So, and then the last question is do you remember where you were when bin Laden was captured and killed?

Paul Andert

Â When what?

Interviewer

Â When Osama bin Laden was captured and killed?

Paul Andert

Â Oh, yeah.Â I wasâ€”we were here inâ€”we were hereâ€”we were in Tulsa when that

happened, yeah.

Interviewer

Â Uh-huh.

Paul Andert

Â We were at home when we heard that, yep, uh-huh.

Interviewer

What did you think?

Paul Andert

Â I thought it was good.Â But at the same time, you always think about thereâ€™sâ€”they say, â€œThe king is dead, so long live the king.â€”Â Thereâ€™s another one that comes right behind him.Â And so he needed to be gotten rid of, same way Saddam Husseinâ€”he needed to be gotten rid of.Â And incidentally, the colonelâ€”Generalâ€”Field Marshal Sada, who wrote the book on Saddam Hussein, talks about how he moved the weapons of mass destruction and all that, and how they changed the passenger planes and the cargo planes and had them fly as commercial aircraft when they werenâ€™t.

Paul Andert

And heâ€™s coming to town again.Â I met with him about two years ago, and heâ€™s coming to town again to Tulsaâ€”to talk some more about whatâ€™s going on now, â€™cause heâ€™s been living in Baghdad as a Christian leader.Â Heâ€™s a Christian leader, and he was a Christian working for Hussein; and he was the only Christian he allowed on his staff.Â And you know what he said he told him?Â â€œBecause youâ€™re the only guy thatâ€™ll tell me the truth.â€” He says, â€œAll the others agree with me.â€”Â And he had himâ€”he told him one day toâ€” â€œYouâ€™re going to bomb Israel.â€”

Paul Andert

This was before the other stuff.Â And he says, â€œGet your planes readyâ€”I want them to take off,â€” and so forth.Â He says, â€œI want to tell you something: Iâ€™ll do what you said,â€” he said, â€œbut before my plane gets off the ground, the Israeli Air Force will have destroyed them,â€” he says, â€œbecause they got a hell of a lot better equipment than you have and than I have, and I would lose my Air Force and youâ€™d lose your Air Force.â€”Â Thatâ€™s what he told him.Â And he says, â€œWe canceled that bombardment.â€” That wouldâ€™ve never happened â€™cause theyâ€™d have been wiped out.

Interviewer

Wow.

Paul Andert

Â And this one general is the one thatâ€™ll mean field marshalâ€™s the one that released the American prisoners after the first desert deal when they captured some American airmen, and Saddam Husseinâ€™s sons wanted to kill them before theâ€”when the war ended, that war.Â And he refused, and told them, â€œNo.Â Theyâ€™re prisoners of war.Â Theyâ€™ll be released.â€”Â And he had them released.Â So heâ€™s admired in

the United States for those reasons.

Paul Andert

But the newspapers don't go for it. The New York Times told him, when his first book came out about four years ago, they were going to expose him. He says, "Here's the book" "expose me." And they haven't—they haven't done anything yet, and it's been years. And so that's General Sada, and"

Interviewer

What's the name of the book?

Paul Andert

Just a minute and I'll think of it. It's not General Sada. It's "I'll think of it"

Interviewer

Right.

Paul Andert

And I'll get it to you.

Interviewer

You can e-mail me"okay.

Paul Andert

I've got two of them in fact. I bought one, and then he signed one for me when we were talking, and so I got two of his books.

Interviewer

Sure.

Paul Andert

What the devil is the name of the book? I'll think of it.

Interviewer

That's all right. I want to thank you so much for hearing your story.

Paul Andert

Well, I"

Interviewer

Thank you very much.

Paul Andert

I feel this way—that if you can—if you were there and you could tell them like it was, do

it.Â Becauseâ€”people need to know.Â They need to know that weâ€™re not angels, but that American people, really, when you get down to it, are real fighters.Â And when we get our nose bled, weâ€™d better step up and do something about it. And itâ€™s just the way we have to be, or weâ€™ll become a second-class country.Â And we donâ€™t ever need to be a second-class country.

Interviewer

Â Right.

Paul Andert

â€™Cause we rebuilt everybody afterwards, on the Marshall Plan and all thatâ€”we did that.Â And we forgive the World War II debts, all that.Â The only people that ever paid a World War II debt, they say, itâ€™s Finland, and part of that was from World War I, I understand. But they paid their debt, Finlandâ€”everybody else has not paid.Â So what do they owe us, you know?

Interviewer

Right.

Paul Andert

But they donâ€™t think about that.Â Theyâ€”and they say culture is different and all that.Â You know, I told a guy the other day, he says, â€œWell, we canâ€™t live with more than two children.â€ And I says, â€œYou mind if I look at you and say, â€”Bullshit?â€ And then I take this picture out of my billfold, and I says, â€œHereâ€™s a brother that has ten children.â€ And he was a truck driver, and he lived that way.Â Ten children, seven boys and three girls, and they have over forty grandchildren now.Â And they are the tightest family you have ever seenâ€”always helping one another and all that stuff.Â And I says, â€œItâ€™s bull.Â You can do it if you want to do it.Â If you donâ€™t want to do it, you donâ€™t.â€ So be a leader orâ€”one more small story.

Interviewer

Â Okay.

Paul Andert

Paul Andert:Â Â Â At the schools, one of the schools I was at, thisâ€”I says, â€œYou have to be a leader and not a follower.â€ One of the smart boys stood up, and he says, â€œHow do you know a leader from a follower?â€ I says, â€œI can tell youâ€”youâ€™re a follower.â€ And he says, â€œWhy?â€ I says, â€œLook at your pantsâ€”youâ€™re walking all over your pants legs.â€ I says, â€œBend overâ€”you show the crack of your behind.Â Youâ€™re following somebody.Â You canâ€™t get out in front and say, â€”Follow me,â€™ instead of â€”Iâ€™m going to follow you,â€™ and do the things you do.â€ I says, â€œGet out in front.â€ The teacher says, â€œBoy, weâ€™re surprised, but we wish we could say that.Â Weâ€™re not allowed to.â€ I says, â€œAt 88, what are they going to do to you?â€ Or 87, then.

Interviewer

You saidâ€”it sounds like you said what was on your mind even when you were 18, though, and 28, so.

Paul Andert

Â Thatâ€™s it.

Interviewer

Â All rightâ€”thank you so much.

Paul Andert

Â Yep, okay.