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Oral History Number: 151-004

Interviewee: Joe Glass

Interviewer: Charles Milo McLeod

Date of Interview: March 28, 1985

Project: First Special Service Force Oral History Project

Charles Milo McLeod: Oral history interview with Joe Glass and Staff Sergeant Milo McLeod on the First Special Service Force conducted March 28, 1985. Joe, you're aware that some of the information on this interview may be given to the Montana Oral History Association and the University Archives [University of Montana Archives and Special Collections] for research by future historians, is that correct?

Joe Glass: I understand that.

CM: Okay. Joe, why don't you tell me a little about yourself, for instance, where you were born and grew up just very briefly?

JG: Okay, I was born in Sarnia, Ontario, March 14, 1920.

CM: Okay and you grew up in Canada and were a Canadian citizen.

JG: Yes, I grew up in Canada. In the last few years of my life, I was sailing on the Great Lakes.

CM: That's what you were doing before you joined the service?

JG: Before I joined the service. Like I told you I tried to get in the Navy, but I'm colorblind so I had to take the Army and joined the camp regiment in 1940, July 1940.

CM: Okay and that was a rifle regiment?

JG: No it was a heavy machine gun, supposedly heavy machine gun, although we never did see one. We trained as infantry for months...I forget, I think about nine months we trained as infantry, and the highest caliber gun we had was a Lewis.

CM: Okay, and that was?

JG: .30 caliber.

CM: .303?

JG: .303 Lewis, yes.

CM: With the old drum magazine on top?

JG: That's right. That's the gun...That's the highest caliber that I'd ever shot at that time, and then we got **Bren** guns [Bren light machine gun], of course, and the new equipment we had the Lee Enfield rifle. That was a .303. The pistols were all British pistols.

CM: **Webley's**?

JG: Yeah.

CM: Those were quite the gun weren't they? [unintelligible] break open.

JG: Yes. [unintelligible].

CM: Heavy.

JG: Break open and heavy. I only fired one once.

CM: Tell me, when did you first hear about the First Special Service Force?

JG: Well when I was training in Ottawa I was an instructor, a bayonet instructor, with this camp out of Ottawa training recruits—new recruits—because I could run so fast they gave me bayonet instructor because I didn't know anything about heavy machine guns, which I was sent to Ottawa to instruct.

CM: Yeah, that sure sounds like the military.

JG: Yeah, so we instructed them in small arms, and basically I was the bayonet instructor. That's about all I did there, and I got kind of tired of training recruits after being in the army since 1940.

CM: This is, what, mid-1942?

JG: Yes, the summer of nineteen...spring and summer. So in the spring they were asking for volunteers for parachute troops, so I and two other fellows that were with me volunteered for parachute troops. After some weeks, we got accepted, and then we noticed on the bulletin board that there was a First Special Service Force being organized. That isn't what they called it. It was a Second Parachute Battalion, but they had this outfit training in Montana that wanted volunteers and that was the first time we'd heard about it, of course.

CM: And it did say it was going to be an airborne outfit too?

JG: Airborne outfit, yeah, with specialized training for...they said sabotage and all this other good things, so we volunteered for that.

CM: Did it say that it was going to be a joint Canadian and American unit?

JG: At that time, I don't think so. I can't remember that. I didn't hear that until we got to Camp Borden and Diamond told us about it—Jack Diamond, the captain. At that time, he was a captain, and he was a recruiting officer there in Camp Borden, Ontario. So they put us through our test there, and then brought us down in August 1942.

CM: So you arrived in August with the first Canadian contingent? Your—

JG: I don't believe it was the first Canadian. They got some out west first come down from Winnipeg, but then we were the second group come down. Some come from the West and some the East. I come from Ottawa of course, Camp Borden. They didn't give us any leave or anything we just we arrive at Camp Borden and went through our tests, and then they put us on a train and brought us right down here. That's how we've arrived in Helena—hot and dusty.

CM: I was talking to Herb Goodwin the other day, and that's what he mentioned. When he got off the train he was...everyone was very sharply dressed and got off the train in to six inches of dust.

JG: [laughs] That's right. We were dressed in Canadian shorts you know, puttees—puttees and shorts—and the big boots—Canadian boots.

CM: Okay, Joe, what motivated you to join the First Special Service Force, to get out of the regular army, and go into a unique [unintelligible] like this?

JG: Well, we join purposely to get into combat, and it was after Dunkirk fell in Hong Kong. The Canadian Army, they were keeping all the troops back in Canada, holding them back. There was no place to go. They had enough troops in England see at that time.

CM: Yesterday you told me about—

JG: Quite confusing in England.

CM: Yes, yesterday you told me about your experience in the Canadian Army of going to Halifax and then Vancouver—

JG: Oh, yeah.

CM: And the events that led up to it. If you could relate that.

JG: Well, the reason we were trained in Chatham, and then we went to London, Ontario, which was the headquarters for the Canadian Army. My number was A, which was the first number in

the regular army. So they took us to London, and we stay there and more training. Then they took us all the way to Halifax because we were going to ship overseas. But Dunkirk you know, they took them all back to England, so I guess they thought there was no space for us in England, and they kept us there on the coast. We done guard duty along the coast, around the Halifax Harbor in fact, out on the arm, and we had several guard posts you know. It was real good duty for us. Lots of girls and lots of good beer. Everything was good there. Boys were poaching deer, so they had lots of food—good food, fresh food. Then they shipped us back to Niagara Falls on the way to the West Coast, and we stopped there and guarded the powerhouses all winter.

Then in the spring, in March, we went out to New Westminster, British Columbia. They were going to take us to Hong Kong. Same thing happened there. Hong Kong fell, in the meantime, so they kept us there as a mobile infantry task force and trained us as such. Gave us a lot of mobile units—new trucks, new equipment, Bren gun carriers, and all that jazz.

CM: Did Canada—I'm sure this is recorded in the history books—but after Pearl Harbor, when the United States entered the war, did Canada suspect an invasion from the Japanese too? Was Canada gearing up and putting troops on the West Coast?

JG: Oh yeah, you bet. You bet they had a lot of troops there.

CM: Vancouver Island?

JG: Over on the island. Yeah, my brother was stationed at the island when I was at New Westminster. He was at Nanaimo. He used to come over...He come over a couple of times to see me, and I went over there once, I think, to see him. Then after that, all the NCOs that were in limbo, they take us back to Quebec, Lake Megantic [Lac-Megantic], for training—non-commissioned officers training in Lake Megantic—and at Kingston—on the arm at Kingston and Ottawa. We made several trips back and forth across the country. That was pretty tiresome.

CM: It sure sounds like it.

JG: So I asked for a transfer when I got back the third time, and so they transfer me to Ottawa as an instructor—heavy machine gun instructor like I said. I end up as a bayonet instructor, and that's how we got down there. We got tired of playing around, and we thought, to get into combat, it'd be quicker going into a parachute troops or a special unit.

CM: Right. And get into combat, also the excitement—the idea of being in an elite unit.

JG: Oh yeah. Jumping, and the training was such...Oh, fantastic training we had! Training without skis you know before...We're training to ski without skis. We done that with sticks.

CM: Yeah, in fact I saw some of the photos of that in the book.

JG: Made many, many miles with those sticks.

CM: Okay, did any of your friends from the Canadian Army sign up for the First Special Service Force with you?

JG: Yes, two of them. A guy named Charlie Mills (?) who got killed on a raid we went on one night, and Allie Bilail (?), and he's still alive in Oshawa, Ontario. Those two guys come up.

CM: So they signed up with you and went through, were accepted, and made it through the training?

JG: Yes, they were...We got very friendly in Ottawa, and they decided they wanted to come with me so they came. They were in my section.

CM: Okay. What was life like here at Fort Harrison in those early days when you first got here? Living conditions, food—

JG: We lived in tents at that time. First they put up tents, and I always found it really great because we had cots. We weren't sleeping on the floor except when we went in the hills—overnight training—but I thought it was great. The food was halfway decent; although, I didn't like too much of their lamb they called it. Ate a lot of sheep.

CM: Did you find a difference in the food between the Canadian and American Army.

JG: Oh, quite a bit different, yeah. I thought it was much better really, here.

CM: American Army food?

JG: Oh yes. I thought it was. The only time we really had good food in the Canadian Army was at London—our barracks in London—it was fantastic food there. But every other place I've been it was you know about the same all the time. Same kind of food all the time.

CM: Typical army chow.

JG: Yeah, so you spent most of your paycheck eating in restaurants when you could get to one. Here in Helena, my friend and I, we spent 90 percent of our pay on steaks uptown. Steaks weren't too expensive in those days, so a 20 dollar bill would buy a lot of steak dinners if you didn't take the girls out with you.

CM: You'd go eat and then take them out.

JG: Right.

CM: Okay. As soon as you got here, you immediately started training, didn't you?

JG: You bet. Yeah, it sure was. Within seven days, you made your first jump. It was good, and then they held off a little while for your second jump. It wasn't too bad. In fact, it was very good training. I liked it because I had taken a bit of commando training in Canada and it was similar you know. Double on every place you went. It was good, and I liked the long hikes. Sometimes the only sleep we got was a five-minute break an hour we got. You'd relax and go right to sleep. That's [unintelligible] sleep the night before. You've done that for months. I don't know how we ever did it. We must have been in good shape—awful good shape. [laughs]

CM: Oh, it sure sounds like it. I know in the Forest Service, being on a forest fire for three or four days you don't get much sleep, and sometimes two three hours a night if that—that continual heavy type work digging fire line. As soon as you sit down and take a break you can go right to sleep, and wake up five or ten minutes later and actually feel refreshed.

JG: You bet you do.

CM: Then you are good for three or four more hours.

JG: Oh yeah, I done that many, many times. I only fought fire though one time, and that was on that big Mann Gulch fire. I can't take wood smoke. I only got one good lung, and that wood smoke really gets to me. But I was on the Trout Creek end over by York. We cut the fire lines there. We worked for three days steady. God, we got very little sleep. What we did, we slept on the ground right there at the camp. That's an experience you guys have in that Forest Service, I tell you. It's hard work.

CM: In a lot of ways it's very similar to a combat situation.

JG: You bet.

CM: That's one thing I enjoy about the Forest Service. It kind of reminds me of some of the [unintelligible] of Vietnam.

JB: Yeah, it's exciting. Exciting, you bet.

CM: Anyway, let's go back to the Force. When did you first learn about Operation Plough and the idea of the heavy water [unintelligible] in Norway?

JG: Well that would come up during our training, but I can't remember when. At the time, I can't remember that. You got a lot of rumors. Enlisted men get a lot of rumors, and that's all you get, unless you're a good friend of some officer who tells you what he knows. But they're very close-mouthed—most of them—that knew, so it was just rumors that we heard.

CM: Do you remember what some of the rumors were? What you were training for?

JG: Well, we had a lot of rumors about whatever we were going to be use for, like you suggested the plow. Then we heard because of that, we weren't going to do that. We were going to be broken up. There were going to you know break us all up again, and boy, that was quite a rumor.

CM: That was a real possibility, wasn't it?

JG: Oh, you bet it was. I don't know how they ever talked them out of that. Really.

CM: I remember they showed that...showed or represented that in the movie, that they were going to break up the Force.

JG: Yeah, that was true. We were real worried about that. All of us were because we were just...At that now we were becoming a real good fighting unit and trusting each other.

CM: And morale was high?

JG: Oh, morale was really high.

CM: No problems between Canadians and Americans?

JG: No, we had that all out by then. It was real good.

CM: Were there any problems or differences initially between Canadians and Americans?

JG: When I first come, I was knocked down to a corporal. To get in I had to give up my...I was an acting staff sergeant, training. So in the Canadian Army if you're not confirmed, they can bust you any time. In order to get out of this outfit, I had to go back to a corporal, and I come down here as a corporal. I even lost those stripes over [unintelligible]...I can't even remember what it was for, probably going AWOL for a night or so. [pauses] Some of our best friends were Americans really, and the ones we trusted in combat were Americans too. They were just like your brother, and it was tough to lose a lot of them, boy I'll tell you. They were such good friends. They made more money than we did.

CM: Yeah, that's what I understand. That was a problem that the Canadians came in at their base pay, and apparently when you first heard about this people thought, or the impression was given, that you'd be paid the same as Americans. Is that right?

JG: Yes, [laughs] but that never panned out. They used to get about 50 dollars jump pay, and we got 25.

CM: That makes a difference.

JG: It made a little difference because we had to borrow a lot of money off our American friends to get through the month sometimes, unless we were lucky in a crap game. They were all good gamblers. We had some real good gamblers in the outfit. So they always had money. Besides we got friends with borrowers, and they used to put us on a book of [unintelligible] the [unintelligible] Tavern in East Helena, why, he used to... Lorin (?) and I we had run a book with him. I even hawked an engagement...I was engaged to a girl Canada when I left, but she sent me the ring back, so I hawked it out there for some whiskey and beer and paid up my bill for a month.

CM: [laughs] So the bartenders used to carry you on credit and let you sign the check.

JG: Yeah.

CM: The Force, when it was here at Fort Harrison, really did have a good relationship with the people in Helena, didn't they?

JG: You bet. We never had any problems with the people in Helena. It was great. They treated us good too.

CM: Is that one of the reasons so many people from Force came back and lived in Helena?

JG: Well, sure. A lot of us married girls here, and I wanted to come back here after...The first time I ever walked through Refrigerator Canyon we come across from Wolf Creek and down—across Refrigerator Canyon—across the Missouri into Refrigerator. I liked that Canyon. I wanted to come back. I said, "If I ever live through this, I'm coming back here to live," and I was lucky enough to do it.

CM: When you were here at Fort Harrison, did you have much time off, say, to get out and go fishing or go hunting?

JG: We had a lot of weekends. At least on Sunday, unless you were on special assignment, why, you had quite a few weekends, and then we had a week's leave around Christmas time, which was great. I went all the way home at Christmas time for a week. We had no problem because most of...My friend and I, we always got out when we wanted to get out, even when we're on CB we got out.

CM: On CB?

JG: Or not CB. [laughs] Yes, Confined to barracks. That's what it was. CB, yeah. That's what we called it. God, I haven't thought of that for a long time. They give you like 14 days, so you got

to...You can't be out of your barracks at night. You got to be in at night. You could be on the post, but you had to be in bed check at ten. So we'd come in, go out—we always went out the back gate, never went through the front gate—and come around. We either had a car waiting for us to pick us up, or we had to walk to get a cab down here. The cab used to hang down by the gate, so we'd just walk around the gate and get a cab to go to town. Or the bus. There was lots of buses. Of course, to get on the bus inside you had a pass, and we couldn't do that, see, because we never had a pass at that time. Then we'd come in in the morning with the milkman, Old Al Jarrai (?), he brought us in here. I don't know how many mornings he brought us in here. One time the M.P. stopped him at the gate and said, "We got to inspect your truck."

He says, "If you get in," and we were in the back, he says, "If you get in, I'm going to take this milk right back to town." So they let him through. So when he come up, we were right out here, Second Regiment. We were right over here, yeah, right over here. Why, he let us out, we'd go change. First we'd go to bed see because it'd be before six. Then when roll call, we just fall out, pull our...If we didn't get a change we just pulled our overalls right over the top. What do you call them coveralls you put on? Jumpsuits. Jumpsuits, weren't they? Yeah, jumpsuits we had. Just one piece, and we pull them right over top of our ODs. That was great. We'd fall out for roll call and then we'd go to breakfast, which we never eat breakfast. We always full of milk, or had our breakfast before we come home. We done that for months. Never got caught at that.

CM: Could you wear civilian clothes when you went downtown?

JG: No.

CM: No civilian clothes at all?

JG: No, they made us give them up. We didn't have any civilian clothes. Wouldn't allow it.

CM: So people in uniform downtown Helena wasn't all that uncommon?

JG: No, unless you got in any trouble, you were all right. You had a few drunks, us drunks I guess.

CM: But as far as fights and problems with the local community, they really didn't exist?

JG: Not really. The only fights I ever got into was with our own fellows, but that was over a girl or just a sort of a drunken brawl. More fun fights than anything.

CM: There's certainly been a lot of changes here at Fort Harrison since 1942, haven't there?

JG: Oh yeah, you bet. Took all our old barracks out of here and some of the mess halls. Permanent mess halls they built are still here, though, and the headquarters buildings have been changed around quite a bit. The guard house is still there—the same one.

CM: Down at the main entrance?

JG: Yeah. Not that I was ever in there, but it looks to me it's the same one.

CM: Okay. Is that's the one with no windows on it down by the main entrance?

JG: Right as you come in the gate, the first one. That's got windows in it, doesn't it?

CM: Yeah, by guardhouses, that's where the guards stayed. Yeah, it's not the guardhouse that was used as the jail.

JG: I see what you mean, yes. Yes, the windows are gone on that one. I noticed that this morning when I was coming in. There's been quite a few changes lately in the last year.

CM: Did you use any of those little red brick buildings out there that used to be kitchens for the—

JG: No, I don't think so.

CM: —for the National Guard when they trained here in the 20s and 30s.

JG: I don't think we ever used them for anything. The farthest I ever got over there was the latrines and the parachute shed. Of course, the tower was not there, but the parachute shed's, part of it's still there isn't it? Just the tower's is gone off that.

CM: And the storage areas for the Weasels and—

JG: Yes, well, they are all new buildings up here. Aren't they?

CM: All new?

JG: Aren't they different buildings than the ones we had where the Weasels are?

CM: No.

JG: Are they the same?

CM: There is still a couple of buildings left where the Weasels were.

JG: They're right off at the end.

CM: Right. Could you tell me a little about your...the training you went through here, Joe? You mentioned about the physical conditioning—the running—but maybe a little bit about weapons training, mountaineering, skiing, hand-to-hand combat.

JG: Yeah, well, we had a good instructor in hand-to-hand combat, old O'Neill (?), he was really good. Tough. Sideways onward he called it—kicking sideways and using your fingers. That's the way he fought, and he was good, so that's the way we were taught to kick. But it's a very good kick because even yet I can kick a guy beside the head, and I'm 65. My kid's over six feet tall. I can still kick him beside the head sideways. It surprises him sometimes.

Then we had all kinds of our own weapon training—45, M1's, Johnny gun, Thompson, hand grenades, of course, the knife. That's another part of hand-to-hand combat with the knife. O'Neil; trained us on that too. We had several different officers that were fairly good in hand-to-hand combat that helped him train. Of course they put us up against each other in boxing, and knife and all this jazz—like all training. We took special foreign weapons training—

CM: That was pretty unique wasn't it at that time in the army to be trained on foreign weapons?

JG: You bet it was. That was the first I'd had of it really. In Canada we had foreign vehicles, but no rifles, no machine guns of any kind. The one thing we didn't have here was a Schmeisser. We never did see a Schmeisser. The first time I ever seen a Schmeisser was in combat, and heard them and how fast they are—how fast they were at that time. They were the fastest thing on the market then—Schmeisser—shit-pisser.

CM: My father was in World War Two in Germany in the Battle of the Bulge, and he talks about the Schmeisser. He says it fired so fast it could literally cut a man in half.

JG: You bet they could, and then of course they had a distinct sound of their own. You could tell it was a Schmeisser. Some of our boys captured them and used them. Until they run out of ammunition.

CM: So in combat, you guys would use foreign weapons too?

JG: Oh you bet, because they were so light. I'd-a like to have got one because they were light, but I never had...I never captured anybody with a Schmeisser. The dead ones I never bothered stripping anything off of them. I never had time anyway. I was either a scout or in charge of a mortar section or something that I couldn't pick up. The only thing I ever picked up in combat, we captured a German and you can't believe this! We took these houses, and I was a scout, see, so I went in first. I got where all the machine guns were, come back, and then we took this one house on one side of the road and went across the road and took the other house. There was two guys—the Germans—down in a ditch. Not a really ditch but a little furrow, and you had this bright moonlight. I could see him plain as day, but I couldn't hit those guys. Shoot would my

rifle, and I had a bayonet on it see. I think that's why I couldn't him in that damn bayonet. I never could shoot that rifle with a bayonet on it. But anyway I've got...**Herbie Forester** (?) was our Johnny gun. I said, "Hey, Herbie, come here. See if you can get those two guys down there," because they were firing you know Schmeissers at that these other guys on the left. He fired right down at them. He never did hit them guys with a Johnny gun. See, there must have been a little, just a little depression that they were in, and he couldn't hit them. I turned around, and an officer come by—he's a brand new officer, just got his commission—and I seen him grab something in this...you know they have these little bake deals outside in Italy where they bake their bread outside.

CM: Oh, ovens.

JG: Little ovens, and he pulls... I looked and, geez, he pulled a machine gun out of this. So I turned around, and I stuck my bayonet in and I ripped it across there and out comes a little white flag. It was a German—a little short German—and the biggest, tallest Italian I ever seen in my life. I was standing on a side of the ditch about this high and he was in the ditch, and I was pointing my bayonet up to him like that and he had a nice, big knife on him. It was a bit like a gladiator sword, but a miniature.

CM: Who? The German or the Italian?

JG: The Italian. He was a San Marco Marine, and you ought to seen that knife. Beautiful! That's the only thing I ever got, and when I went to the hospital, somebody to it out of my bag. [laughs] I never got it home. That's the only souvenir I ever got, except some guns like P-38s and Lugers and stuff like that. You had to get them because there was so many laying around.

CM: Well, let's see, how about the winter training? The skiing, the use of the Weasel?

JG: The Weasels.

CM: Yes.

JG: well they first started to train us right out here in the fields with the Weasels, driving them first, of course, operation. Then towing.

CM: Towing skiers?

JG: Skiers. That was fabulous training.

CM: That was a pretty new concept?

JG: Oh boy, they'd go you know...You know how they get playing around after the training.

CM: Right.

JG: And if your last guy on the stick on that thing, they're going about 40 miles an hour out there. The way they go and whip you around, you're gone. I mean, you can fly. I don't remember anybody get hurt on them. They towed us up on Mullan Pass, and we drove them all over the place up there in ski training—fabulous training up at Blossburg. Had nice long ski runs. This was for just downhill, I'm talking about, but those damn Norwegians, they'd go all day. You'd go uphill all day, but the last half a mile, you come downhill—coming back to camp, that hill. That's about the only hill you'd come down. I don't know how they did it.

CM: And the rest of it was going up?

JG: Was all cross-country going up.

CM: All endurance training.

JG: Oh yeah, that's what it was because you couldn't break trail. You had to take turns breaking trail. It was such heavy snow—deep—but it was good training. Man, they were good.

CM: Were you up there when they had that cold snap when it got down to 50, 60 below?

JG: You bet, that's when we were up there. Of course, we never realized it was so cold. Just seemed like any other cold day. I think any time it gets 20, 30 below, it doesn't matter if it goes 100, you just freeze a little bit faster because we never really...We never got cold. We had good equipment, real good equipment.

CM: Yeah, the Force had number one priority for equipment, didn't it?

JG: Yeah.

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

JG: Most of his staff officers would give all the briefings at the theater, where we had all the briefings.

CM: Is that the theater right over—

JG: The theater, same one. It's still there. Everybody really got to respect him. The way he handles all his officers and his men—he was really good. Everybody got to like him—really like him. Boy, we found that out in combat, we really trusted the right guy because anytime we went out on a daylight raid, he was right there.

CM: Frederick [General Robert T. Frederick] was?

JG: Frederick was always there, you bet. In the midst of firing—it didn't matter where—shells would be falling all over the place. There would be old Frederick standing there with a couple of scouts or his staff.

CM: One thing I think is interesting about Frederick, from what I've come across of him, is he was commissioned in the Coast Artillery. It seems kind of odd for me, someone who would be in Coast Artillery, which normally deals with large guns, stable positions, to create hard-hitting, fast-moving, special-type unit.

JG: Well see most of us—and I'd say in my section—we didn't realize that he was an artillery officer. We thought he was probably a commando-type officer. This is what it appeared to be, anyway, here because we weren't looking for history or anything. We were just looking at what we're going to get into and what kind of training. I'd say we had the best training at that time that you could get anywhere in any army any place. It was really great. They had officers that...like if somebody wasn't paying attention too...We had one guy—I wished I could remember his name because he was a well-known good, tough boxer—and he was training us in some foreign weapon, I think it was, one day, and some of the guys weren't paying attention to him. He got really irate. So some guy smarted off him, and he challenged that...he challenged everybody in that...There was more than...I'd say there was 40 or 50 men in that group. Maybe they were separated a little bit, but there was 40 or 50 men in that group that he was talking to. He challenged everybody, "Any one of you step up here." He says, "Forget the stripes and the bars." He says, "Now, I'll whip your ass." I really respected that guy because that guy that was mouthing off was a big sucker and he wouldn't do it. Now, if he'd challenged me and he was my size, I would have taken him up on it just for the hell of it, but this guy wouldn't. I was really...I respected this guy. I didn't like him, really like him, but I respected him. Boy, he was good. I thought, if that's the kind of officer we got, we were going to have a good outfit and we did. A real good outfit.

CM: What were the replacements like that you got after you'd been in combat?

JG: Well, the first replacements that I can remember that were real good were the Rangers.

CM: Okay you had Rangers come—

JG: You got your Rangers in Anzio [Battle of Anzio], and in my section, I had two of a set of three. They were triplets. One got captured on that raid—Vittorio (?)—and the other two come back and they come to us. They were named Patterson (?). They were from Kansas City...yeah, I think, Kansas City.

CM: All three brothers?

JG: All three brothers.

CM: In the same Ranger battalion or Ranger company?

JG: Yes, you bet. One of them got wounded the same day I did because he was right behind me. We both got hit with the same shell, but the other one he got through, and I've never been able to contact those guys. They've never been to a reunion or anything. I have a fellow now that's [unintelligible], in fact. He's looking for them for me because he's doing a history of the Rangers too, see.

CM: Oh, he is?

JG: Yes, he's quite a guy. He's traveled all over the country contacting everybody. He is doing a good job.

CM: Boy, it sounds like it.

JG: So he's going to try to find these boys for me. See if they're still kicking.

CM: The Rangers weren't airborne, were they?

JG: No, not at that time.

CM: Later on in the Force, when you took all the heavy casualties, you wouldn't get replacements from a typical rifle company—green recruits—would you?

JG: Oh we did get a few green recruits, yeah, that didn't know too much about anything really.

CM: But they hadn't gone through the hard conditioning, were not airborne qualified, didn't have the experience in, say, winter warfare?

JG: We got some airborne qualified from Canada because there was a kid from my hometown and he was an airborne—Canadian airborne. He come...I didn't even know he was in our outfit until I got home. I met him uptown. He said, "I was with the First Special Service Force." So I run home, got my book, by god, his name was in there as a replacement. That was really funny.

CM: One thing we talked about yesterday that I thought was interesting was you got some replacements, had some replacements brought up to the line and they were black.

JG: Only one. Particularly in the Second Regiment, we had a group come in and one black fellow, and we thought that was great. We never paid any attention to it, but he disappeared. They sent him back. I don't know who ordered him sent back, but someone did because they wouldn't accept him just because he was black. He was a good-looking guy. Big, you know. The kind of guy we'd like to have for night work, see.

CM: Right, night fighters.

JG: He would have been a midnight fighter because we had to black our faces every night. It's kind of hard on the skin that cork we used.

CM: Was that because of military policy, do you think, or just the attitude of some people higher up?

JG: I think it was just the attitude of some of the Southern officers we had there. They didn't like blacks. Of course...

Yeah, just a little bit. Just to warm it to warm it. Thank you. [referring to his drink]

But I never did really know why he was sent back. It was kind of disappointing for us because we needed every replacement we could get. We were short—quite short—but they did give us a leave from Anzio. I don't know how it was arranged but we all got...I don't know whether all of us got it or not but I know I got some. I think it was some kind of a priority basis, but I can't remember why. Tommy Fenton (?) and I, we went down...They didn't fly us. They took us on an LST [landing ship, tank] back to Naples, went over to Caserta, had a bath and a change of clothes and all this jazz—got all cleaned up. Tommy and I, we made a tour of southern Italy. Went back to some of the Canadian headquarters where way back then because they weren't by Casino yet. I met a fellow from the Kent Regiment. His name was Sculls (?), yeah. I've seen this guy standing alongside...We were going in to the...to get some beer in the afternoon...Canadian because we were in American uniform, but we had the USA Canada patch. They didn't know what we were. So we went in, and I said, "Geez it's nice to see you, Sculls."

"Hello, Joe," just like I'd been there yesterday. [laughs] He'd never been in combat, see, and he never did tell me what he was doing there. I didn't find out where the Kent Regiment was or anything about it because all we did was go into their P.X. What'd they call it? Canteen. Had a

few beers, had dinner with him, and then left. We don't even know who they were—Canadian outfit, that's all. Then we come up back up, come up to Pompeii, and spent a few days there because we want to check the...I still got some Vesuvius ash and all that stuff that you get from a volcano eruption because that was quite an eruption, when we were there. From Anzio, you could see it.

CM: Did Vesuvius erupt?

JG: Oh, it erupted there. Yeah! Oh, god, the ash was all over Pompeii and Naples and all over across that country! It was thick around Pompeii. So we spent a few days there, and then got back to the outfit. When we come back—this was really funny—we come back to the outfit, why, Jimmy Flack (?) had been down on leave. He come back, and they were bombing us every night—every night that plane come over and bomb us and the shells would come in. All the time we were away they didn't bomb us, and the night we come back, why, they started bombing again. I got holy hell being a bad luck charm. Everybody thought I was a bad luck charm. I always drew a lot of fire [laughs] wherever I went, so I got holy hell for that.

CM: Say, speaking about bad luck, where people superstitious?

JG: Superstitious you mean? No, I don't think so. No, we lit three and a match lots of times. When you're out on outpost or patrol, of course, you can't smoke. But when a German plane would come over and drop flares, you know how they light up the whole area, you could look around all everybody's lighting a cigarette. [laughs] Smoke coming up, but there's so much smoke anyway. I mean you couldn't pinpoint a cigarette, but I've seen a lot of Germans that I could have killed at night on patrol that were lighting cigarettes in the doorway of a house or in a foxhole. That glow of the cigarette shows up for a half a mile. Lots of times I could have killed guys like that, but because we were on reconnaissance, we couldn't shoot, see.

CM: You were telling me that you really liked to fire them up yesterday. You really sometimes had to be constrained.

JG: Well, yeah, because you get nervous when there's a lot of enemy around, but there are times to fire and times to get the hell out of there. This P.N. Crichlow was very, very smart and a very wise man. Well, he was a college professor, he had to be smart—very intelligent—and he stopped me a couple of times from probably getting in bad, bad trouble.

CM: Taking on more than you could really handle?

JG: Well, yeah, I didn't think it was more than we can handle at that time. Five of us were...the weapons we had, I think we could've got out of it all right. We could have killed most of the patrol, but one night out on a fighting patrol, I captured a whole...well, I was lead scout. I didn't catch them. I was the lead scout and I ran into a German patrol, see, so I run back to Lorin, and I said "Lorin, get the company and swing them around to the left." They walked right

into it, see. We never fired a shot. Got the whole goddamn patrol. It was very lucky though. There was one Nazi in there, and he had a grenade in his hand. Ready pulled the pin when they caught him. Of course, in night it's pretty tough to disarm a man when it's dark.

CM: One Nazi?

JG: I mean a real Nazi. Boy they'd spit right in your eye. So this one guy that after he...Was at **Wolfe (?)**, yes I think was **Wolfe** took his Iron Cross away from him, and he spit right in his face. He should've done that. I wouldn't have done it.

CM: What taken his Iron Cross?

JG: Taking his Iron Cross off. He had it hanging around, and just ripped it off.

CM: What were the Germans like? You say this guy was a real Nazi, and I visualize what you mean, but the other troops in the German Army.

JG: Well you know their Grenadier Guards were good, good fighters—good combat men—and they didn't give up very easy either. You know when you get...If you get Italian troops scattered amongst them that want to give up anyway—the war was over for them. They want to give up. Then we had a lot of Polish soldiers in there that wanted to give up. They didn't want to fight, so we got a...What we'd do, we'd go out at night, and we had a guy named Rusty Khrols (?) from Chicago that was a Polish boy. He could speak the language very well, and he contacted them. So we made an arrangement to bring them in, so we went out that night, and we got a lot of Polish prisoners and a lot of Germans come with them—dissatisfied German, see—that weren't Nazis. They were just soldiers, maybe been conscripted soldier, and they wanted to get out so we got a lot of them. Sometimes we got more than we can handle, but if you run into a good German soldier, they were damn good. When they manned the machine guns, boy, you had to get right into them. You'd never get them out of there unless you're lucky enough to hit them with a mortar, which isn't likely when you...when you're out combat, you maybe have one 30, which we carried all the time.

CM: One 30?

JG: Yes, 30 millimeter.

CM: Mortar?

JG: No, 60. What am I talking about? A 60 millimeter, you know a small mortar. That's what we had.

CM: I was an old mortar man too.

JG: Yes, we used to carry that and lots of times you wouldn't have a baseplate. We just used a helmet. [unintelligible]

CM: I've never used a 60, but I have used an 81.

JG: Oh yeah, well, we never carried them. They had regular mortar battalions for that. When we had the line up there, they come in and set up their mortar positions behind us, and they were good but, oh geez, those guys took a beating. Man!

CM: The mortars?

JG: Yeah. Well as soon as you opened up on them, the 88s would zero in on them and their mortars. They had good mortar men, them Germans. But you know something? We were very lucky because they had a lot of duds.

CM: The Germans did?

JG: You bet. On [unintelligible] offensive, there was three of us dove in a foxhole in a mortar attack, and one mortar shelled lit right between our legs in that foxhole and didn't go off. It was Herbie Forrester and I and Don MacKinnon (?). I was on top, and Herbie—he was a little guy—he was in the middle. But I was laying on top of those two guys. When I looked back and seen that mortar, I thought, oh boy, but it never did go off. What the guys did, they tied the rope around it and towed it away. It never did go off. They were so accurate, those guys. Man, they'd of wiped us all out if it hadn't been for a lot of those duds. We got a lot of duds. In fact, we had guys killed with duds. It took half of their head off.

CM: How was our ammunition and equipment? Did we have many duds?

JG: No, I never ever seen a dud. I've never seen a dud. You know those rifle rockets we had, you put on the end of a rifle? Boy, we made good use of them for getting snipers out of them rocks. They were great. They were so accurate. Once you got used to them, boy, they were good. I liked them. I used it quite effectively a couple times. Sniper on a tall rock, sticking way up—he was sticking way up there. Hit it the first time, the second time he never fired again. I liked them for picking off machine-gun nests too. If they were a little higher than you were, because you had a little trajectory you know and you could just get in on it perfect.

CM: They are almost kind of like a mortar, aren't they?

JG: Well, yeah, but they didn't go that high. But I mean if you've seen a machine gun nests out of the side of a hill and you had a good shot at them, two or three shots and you'd get them every time. I liked that. I never had one, but the guys that had them got killed, so we just used them. Took their rifle with the launcher on it. It was a very, very effective weapon.

CM: One other thing I was interested in, was the amount of equipment that you guys carried in the field.

JG: [laughs] Yeah, we carried a lot of equipment.

CM: You were armed and equipped differently than most regular units, but... Herb was mentioning that you'd carry rucksacks and pack boards maybe 100, 125 pounds.

JG: It's true. Boy, that's true. We had to carry our own ammunition, our own water. You know what a can of water weighs on one of them pack boards. We had to carry our own water, all our own ammunition, and we were traveling light then. Really with just a lot of ammunition. Most of us carried two belts of ammunition besides our regular belt. God, I think when I went on defense I had...I must have had 80 of those clips of ammunition.

CM: For an M1?

JG: Yeah, and I used it all.

CM: Plus a 45.

JG: I used it all before I left that hill. Plus, yeah, we had the 45 too.

CM: Every man carried a 45?

JG: Yes.

CM: Yes, that seems kind of strange.

JG: You know the only time I ever went to use one, it wouldn't fire. [laughs] It's a good thing I didn't, I would have killed one of my own men. But that was different. That was a different situation. That was crawling through...What happened, I went on a patrol one night, and it was a fighting patrol—company strength—so I wasn't scout that night. I was in the Second Regiment. They had the three regiments all put together into one company, so I was designated, my friend and I Lorin Waling (?), who lives here, as a stretcher bearer. We got caught up by a flak wagon. You know one of them 20-millimeter flak wagons—Germans, and they didn't knock it out at first. This kid Jimmy Nielsen (?) from Oregon got hit right in the stomach with a...you know how what that'd do. So we're got to carry him back. We got three miles to go by the way we come, and the Germans are all in behind us. So we thought we'd go right back through them, see.

CM: He was still alive, Joe, after that?

JG: He died about half way back. He begged me to shoot him. Of course, I wouldn't have shot him anyway, but when I was feeling around to try to find out where his wound was, I stuck my hand right in his guts. I knew he wouldn't live. He was wide open. I couldn't patch him up no way. Didn't have enough to patch him with, so we laid him on and put all we could on top of his stomach—laid our rifles on the stretcher. One guy that had went all to pieces, first guy I'd ever seen go to pieces. He went to all pieces, so he had to come back with us. We had to carry his rifle on the stretch too. This guy weighs 200 pounds. I'm short, and Loren's six foot tall. I'm on the front, so he's pushing me, see. That was the worst experience I ever had carrying that poor guy back. He died about halfway back, screaming bloody murder. We thought we'd never make it back, but we got...That's another night that I could spot every German...They were smoking cigarettes all around us. We went right through them—right through them—back to our lines.

CM: Did they see you?

JG: No, they couldn't see. It was too dark, but there was so much fighting up ahead, where we left the fighting and come back, see. Then they went around and come out another way, and we went back the way we started see. We got through all right. Got right back to our lines and then almost got shot by our own men because this guy, I told him to go give the password...before there was a hard macadam road and we're on this side of it, and I knew the outposts were just on the other side of it. I told him where they were. I said, "Go give the password, and get us some help." I wanted some help to carry this guy. I'm beat you know. Geez, I couldn't hardly crawl. The guy went up there and he forgot the password, and he come running...The guys firing all over. He come running back, "What's the password." So I give it to him again. Away he went again, and he went up there and he come back again. I said, "Where's the help?"

"I can't find nobody."

I said, "Well did you give them the password?"

"Nobody asked me." Well, geez, I was so pissed off. I would have shot that son of a bitch, but my pistol wouldn't work. It wouldn't work. It was an Ithaca. You know a .45 Ithaca, not a Colt. But it was jammed full of mud and it wouldn't work, so I just picked up and we went across the road and hollered out the password.

CM: You were going to shoot the guy?

JG: I would have shot him. Do you know that guy got a Silver Star later? He come to our first reunion and stayed with me. He was from Montreal—a French-Canadian boy. He got the Silver Star and Bronze Star—several medals—but he just went to pieces that one time. I'm glad I didn't shoot because I could have been shot too probably. Oh, we were so mad at him. God! He pretty near got us killed by our own men, see, by being so damn stupid, but I didn't realize he was that bad off. He was really shook up. He couldn't even carry his rifle, and he wouldn't help

us— wouldn't help us carry the guy. Couldn't even make him help us. He would just trail along with us, and every time a shell would come within a half a mile, he was down on the ground crawling and we're still going. We'd have to get him up. It was an amazing thing.

CM: How did most people hold up in the Force mentally?

JG: Damn good. I only seen...let's see, one, two, and that boy there was three. Only three that I ever seen that really broke under combat conditions and they wanted to quit. One guy shot himself.

CM: Really?

JG: Yes. The other guy, I don't know how in the hell he got out, but we were going to take a mountain one day, and here he comes down you know leaning on his rifle. Nobody ever seen him get hit, nobody ever knew he got hit, but he was back in Helena here, christ, while we were still over there. I won't mention his name because he's still alive. And he...I always—

CM: What did he do, just quit?

JG: He just quit. I don't know how in the hell he got back. He never got shot that I know of. He got all the way back, whether it was mental or what. Those are the only three, and the one guy that broke he became a hero. Good boy, real good boy.

CM: So the selection process or the training, the conditioning, really did put together a top-notch force.

JG: You bet it did. One of the toughest guys we had here went all to hell in combat.

CM: Did he?

JG: He wasn't worth a shit. You couldn't trust him. You didn't want to be with him, but that's unusual. He was a tough son of a gun too. Here he could whip anybody, but over there in combat, he wasn't worth a shit. He stayed in his hole and finally shot himself through the foot, so he got out.

CM: Is that the fellow you were telling me who shot himself?

JG: Yes.

CM: Okay, I guess I misunderstood.

JG: Hey, I seen a guy pull something who wanted to get out of the Force. When we come back from the Aleutians—and he was a Canadian I'm sorry to say—he says "I'm not going. I'm not

going with you guys. No way.” So he takes a .45. This is a .45! He shot himself in the foot, and do you know it went right between his two toes and just burnt it. Never broke nothing, but a little burned skin with a .45 slug. Of course, they kicked him out, see.

Them’s the only incidents I ever seen anybody break in anywhere. I never seen anybody cry or go all the pieces. The guys that I were in the hospital with an Anzio—we were getting shelled all the time in the hospital and it was kind of a hairy place to be in—but when I was hit I was so bad I didn’t give damn whether I got hit again or not. You get that way, of course. If you get hard enough, the pain goes away eventually. I’ve seeing guys laying there on the same bottle I was, and just...A guy I had a fight with here in Helena, over a girl, and he was right across on a high bed and I’m down on a cot but I got to sit up—both of us got to sit up because we’ve got chest injuries and we got the tubes and the oxygen. I’m on the same oxygen bottle as he is, and he’s trying to tell me something. For two days, I’m trying to find out what he’s trying to tell me. I never did find out. He died. He had one bullet hole in his chest—a little bullet hole—and I thought, geez, he shouldn’t die. He’ll be all right. By god, he died. Geez that surprised me. With one bullet hole! I’ve seen guys with a gut full of bullet holes and come through all right, but I guess it’s just where you hit him. Geez, I’ll never forget laying in that damn hospital and watching that kid die. He was bigger than me.

CM: Was he in the Force too?

JG: Yeah. Well, most of the guys in that hospita—in the ward I was in—were from the Force, except that I could see down in the burn unit. They had a guy wrapped like a mummy. All he had was a hole in his mouth and that’s all he had, and he lived, Jesus Christ, he must have lived a week before he died, poor bugger. He made a sound **[unintelligible]**, that was very terrifying to listen to. Then the rest of guys, I didn’t see the rest of the Force boys until I got in hospital down in Naples. They flew us down to Naples after the...I remember laying in the hospital on June 6 when they...D-Day.

CM: Invaded.

JG: Yes, and they’d give us the radio. Turned the radio in there and let it **[unintelligible]**. We were all happy.

CM: That must have been quite an experience. Well, you were wounded how many times, Joe?

JG: Once real bad. Three times altogether. I had three wound stripes in the Canadian Army on...I’ve got three wound stripes. You’ve seen our wound stripes in the Canadian Army? I got three, but actually I didn’t think you got hit until you got hit real bad—so you couldn’t walk, so you couldn’t crawl, couldn’t even get up. That’s when you’re hit. I’ve see lots of guys with their guts torn open walking and with their arm shot off and all kinds of wounds. Head wounds, guys walked out by themselves. One officer we had, boy, he got shot. One night we were on patrol,

and he got shot right in the guts with a Schmeisser. About tore him in two, we thought. He held his guts in and walked back—walked all the way back.

CM: Did he make it?

JG: Yea, he's still alive today. He was at our last reunion. The Second Regiment's a real, good tough regiment.

CM: Well was there a lot of competition between the regiments?

JG: Yeah, kind of, but it wasn't serious competition.

CM: It was a good natured.

JG: You bet. Yeah, oh yeah, we had lots of competition, even baseball games, football games—anything they played it was a competition.

CM: Did they have the same sort of morale and *esprit de corps* in the regiments of the Force, like say, they do in the Canadian Army?

JG: More so, I think, here because a guy like me—I was never military minded. I really didn't like the army, and I didn't particularly like the Canadian Army because it was so strict. It was sort of like the British Army. When I got in this outfit, it was so different. There was good discipline in this army, but it was different and the officers—even the Canadian officers—changed a lot after they got here. Now, I done things here that I would have really got in trouble for in the Canadian Army. All I'd get was a severe reprimand. I got three of them here, and I lost my stripes too once. I never got to be a sergeant until I was on Anzio again. The morale was really high, and we had fun—always had fun. Enjoyed everything.

CM: Do you think a lot of that is the attitude of the people who made up the Force?

JG: You bet.

CM: You put them all together and—

JG: Yeah. You had everything—every type of...Well, like you do in any army, you have every type of person, every vocation, but they were very, very good and we respected of each other. You had to. [pauses] A lot of love in that outfit. Really love.

CM: What was it like the day the unit disbanded?

JG: I wasn't there. See, I was already gone. I left two months before then...or a month. Anyway, shortly before they disbanded, Colonel Walker was in charge then—Ed Walker—and he was a

hell of a fine soldier, even though he did get into a little trouble after the war. He come and shook hands with some of us, and said he was sorry that we had to go. He knew we didn't want to go, but he says, "We can't...We're going to..." He told us we were going to be disbanded anyway, and it would be better for us if we left then. It was. I'm glad I did leave then. I wouldn't want to be there when the Force broke up. I was in England already when the Force broke up, see, and they come there—the Canadian outfit come there. Some went to the First Canadian Parachute Battalion, and they split them all up. The American went to the 474th over to Norway, and a lot of them went with the 82nd Airborne to Germany. In fact, some of our boys were in Bastion.

CM: No, I didn't know that. Former Force people?

JG: Yeah.

CM: What, with the 101st?

JG: 101st.

CM: Or the 82nd?

[End of interview]