

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 151-008, 009**

**Interviewee: S. Leonard Goodman**

**Interviewer: Claire Rhein**

**Date of Interview: August 16, 1986**

**Project: First Special Service Force Oral History Project**

Claire Rhein: This is Claire Rhein. We're in Helena at the First Special Service Force reunion, and I am talking Leonard Goodman who is from Bremington, Washington. Well, Len, what's it like to come back?

S. Leonard Goodman: To the reunion?

CR: Yes, in Helena.

LG: It is very nice. This is kind of our home grounds really, being that we formed up here in '42. I was in on the first bunch that came in here, so I remember all the beginnings. Being that I came in from Canada, it was quite strange to me a lot of the things that took place were so different than what we had been used to in the Canadian army, especially that there was many...All the different states in the Union and the provinces of Canada were represented in this group of men, and we found a lot of differences. Different ways they had that the...the Southerners were quite strange to us. I remember especially the first thing that really made me surprised was we had a very early reveille, and of course, the Canadians were very well regimented and we'd be out on parade in the morning to answer rollcall. Some of the Americans would stay right in their bed, and they would say, "No," from their bunk. We thought that was great.

CR: Did you try it?

LG: We didn't try it, but we wondered what was going to take place on this type of...They just didn't seem too conformed to anything, and they weren't happy about being there at all. We—

CR: That's odd, isn't it, if it was a volunteer force.

LG: Well, they weren't volunteers really. The Americans weren't volunteers. Mostly, they were just picked and taken from wherever and a lot of them were nonconformists and were a little bit tough. A little tough bunch some of them. Some of them, of course, was the cavalry and they were the ones that answered "No," from the bunk. But when these boys found out that nobody seemed to care that they didn't get out of bed in the morning, and they would say...The first thing the officer would say on parade, "Now, is any man here that would like to leave this outfit and go back...We will send you back to any outfit that...We'll just send you to another outfit. You won't necessarily go back to your own outfit at all. Nobody will know you were here." They started thinking this must be a pretty good outfit that you don't have to stay here. Therefore they became volunteers by this staying because they could have all left right away.

CR: Well, that's incredible. That's incredible.

LG: Yes. [unintelligible]. See, in a little while there was no differences. You couldn't tell the difference from or another as far as they were just as proud of the outfit as we were.

CR: Tell me Len, you mentioned you were Canadian army first. Let's go back just a bit and tell me about that. When did your service start in the Canadian army and what unit and where?

LG: I joined the service in Fort William, Ontario, Canada, in '41—May 21, '41—and I volunteered in Canada because that's the way you did. You were volunteers in Canada, but then if you didn't volunteer you would be taken in as a conscript but you didn't have to leave Canada, so they were considered zombies, we called them, and this was kind of a thing. I didn't really want to be a zombie so I thought I would volunteer, and I wasn't much for military or anything.

CR: How old were you?

LG: At that time in '41, I was 20 because my birthday's in July, so I joined—

CR: Just before.

LG: And the same when I came here in '42, I was 21 but almost 22 because I came here in July and my birthday is on the 25th of July.

CR: You had been pretty well indoctrinated then into the Canadian army and the ways it worked.

LG: I didn't like the Canadian Army. That's one reason why I joined this outfit. I wasn't much for military. It was a little hard for me to take certain type of orders like they were kind of strict on little things that I didn't think were very important.

CR: I am not going to ask you for examples of that. [laughs]

LG: No, no. [laughs] But I was really ready to get into something, and I wanted...Well, I guess this was the real outfit for me because I loved that outfit and I did right from the start.

CR: How did they recruit you for this?

LG: It wasn't well publicized or anything, but I got wind of it in Petawawa. I was taking my advanced training, and so I volunteered for it. Then I had many interrogations before...There were 5,000 Canadians that volunteered for this outfit. There was 800 of us taken.

CR: You knew right away you were a select group, didn't you?

LG: Well, I started thinking it must be all right, and the first thing they told me was that this was a one-way ticket. This outfit is a one-way ticket. Well, I figured there is no such thing as a one-way ticket. I know maybe it's going to be a tough outfit and all that, but—

CR: That's what they were telling you?

LG: They told us that. See, they didn't want you unless you were willing to win. See, they scared a lot of this 5,000 by saying this, by saying the one-way ticket. They didn't tell us what it was like that, but they said...but it got an idea...There was an idea in my mind that it was something to do with the Scandinavian countries, but it'd have to be Norway, I figured, because they asked me if I could understand Norwegian. Well I said, "No, but I can speak Icelandic."

CR: Oh, can you?

LG: I can, and I said, "That's the old Viking language so I can understand Norwegian probably because—"

CR: All right, how did you learn Icelandic?

LG: Well, I learned Icelandic from my great-grandmother who lived with us when I was, before I went to school, so when I went to school, I could speak Icelandic better than English. For if I really had to make an answer to a surprise question of any kind, I'd answer in Icelandic. In fact this one...To make sure that this is true, the very first day that I was in school...There was mostly Icelandic kids and they understood Icelandic, but we had an English teacher and I was very aggressive about learning. I was going to learn this all right away. I wanted to get this started and get it on, and I sat down in my desk and I didn't have any pencil. I knew who had taken it. It was the boy behind me. So I put up my hand and the teacher wanted to know what I wanted, so I said "[speaks in Icelandic]." Everybody laughed in their own seats. All the kids laughed.

CR: They understood you?

LG: They understood, but he didn't and his face got red and I didn't know what was going to happen to me. What it means was that the boy with the little nose took my pencil. [laughs] We got over that one, but anyway that how I was with Icelandic. Then when my great-grandmother died when I was about eight years old and then they didn't speak Icelandic in the home. Then we spoke English. Therefore, I practically lost it for a while, but then I had a great-uncle that came and stayed with us, and he spoke Icelandic and he interested me a lot and I picked up quite a...In fact, that's when I picked up my pronunciation of it. It is a little hard to pronounce Icelandic, and if you learn Icelandic without it, you lose its effectiveness. The words are rather hard to pronounce.

CR: I have never heard it before.

LG: Oh, yes.

CR: It sounds very nice. There's a rhythm to it.

LG: Just lately now, I have just a little joke about Icelandic and the neighbor lady. [laughs] Well, I bought three little lambs this spring just to have around being I'm retired, and the lamb, one of them got out, and he ran all over the country for the first day or so and we had quite a time chasing him. The neighbor lady, she is a tall, very agile lady, and she was chasing him with me. Boy, she helped me catch him, see. So a few days later, I was up close to their house, and we talked over the fence line. She said, "How is your lamb?"

"Oh," I said, "he's just fine." I said, "We're getting along just great now. He thinks I'm really it because I sort of pulled him home and he found out that I was kind of the boss. So I told her what I called him. I call him *Groot* (?). I said, "*Groot* means ram in Icelandic." So I call him *Groot*."

Then she laughed. She's Swedish decent, and she said, "You know, that's what my grandmother always called me was *Groot*. My name is Ruth." [laughs] She couldn't say Ruth. She calls her *Groot*.

CR: Did she know what it meant?

LG: I told her then what it meant.

CR: Well then you pretty well figured there was something going on in a Scandinavian [unintelligible].

LG: I thought so possibly because then I said that I could understand Norwegian, yes. I said, "I can speak Icelandic." This got them a little interested, but that wasn't the last interview I had. I had, I don't remember for sure whether I had three or if...I know I had at least two. I'm sure of that. This was a young American officer that was interviewing me, and he could see that I wanted to be in the outfit and that was one of the main things that they wanted to know. Then he also found out that I was married, and he said. "Now, what does your wife think of this?" Now, I'm thinking I got to answer these questions right for me to get in there because I was a private and it was a little harder to get in as a married private. They didn't want married men. So I said, "Well, my wife thinks it's the best thing that ever could happen," I said. This got me in, I think. I think that is how I got in really.

CR: I have to ask you, did she really?

LG: I think she did in a way because she wanted me to do what I wanted to do. We were childhood sweethearts.

CR: You were married young.

LG: Yes, yes, we were childhood sweethearts. My first daughter was born when I was here in Helena. She was born in Bellingham, Washington, but I was able to get a leave to go there because we were all taking leaves around Christmas time.

CR: Was your wife from Bellingham?

LG: She was from Saskatchewan, but she was an American. Her father moved to Saskatchewan, but he never homesteaded so he was always an American. So he moved back here in '42. Therefore my wife stayed in Blaine (?) and was an American, and therefore my young daughter stayed with her parents while I was away.

CR: When you were accepted, how long did it take for them to move you out and into Helena?

LG: Oh, it wasn't very long. I came from Petawawa to Ottawa, and I don't remember whether we stayed there a few days possibly. There was another interview in Ottawa, but I managed to get through that one all right but some of the guys didn't. One or two that I knew were taken out for whatever reason. It could have been from health wise or whatever. They wanted you to be healthy. That was a main issue. They liked the fact that I had been a logger in Ontario.

CR: That's interesting because I read that they liked loggers, they liked cowboys, they liked farmers—

LG: Outdoors.

CR: They liked the people who were outdoors because they could work independently.

LG: Right, and I think being that I had been a logger had helped me some.

CR: When you were accepted finally in Ottawa, I understand there was a train that kind of went this way and that way across Canada into the States.

LG: Well, the one we were on came right directly to Calgary, and we hooked onto another train in Calgary and we pulled that whole train in here. There was a bunch from Calgary, and this was a coincidence that I come from a very small town in Saskatchewan called Leslie. On the train from Calgary there was another Leslie boy on that train that I knew. Of course, we knew everybody knew one another. In fact, I had thrashed with him the year before, I guess it was. We thrashed together on a thrashing machine, and I had seen him again. He was on that Calgary train, and he got into the First Regiment as well as I did, but he was in Second Company, I was in the Fifth. We always used to...Well, at least I always used to check with Second Company to see if Fred was still going after we'd been through something, but Fred go it on Anzio. He got killed on Anzio.

CR: When you write your company regiment, is it the company first?

LG: Company first.

CR: That would Five-One?

LG: Yes.

CR: Okay, I couldn't understand that. Now, I've got that straight. So you lost your friend in Anzio, but let's come back to Helena. Now, you came into Helena...Helena was glad to see you I understand.

LG: Yeah, I think they were because the boys were making a little extra money and they spent it all here. They were a good bunch of guys in a lot of ways they were...they probably drank a little extra, but I think they were well-liked all around. We were young. The Helena people, of course, treated us so wonderfully that that helped, of course, for our boys to be a little nicer too, you see.

CR: I thought about that. I suppose that's true.

LG: They was always cars waiting to take you to town.

CR: Oh, really?

LG: Oh yes, and they'd invite you to their homes. I didn't get in on as much of that as others because I was married and actually I had my wife here for—

CR: Oh, did your wife come?

LG: As soon as after the baby was born and she was able to travel, she came to Helena. When she was here, we had the little daughter here and had her in a dresser drawer. That was her cradle.

CR: That is a wonderful story too. But, she was born in Washington?

LG: Yes, she was born in Washington.

CR: But she's truly a First Special Force baby.

LG: She is a First Special Force baby, yes.

CR: I wonder if she was the first one by any chance.

LG: I don't know if she was the first one, but I know that I won a prize with her picture in Virginia. They asked us to bring a picture of our babies, and I had one of her and it won first prize. She was in a little tub then having a bath. It was kind of a unique picture.

CR: Here you were in Helena, and the Americans joined up. Were they here, some of the American troops, before you came?

LG: There was just a very few. A very few. The majority of the Americans came after we did. The majority of them.

CR: And you came with your officers?

LG: Oh, we came with everybody, but we were all separate guys as far as I was concerned. There were some of them who came in here with kilts on and I ain't sure of how the...I don't think there was any unity here. They were all picked from different parts of different units, and I think if they were in an outfit that wore kilts they just happened to wear their kilts down here. We didn't get our uniform right away so we were lot of in different dress. We were dressed differently around town and all over the places.

CR: When you did get uniforms, there was some questions about that, weren't there, originally?

LG: I don't know just what the questions were, but there could have been.

CR: Well, mixing Canadian and American insignia, ranks—

LG: well they must have had some trouble with that, but they settled on wearing the American rank and the American uniform. There was one thing that they did that I thought was unique and served us well was that they picked some of the best commands out of the Canadian army and the best they figured out of the American army. So we had a different table of organization than any other outfit. We done the right and left wheel instead of right turn, so it made a nicer parade out of it. You didn't abruptly make a turn, you wheeled it around. Some of the others I've all probably forgotten now too.

CR: Tell me, did you march as Canadians with the swinging arms?

LG: Well, we did that a little more than the Canadians possibly because we marched with a faster cadence than the Canadians or anybody else. We marched at 160 cadence, and some of the Scottish units in Canada and England, they only marched 110 or something. The regular is 120, as far as I know. Now, I know we did 160, so that gave us a better chance to more swing, see, and it helped you to march faster because you were swinging yourself with your arms.

CR: Interesting watching them in the parade yesterday, the Special Forces troops from Canada and the United States. Is it funny that they really didn't accept North American, which is what you really were, and possibly these folks are people that thought that it might lead to a North American unit?

LG: Oh, I don't think so, but I think there's always been a little bit resentment about Canada not being in the United States, I think, because they could of just as well been in the United States as far as I'm concerned. They were just holding out. Of course, I'm not a historian, but it seems to me that's the only...Now, see we had a lot of chance for discussions when we got into the bunk house at night. We got the English and the Canadian and British and American war there, and when that didn't...When that died down a little, we'd bring up the Mason Dixon line, so we had quite a little thing going you know.

CR: Oh, I see when you were in the barracks at night. [laughs]

LG: Yeah, it was some good conversations I'll tell you.

CR: But did they stay conversations?

LG: Yes, they did because there was always the ones that I was with. In fact, I never seen a fight between the American and a Canadian, but they did happen in some of the other regiments as far as I know somewhat, but we didn't seem to have that problem.

CR: Was that a leadership reason? Did you hear from your officers that—

LG: Well, I don't think that mattered to us much.

CR: [unintelligible]

LG: No, I don't think so. I think it was because we liked one another.

CR: That is the best reason of all.

LG: Right because well—

CR: Did you have a lot in common because of the work that you had done?

LG: Very much. Oh, very much, and parts of the country we came from and we seemed to...There would be a Canadian and an American who would be chumming together. Most likely, it wouldn't be two Canadians together if there was two going to town. It would be an American and a Canadian, and there was more than one reason for that. One of them was that they got more money than we did, and also we got paid twice a month.

CR: Let's talk about that money situation just a minute. You kind of got snookered, didn't you?

LG: we got snookered, but we were used to that.

CR: [laughs] No, but that didn't work out quite as planned I understand.

LG: No, it didn't work out, and the reason as far as I have heard it is that the Canadians wouldn't allow it. The Canadian government wouldn't allow it even if the...Actually as far as I know, the American offered to pay [unintelligible], but in order to make...to get over that hurdle, but it seemed like they eased us into this without any pain and it worked out pretty good.

CR: It is really remarkable when you think about it that they could get all of the logistic things and the money things and all of this working out.

LG: Right, without problems. There should have been a little trouble, but it didn't work out to be one. The reason I understand the Canadians would...The Canadian government wouldn't allow us to have as much money as the Americans was then we have been getting more money than the Canadian Air Force, and that was not allowed because they were the top outfit in Canada.

CR: I see. Well, they did make quite a reputation.

LG: Yes, they did.

CR: You can't deny it.

LG: Well, actually in the case of this type, money shouldn't have been the big issue anyway. It was nice to have a little extra money all right but—

CR: You were very much an experimental force though.

LG: Oh, we were that, but we of course...But we liked...I guess that was why we wanted to get into something like this was that we would rather didn't like too much dictatorship amongst us. They seemed to just...They didn't express as much tough...I don't know how to word it, but for instance, they didn't care if you insulted an officer. That wasn't important, so then the officers were more amongst us and they mingled with us. They were friends with the officers, but the thing is that we done what we were supposed to not because we were told to but because we wanted to. We wanted to have this outfit a good one then you'd have to do the right things to do that. But you were expected...When you were really expected to do something it was done. That's the way I felt about it, and we could go to town and we could always get back in.

One time some of the boys got caught. In fact, I was talking to [unintelligible Marshall yesterday that was here at the very beginning. He was a young officer at that time. I told him about when Colonel Akehurst [John F. R. "Jack" Akehurst], he brought us—the whole second battalion—out and give us a lecture about some of the boys getting caught coming in the gate. He didn't think that was a very, not very good outfit that couldn't get around that guard house. The place isn't fenced.

CR: Right, they were going to send you some other tricky places if you couldn't get around that one. Not so good.

LG: [laughs] So everybody thought a lot of Akehurst right there and then. He was well respected all the way through.

CR: Did he stay with you?

LG: He is here today.

CR: Is he really?

LG: Yeah, he is 78 years old. I just seen him. He is in a wheelchair from arthritis.

CR: A young man pushing him?

LG: Yeah, that's his son or grandson.

CR: Grandson. [unintelligible]

LG: Grandson probably.

CR: I saw him go by, and I didn't know whether to approach him or not.

LG: An impressive looking man though, Jack Akehurst. He was a good man too. He was just the right man for that outfit, for this outfit.

CR: Was he a Canadian or an American?

LG: He was a Canadian.

CR: When things started like jump training, I understand that was a pretty sketchy affair as far as time was concerned.

LG: It was about eight days. We had a mock-up airplane out of wood that we'd get into it and stand at the door and jump, and it was—I forget how many feet—but it was enough to make

you know you jumped out of something. You learned how to land stuff like that. Of course, none of us had ever been in an airplane to speak of. I'd never been up in an airplane, and my first jump I was...We were lined up towards the airplanes, and there was 18 men went into an airplane. I happened to be the last of the 18 into the one I went in to so that made me the first man out of the airplane. I'd never seen a man go out of an airplane before.

CR: You're telling me that you jumped out of the first airplane you were ever in?

LG: Right.

CR: And you had never...You weren't really sure this thing was going to work or—

LG: Oh, of course, I wasn't sure, but I knew that others had done it and made out. [laughs]

CR: How did you feel?

LG: I was never very brave about being up on top of anything. Whether it was a house. In fact, I was thinking if my dad was here he'd think that I'm a pretty brave boy now because I was never much for going up on top of a house or anything. But it's so different. It's nothing like being up at heights. You don't have a feeling of height. You just have a fear of the unknown that's all. So then I was the first one out of the airplane. I didn't see any problems behind me in that airplane load because we flew the field three times—six men on a stick—and they'd fly around again. Well, I must have had an excessive amount of mechanical oscillation when I jumped. When the silk opened up, it threw me real jack knife, they call it. It broke or cracked two ribs, and I was in a little bit of pain but I didn't want to wait to make my second jump. I wanted to do it right away the next day, so I didn't say anything about it, and I went up and jumped the second day and that time I was in the last stick—

CR: Can we wait just a minute while I flip this tape because I don't want to miss—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

CR: Okay. Were you on the second—

LG: The second time I jumped I was in the last stick of the jump, see, and so there was two that went out ahead of me. Well, no, there was two in front of me that didn't want to go, and they were hanging on the seat, see. Well, that delayed things and scared me a little more, but I made up my mind that I was going to jump out of that airplane. I went past them, hook up, check equipment, stand at the door, and jumped. After I went through all that and I jumped out, and then you count to ten and it's to be done fairly slow to ten. Well, no silk, so I thought, well, I must have counted too fast. I'll count again. So I counted again and no silk, but I'm thinking about the emergency chute by this time. I had my hand on the emergency chute and then I'm thinking I don't want to pull that emergency chute because if they both open you come down faster. It spreads out the silk like umbrellas. So I waited a little longer. I thought, well, I'll wait a little bit longer before I pull that emergency. All of the sudden it opened up so I didn't have to pull the emergency. Then as soon as I got down I went to the hospital because I was in a little bit of pain. I'll never forget that doctor. I heard him saying to the nurse, "These guys in that outfit, they're are not scared of anything," he said because he found that I had two cracked ribs, see. What he didn't know was that because I was little bit of coward is why I wanted to go the second day because I didn't want that long wait. That might be two weeks or so before I—

CR: Yeah, yeah, thinking about it.

LG: I didn't want to think about that.

CR: Tell me what happened to the fellas that didn't get off their seats.

LG: They just were disqualified, and they were just sent away to another outfit somewhere because they didn't have to jump until after you qualified. They have to qualify you. Oh, there was many differences, different things about jumping. I knew...there was this one that...I seen one guy jump out of that airplane instead of walking. Standing at the door and he was supposed to swing one leg out and just drop down sideways, but I seen him just sit right down and his tailbone must have hit that door hard because I just seen him do it.

CR: I understand you put quite a few fellows in the hospitals with these things.

LG: I think it was 17 percent with broken legs right here. We jumped in a high altitude here, it was a high altitude for jumping with those type of chutes and the ground was rough and that's mainly it. I know another reason that they broke legs here is that they didn't know how to jump [unintelligible] yet. They taught us to jump with our feet straight down from the hip, and then they learned they should land with both feet together because they you have a better chance of hitting two feet on the ground at one time instead of one.

CR: Keep your knees a little bit loose?

LG: Oh, that was definitely to get into the roll, you see. The looseness of your knees, but the landing with two feet together they found out was a safer way to hit the ground because you'd have two feet together—

CR: To bear the weight?

LG: Right.

CR: Wow! Seventeen percent. What happened? Were they allowed to re-cycle?

LG: They never were allowed to jump in our outfit again, but a lot of them if they were Americans, they could have been sent to the service company. We had about 600 of them.

CR: Were they just American or were they Canadian [unintelligible].

LG: They were all Americans.

CR: the service companies were all American?

LG: It was all American in the service company, and they did all the work that we were glad not to have to do.

CR: I see. I did talk to two gentlemen today both of whom had strong Southern accents, and I thought how unusual, and I mentioned the fact that they didn't sound like Westerners and what units were they in. They were both ordinance people.

LG: yes, this could well be. Although we did have a lot of Texans, and we had—

CR: Texans are Westerners.

LG: Well I guess so, but hey have a Southern...I know they don't talk quite the same as Georgia, but I'll tell you they are hard to tell apart at first when you first come in. Georgia was the hardest for me.

CR: Yes, to understand the Georgians.

LG: Yes, there was a lieutenant, his name was Smith, and we'd call him Smitty. He was not in our company but he often gave us lectures, and I couldn't understand one word he said and then I would fall asleep every time he got up. Although he spoke fast, it put me to sleep, and that would rile him and he'd want me to tell him what he'd said, and I could never tell him. We always clashed about that.

CR: All of this group that came together, finally you got uniforms, finally you began to get your training—the jump training—and what other special kind of training did you get for this particular unit that you wouldn't have gotten in another unit in Canada or the U.S.?

LG: Well, one of the first things we learned was...Well, I guess we were in a crash program so it all kind of came on us really quickly, but demolition was one. We were supposed to be demolition experts.

CR: All of you?

LG: Yeah, everybody. Everybody. We all played with dynamite around here, and of course, the close arm combat [close combat] was another requisite.

CR: Somebody named, was it, Riley (?)—

LG: O'Neill (?). O'Neill came in but he didn't come right away, but he was here pretty early and he was a fantastic man for close arm combat. Then we also had some Canadians who had a lot of training before. For instance I was...My platoon sergeant was [unintelligible], and he was probably as well-known as anybody in the outfit. He had been in Dunkirk, and he was a professional soldier although he was a young man. He was probably a little older than I was, but he was a fantastic man in close arm combat. For instance, he used to stand out against anybody without...Just himself, but you had a bayonet on your rifle and he'd take it off you. Of course, I guess...I know I wouldn't have wanted to stick him with it, but I don't think I could have because he'd take it off of me anyway.

CR: He'd been through Dunkirk?

LG: He'd just come back from Dunkirk, yes.

CR: Did he volunteer for this outfit?

LG: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He volunteered. All of us Canadians volunteered, and he was sent back to Canada to train Canadians. Well, he didn't want to train Canadians. He wanted action.

CR: Thought he would find it with the Force?

LG: Right. He probably knew more about what was happening than I did, although I don't think they were letting it out. It was a secretive outfit. For one thing, we weren't allowed to have cameras when we went overseas. So there was very few pictures taken. And we never had a group picture taken, see. Never was a group picture taken of our outfit.

CR: I haven't seen any. The only one I have seen is when...in 1944, it would be in December, the last parade.

LG: That could be. Something like that—

CR: Were you there then?

LG: Oh, yes, yes.

CR: That must have been a very moving moment because I understand the Canadians came out of ranks and formed their own battalions and marched past, and their places were then blank in the American formation.

LG: Well, I was in the Canadian bunch so of course I became into the Canadian ranks and I don't remember what happened to the others. We formed up there, and it was very impressive. Yes, it was, and then of course, we went back to Italy. We all went back to Italy.

CR: As a unit?

LG: All of us Canadians. All the Canadians. Not as a unit. Just as—

CR: [unintelligible]

LG: Then when we got Italy all the old members that were here from Helena, they were sent to England, but the Canadians that had been taken in as replacements were put out into units in Italy.

CR: Oh, that's interesting that you had Canadian replacements as well as Americans.

LG: Oh yes, we had a lot of Canadian replacements. Yes, oh yes. In fact, at one time it seems like...it's hard to believe that it's not that long ago, but there was two Canadian Negroes brought into Anzio as replacements for our outfit. They never put them in the outfit. They shipped them right out because they didn't dare put them in our outfit. We had a lot of Southerners that just...they didn't think they'd live through the day or the night. This is how tough it was. Like I had a Louisiana friend that they'd never think about [unintelligible] Negro outfits. That's all there was to it. [unintelligible] Negro outfit.

CR: Well the army, I guess the American army expected a lot of problems with that when they decided to integrate...when was it? In 1947?

LG: It was somewhere in there possibly.

CR: Somehow or other it has worked.

LG: I think it has worked wonderfully, and it's great that we are starting to civilize ourselves a little.

CR: You said we. Are you Canadian, or are you American?

LG: We!

CR: What do you feel—

LG: We the people.

CR: We the people, okay.

LG: We the people.

CR: Have you become a citizen?

LG: Oh, yes.

CR: You did?

LG: Yes, I became a citizen in 1949. I only had to be in the States three years to become a citizen. Two years to become a citizen because my wife was an American. Otherwise, I would have had to wait five years.

CR: Even with your service?

LG: It didn't seem to make any difference about my service at all, and I wonder about it sometimes but I just have one citizenship, American. I know so many people have dual citizenship, and I can't understand what it's all about.

CR: When the Force left Helena, that must have been a rather dramatic affair when Helena finally had to bid you goodbye, and it must have...Didn't it empty Fort Harrison? What was left there?

LG: I don't think there could have been anything left there.

CR: No, I didn't think so. So you went then, and I guess the next most exciting [unintelligible] part of your training would be with the boats.

LG: Oh, we didn't go there right away. We went to Burlington, Vermont, first, and then we picked up a few more replacements there. I don't remember how long we stayed there, but then we went to Norfolk, Virginia, to do the rubber boat thing.

CR: The rubber boat thing. That just reads as though that was quite a show that you people put on there.

LG: Well, we enjoyed the training all right. It was fun. It was all fun.

CR: I understand that you managed to load yourself with bigger packs faster than any other unit ever had.

LG: I think they did that all right without a doubt.

CR: Did that surprise you?

LG: Yes, it was a lot of...We carried a lot of stuff. A lot of stuff.

CR: Was there something competitive about the kind of physical condition you were in, the amount you could carry, the distance you could go?

LG: Well, I think that we had a lot of *esprit de corps* for sure, and then of course, they did blow us up a little and that helps to make you think you are a little better than anybody else. I think this was why we got to thinking we were better.

CR: Then you proved it.

LG: We tried to prove it at least, and I think we did prove it in a lot of ways being that there was very few prisoners that were taken in our outfit. There was very few ever taken. They were definitely trapped whenever they were taken. There were just very few taken, and there's...I don't know whether I should go into this little story or not, but it's about how our boys hated to be taken prisoner.

I had this very close friend from Louisiana, George Robert (?)—we called him Rebel. Rebel is feeling a little [unintelligible], but he was on the very right-hand position of Anzio and there was three of them in this machine gun nest that was with a road in between that position and the next position and then there was the ocean. The boys had dug a tunnel between the two positions underneath the road. It was kind of a crossroad except that it didn't...the water stopped it from carrying on. They had a telephone in between the two positions and to the company headquarters. This night things had been slack in that corner, and Rebel told me this himself. Burkholder (?) was with him and he told it to me, and Burkholder was another very close friend of mine. The back door of their little dugout opened up, and this great big German came in there and took Rebel right off the machine gun. Rebel being that it was in slack, he

wasn't looking towards the back, he was looking towards the front. He took him out, laid him on the ground face down, and when he commanded as he opened the door, "[speaks in German]." Then he went back in after Burkholder, and Burkholder was still in his sleeping bag fast asleep. They were taking turns on the machine gun at night, so he took him out and laid him on the road and he went back in after Rice. That was the third guy. Well, Rice had woken up by this time, and he ran through the tunnel and he wasn't all the way to the other end when this German started firing down through the tunnel, but he didn't hit him because the tunnel was made crooked for that reason. He shot the telephone line out, and he took Rebel and Burkholder then. Two Germans took them towards Germany like and going through the front of our lines was barbed wire so between them all they decided that Burkholder knew how to go through the barb wire best and he knew more about the mine field, so he was in the lead. Then there was a German, and there was Rebel, and then there was a German. They're out in front.

By this time, the other position knows what's happening because Rice got through. So they're deciding, what are we going to do about this, and Dave Potts (?) gave the order to cook—to fire—onto them. At the same time Rebel's thinking, I don't want to be a prisoner and I'm not going to Germany—he says to himself. All of the sudden he decided he would reach back and take the gun off this German. He got the gun off the German, and the German let him have the gun [unintelligible] because the German grabbed the magazine off the gun. When Rebel pulled the trigger on the German, there was no bullet in there, and the German hit him over the head with a magazine. They fired and hit Rebel in the stomach at the same time, but that chased the Germans off. Rebel and Burkholder got back to our lines, but Rebel was sent home and never seen anymore action. He has not been well all his life, I guess.

CR: But you've kept in touch?

LG: I have kept somewhat in touch with him. It is awful hard to keep in touch with our boys it seems, but the last letter I got from him, I had tried to get a hold of him by telephone and all kinds of ways, and I had written him and stuff before. This time I wanted an answer from him. So he wrote me back, and he seemed rather sour about things. Possibly from this...from not feeling all that well, being his stomach may not be quite right. I ain't sure just how badly he was wounded.

CR: Before we close this session, and I'm in no hurry to do that, you understand, but we have got to have the cow into the—

LG: Cow! Okay well, then I can carry on right from where I am because this very position that they were taken prisoner out of...I should just...Well, I can stop that part right there and then go on to say that I became the section leader of this position right after that. Therefore then I had a whole section of men there and had that whole corner.

CR: You were right on the—

LG: Right on the very right-hand corner of Anzio.

CR: That was quite a responsibility.

LG: It was a unique position. There wasn't another one. We tried to do all our work at night. Go out and keep the Germans away from us. We didn't let them get too close to us by doing that, so then therefore we had all day to sleep or whatever we wanted to do. Well this one morning I says to Prussia (?)—he was a tall good looking young fellow from Pennsylvania and he was always willing to do everything, anything I tell him—I says, "Let's go and get a cow." He didn't know anything about cows, but he was willing to go anyway, so we headed out and went where I found...that I'd heard about this herd of cows, where it was, and it was right close to Force headquarters. I walked into this bunch of cows—Prussia and I. I have this rope with me and I looked them cows over a little because I had lots of time—beautiful morning, I remember that—and I thought it was a nice herd of cow. This Italian looking after them, he just sort of walked away, and I picked out the cow that I wanted. Put a rope on her, no problem. Just walked her right past Force headquarters, which was, I think it was a few miles at least—three or five something in that order. We just walked her slowly back to the lines. Things were quiet in the day time. We done everything at night. I milked that cow twice a day for at least a month.

CR: You were all there at Anzio quite a while. Was there more farming that went on there besides—

LG: We were there for 101 days. It was all farming. It was all flat land, and it was all land that had been diked out. Mussolini made the Mussolini canal, and they built houses for them. Real nice houses, and it was all farming land. Of course, when we come in, they evacuated the Italians expect for a few that they left behind, like looking after that cow herd. But the other cow herd—cattle—they just became a herd of cattle from being shot at and chased around and they were out in no man's land. That was on the front of our line. Well, there was another thing that we did when we needed a little beef. We'd just drive that herd back towards the minefield, and say that they got into a mine and we'd shoot one and take it for beef. Well, we had shoot it if it got in the mine field. You weren't allowed to shoot these things unless you had a reason. We always had fresh meat and milk.

CR: Maybe in a way that was one of the better spots you were in.

LG: It was the best fighting place I ever was.

CR: Because some places you were pretty cold, pretty miserable.

LG: Oh, that was the first part. Oh, the first part that was another war all together for us. That's where we lost our men was before Anzio. We lost some men on Anzio, but nothing like that first, that La Difensa deal [Battle for Monte la Difensa]. Hell, 720. I am talking for First Regiment, they seemed to get that first run of it there. We were in reserve for Second Company, for the

Second Regiment, and we got stuck in a place where the Germans were able to shoot right at us. Practically lost...Well I have read, heard that it was...that the regiment was 40 percent...They had 40 percent problem.

CR: Your casualties were that high?

LG: Yes, our casualties were that high when we were in reserve—

CR: That's killed and wounded?

LG: Killed and wounded, yes.

CR: As reserves?

LG: Yeah, we were in reserve, you see, but we got trapped and I could...Like the platoon that I was with, Second Platoon of Fifth Company First Regiment, I lost the platoon officer and both section leaders were killed in one shot. Of course, being that there's only 26 men in a whole platoon, we were all pretty close together.

CR: Was that the first time really there was a heavy bloodying of you—

LG: That was the only. That was the very first. We had never seen anybody killed to speak of.

CR: That must have been a real trauma for everybody.

LG: Oh, it was a tremendous thing because it was raining and it was cold and they were hollering medic. We were trying to tighten and loosen the tourniquet on my section leader, Wilfred Knight (?). There was two of us doing this and we'd have to jump into our foxhole after we tightened up his tourniquet, and then we'd have to in and loosen it and then tighten it again. We were trying to save his life, and then we couldn't do much about it. All the litters were full. We had to put him on a litter bearer, on a stretcher type of thing, so Rebel and I—that was the guy I just told you about—we grabbed a hold of a litter that had a man on it and we run it down the mountain. We was going to come back for Wilf, but when got down the mountain, there was officer standing there and he wouldn't let anybody go back up. He wanted to reorganize, and they wouldn't let us go back for him. Now, I wish I had gone back against his orders because we could have saved Wilfred. We could have if we'd have got him down to the hospital because he lived for several days, but they never could get him off the mountain. He just died from overexposure mostly.

CR: But you were just in a situation that nobody could help you.

LG: Nobody could help us, no. There was no way to help us. We had a Captain [unintelligible]. He was in the Second Battalion with Akehurst, and he went out after this sniper that was

bothering us and he never came back. There was others with him. It was a serious, bad serious problem.

CR: A bad start.

LG: Yeah. So then they took us up on top of the mountain, and these boys from Second Regiment had been shot up there. That was my first job was helping to dig these bodies into the ground and...Well, they were trying to keep the Canadians and Americans apart because we had taken down...it would be a little easier for them. We thought it was 90. I read 75 later some time, but we thought that we'd helped to dig in 90 bodies. Right up on top of that mountain, La Difensa. That was one of the great—

CR: You stayed with unit until the end.

LG: I was in it from the first and the very last. That is to say until we were disbanded.

CR: How many of you do you suppose made it all the way through?

LG: All the way through, well—

CR: To '44, December.

LG: I am not sure how many made it all the way through, but I'm certain we had 33 men killed in my company. In my company. When I came back, there was only five of us. There as only five from the Fifth Company that came back at the same time as I did that had not been sent home or killed. Out of 90.

CR: You mentioned earlier that none of the Force men ever wanted to be a prisoner, and that they quite a record of very few taken prisoner. Did you feel that since you were the outfit that you were and as I understand the Germans called you the Black Devils, that they perhaps would treated you worse than any others?

LG: I think we had that in mind. Yeah, I'm sure that we had that in mind, yeah. I guess the ones that were taken weren't treated any different as far as I know, but I talked to some last night.

CR: Oh, did you?

LG: Yes. I talked to some of the boys who were taken prisoner at the very place that I took patrol out that [unintelligible] I know it. The last patrol ever taken out of that company, out of that outfit. In that little...On the Italian-Franco border. When I took the patrol out, things were quite different than they were when these boys were taken prisoner. The war was about over for them Germans in that area. The Germans hadn't been supplying them properly, and they were ready to give up and they—

CR: Was it easier then? Was it easier to take prisoners then?

LG: Oh, it was no problem to take prisoners at that time. No. They were ready to give up because that's the way the Germans operated. They didn't let them boys that were holding the front line know that they were pulling out. Our American army would never do that to a soldier I'm sure. They left them there, and they took all the backup out. See, they didn't feed them.

CR: When you came home...That was in...Did you come home in '44 or—

LG: '45.

CR: You came home in '45. Then you had some service with other units.

LG: I was in England. [unintelligible] in England. I got [unintelligible] in England. [laughs] As far as I'm concerned the war wasn't over for me then. I went to England. Being that I was married and I had enough of it all anyway, I didn't volunteer for the First Canadian Paratroop Battalion like some of them did. But we didn't all of us. There was quite of few that stayed right—

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

[Audio changes in speed and tone]

CR: This is Claire Rhein still. Talking about our experience in England when the Force was disbanded.

LG: Most of us had a rank. In fact, all of us had a rank.

CR: By that time?

LG: Sergeant, Sergeant Major.

CR: What were you then?

LG: I was a staff sergeant when I came to England.

CR: Is that the American rank or the—

LG: That was the American rank, but it was also a Canadian rank.

CR: Oh, is it?

LG: Yes. It was a Canadian rank. Yeah. But they didn't know what to do with us because of the rank for one thing. So sometimes they would give us a lecture on warfare and things like that, and some of our guys in [unintelligible] they would make that poor instructor almost cry. It was terrible, that part of it. So that didn't work very long so they had to do something with us. They put a lot of us into the MPs looking after Canadian prisoners that were in jail for different things. Two year—

CR: Oh, I see. Disciplinary.

LG: Disciplinary. Mostly two years. They got two years for most everything they did. They got put in there for AWOL or stealing or shooting themselves in the foot or whatever it was. So they had them in the different detention camps. The first one I went to was a camp that had barbed wire around it and just regular barracks type inside the barbed wire, so we would have to stay in, do our shift job on these huts and things like that and we lived outside the wire. I just hated the job because these prisoners were just about...They were guys like myself. We'd all done some of that stuff ourself. All except shooting in the foot.

Anyway, one morning I'm just coming off shift. I just got off shift, and I'm shaving. I hear, "They're breaking out," and I looked through the window and sure enough they broke right through that gate and they were all running all over the place. They commandeered a truck and

took off. Of course, they picked them all up in a few days. One guy got as far as Scotland though before they got him. So they had to put these prisoners somewhere else. They were considered a little too tough for that wire, so they put them into this jail in Reading, England. They call it the Reading Gaol. That is the jail that Oscar Wilde was in, and I was in that too because they sent me down in there to look after them. They had a lot of us down there looking after them in that particular jail. That was a terrible jail.

CR: Oh terrible! [unintelligible]

LG: Oh, and we had to live right in the jail.

CR: Oh, you did have to?

LG: We slept in the quarters that they used to have the debtors, and that one time they used to chain them. Chain them [unintelligible] to this post. This post was still there. That's where we slept. We ate our meals, what they called...It was the place where they used to give them the last meal, and the scaffold was standing right outside.

CR: Oh you...don't believe it.

LG: Yes, this was where they used to give them the last meal.

CR: Good heavens!

LG: I stayed there, but I was always doing something against the rules sort of because I didn't like my job and I didn't get caught...Not enough where they could do me a big problem or anything, but they didn't...They wanted to ship me to another one, see. Get rid of me. They didn't like my ways there because I was liable to give them smoke or something. So they sent me to another one, and that was a real fancy place, far as our living quarters was in a mansion right outside the gate. But the fence, it was a fenced affair with buildings inside of it—a compound sort of things. We done an eight-hour shift in those places.

Just to go back a little bit, when I told them I didn't want to go into this outfit—into this MP business—they said “Well, you'll either come here as a sergeant or maybe you will lose your rank or you could be here as an SOS”—a soldier under suspect. That's what they called the prisoners. So we were forced into it, but in this place, well, I always dragged quite a bit. I'd go on a little spree, and this guy, why, he ran a canteen—a Canadian canteen—not too from this camp. Anyway, he stopped one day at the mansion where I was billeted and said, “Would you like to come up to the pub?”

I said...I didn't know him even. I says, “Well, I don't know. I haven't got a lot of money to spend on that.”

“Oh, I got lots of money.” He’d been stealing off the canteen.

CR: A Canadian?

LG: A Canadian sergeant. From another—

CR: We’re talking like a PX canteen.

LG: Yeah, same thing. So he had enough money, and he said, “There’s a new fresh [unintelligible] of scotch whisky coming in.” So we went and had a bunch of that stuff and had a bottle on our way home. I had it in my...I wasn’t even wearing the right uniform. I was wearing the American jump jacket. I was defying them, see, all that I could because I didn’t like this at all. I either wanted to go home, or...mostly that. So I’m wearing jump boots and the whole bit. I got this bottle of whisky and I’m coming home, and as we go past the gate, the colonel of the camp who was an ex-mounted policeman—he was a colonel at this time in MPs—

CR: Are you talking RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]?

LG: He had been an RCMP. Yes, but he was now a colonel with the MPs and he’s got a work party out between the gate and the office in front of the gate. So these work party of prisoners was working right there, and he’s out there and I happen to walk right past him. So here I got this bottle of whiskey in my tunic and I can’t salute him without losing my whiskey. I thought, well, I’m cornered. I’m out of uniform anyway, and I’ve got to salute him so I just took the bottle out and I held it at half-mast as I walked past. [laughs]

CR: Was he impressed?

LG: I don’t know. You know, I never heard. I didn’t. He’d seen it all, and I went right through and went into the mansion and I went to bed. I’d plenty to drink. It was getting dusk. It was right about dusk. The next morning I go out on parade at eight o’clock in the morning, and I’m in formation in my right spot and everything, ready to take over my position, and a runner comes up. He says, “Your name is on orders.” He just come right over to me and told me my name was on orders. So I got to go back to the building and look at the orders. I thought, well, they’ve got me now. I’ve done a little too much this time. I look at the orders, and it says for repatriation to Canada. I don’t think...This couldn’t possibly have happened that fast. It just was going to be that I was going to be repatriated at that time. They couldn’t have made those orders that quickly.

CR: No, no, I don’t think so. I don’t think so. Tell me, did you see the movie *The Devils Brigade*?

LG: I seen it when it premiered in Calgary. I happened to be in Alberta at that time.

CR: Oh, you were. What did you think of that?

LG: I liked it fine. That was a good movie. I don't think they could have made it any better than they did. It's not very easy to put a lot of stuff into a three-hour show. I have seen it many times, and every time I see it I like it better.

CR: Oh, really?

LG: Yes.

CR: Where do you see it? I've never heard of it.

LG: Well I have seen it on TV many times. Yes, many times on TV.

CR: I guess I have to watch.

LG: It was on the satellite from Chicago last spring, it was supposed to be. It was on that list there, but they didn't put it on. I watched for it because I have a satellite dish, but it never come on. Never been on. It was supposed to on from Chicago, but I've seen it on movies many times.

CR: I've been told since I haven't seen it that one of the things that upset some Americans apparently was the fact that they were portrayed as being pretty sloppy and pretty careless and pretty badly disciplined compared to the Canadian troops who were very spit and polish.

LG: Well, I'll tell you I think this is very true. I think the thing is true. But what I think is that they should be proud of the way that they came to be every bit as good as the spit and polish bunch that did come from Canada. I couldn't see any difference in them. They were just every bit as good of men as the Canadians, and they loved the outfit just as much as we did. But I think...and I know they did because I know some of the boys told me so and then I read about it that they did pick them out of some of the stockades even.

CR: Are they troublemakers?

LG: They were troublemakers. I think they were nonconformists, see, and I was one myself. But we loved to...We didn't mind the little discipline when it was done at the right time. I was always proud of the Americans. Another thing, I liked the way the Americans treated us. I think the Americans treated us better than they did their own, anyway, right here in Helena. You know we had good cooking. We had good food here. We threw more stuff in the garbage bin than I was used to getting over in Petawawa, Canada.

CR: You think that was special treatment that you were getting?

LG: I think we were getting special treatment, yeah. A little better food for one thing.

CR: Well, you were putting out great quantities of effort.

LG: Well, that's another thing. That's right.

CR: I understand that in the submarine service they always feed very carefully too, and it helps to make up for some of the other not so pleasant things perhaps.

LG: I don't think we hated our cooks like they did in some of the different other outfits. They were good cooks.

CR: Who did you cooking? Were those Americans?

LG: It was service company. All Americans.

CR: Yeah, and of course locally you had plenty of beef and you had—

LG: Oh yes, we had milk and—

CR: Yes, and this area had not been in a war really yet.

LG: No, they hadn't. No. There was another thing about the milk. We had them in little bottles, and they told us the first time we jumped, they said to us, "Don't drink too much liquids before we jump because your stomach might not be all that happy with it." Well, I thought...and I was always a big eater so a lot of the boys left their milk. Well, I guess I must have drank five of them that morning. I remembered what my dad had told me. He said, "I can take anything on a full stomach." I was nervous about going, but it didn't bother my stomach.

CR: Oh, really? Not even all that milk at all or nothing?

LG: No, no.

CR: Oh, your father must have had something there.

LG: He said, "I can take anything on a full stomach," he said.

CR: [laughs] Where was your father from?

LG: He was from Iceland—[unintelligible]. I just lost him last November. Ninety-two years old. He was a very smart and sharp person. Healthy and well physiqued. He wasn't a big a man. He was just a man that looked after himself. Worked very hard, but he lived to be 92. He danced at his 90th. We had a big birthday party for him, and he danced one polka after the other.

CR: That's marvelous. That's marvelous. Tell me is your wife still with you?

LG: Yes, I'm married for the second time, and she is with me. She is a very fine lady here. She went to the luncheon, and I couldn't get a hold of her so they met and went uptown or something.

CR: Is it a second marriage for her? She's not one of those ladies who was married to two Force members?

LG: No, no.

CR: I have the names of—

LG: I know there's some probably.

CR: Yeah, there are two ladies here, one of whom has married...lost her husband in one of the early actions, and then married another fellow from the Force. Now, she's widowed again, but I understand the Force is absorbing the cost of membership for these widows and [unintelligible]. It's a very gentlemanly and decent thing to do.

LG: Oh, yeah.

No, I married a lady that's 15 years younger than myself now, and we get along really well. We like dance, and that's where I met her at a dance. We play bridge, and we get along. We have a lot of the same likes.

CR: That will make it. That'll make it. And your little First Special Force daughter?

LG: Oh, my daughter Lynn (?). Her name was Lynn, and she is a wonderful lady. I have two daughters, but this one especially is the oldest one. She had a 22 year old daughter that just got married last March, and she has a boy that is 16 and another boy that is eight.

CR: Well you have some—

LG: And I live half way between both of these daughters of mine.

CR: Oh, do you?

LG: Yes, they're not too far apart. About ten miles each way.

CR: So you get to enjoy your grandchildren.

LG: Oh, yeah. I get to enough you know.

CR: And you are retired now.

LG: Yes, I'm kind of retired. I just play around with a few head of cattle and a few sheep. Oh, I keep busy doing that. I could do a little work once in a while. I'm brick layer, so I can do other work whenever I get an urge for it.

CR: You never went back into the forestry thing or the logging thing?

LG: No. I went into farming.

CR: That is a young man's job.

LG: I farmed and fished and did construction up until now. Yeah, I mostly followed construction all the time, but I did that when one time I had an 80-acre farm along with it when I was younger. [unintelligible] have milk cows.

CR: How did you manage during the formation yesterday? I understand that was very difficult for a lot of men.

LG: No, I enjoyed it real well. I was right out in the front there with...There was the marker. Feathers (?) was on the marker. He's a pretty sharp looking soldier, and then there was McFadden is a Second Battalion commander and then there was Peters. He's a real sharp cookie, and then there was myself. I don't know the other two who was in the very front of the whole thing. So I did real fine. That's the best place to be. In the front. Yes.

CR: You get the breeze and all of that.

LG: And you didn't have to follow the slack from behind.

CR: It was a beautiful service.

LG: Oh, it was. Yes, I enjoyed that. I enjoyed it. This was the main reason why we come to this.

CR: Actually, you were a pretty sharp looking group.

LG: Well, I wouldn't doubt it for a 65...60s, 70s, you know.

CR: It started earlier than we expected. I planned to be here, and lo and behold, it was already going on when I got here so I was a little cut short on the pictures.

LG: I think they would have missed me if I hadn't gone a little early.

CR: Yes, but it was very impressive and looking along the ranks I knew that you fellows all had to be in your 60s or early 70s.

LG: Got to be in the 60s at least. See, I was 20...almost 22 and I am 66, see. Then there was a few older than me but not many. Mostly, they're a little bit younger than me.

CR: Well, you're looking pretty good.

LG: Oh, yes. There's one guy I talked to this morning, he's 76 years old and he was ten years older than me and he had a little trouble getting into his outfit, but he looks almost as good now as he ever did. He's a man that loves to dance, and that's why I always know him because I love to dance and I used to dance here a lot and he was always at the dances. He was a very good dancer.

CR: Where did you go in Helena?

LG: Well, I love to drink so I'd go and have a few highballs and all that stuff, but that wasn't...When I liked to go to a dance, there was a dance hall out here. That building's almost falling down now. It says "Bingo" on it.

CR: What was it called then? Do you remember?

LG: I can't remember what they called it. Well, there's a little story about that one, about that dance all. Three of us went—Dave Potts (?), Tommy Cole (?). Tommy is from Calgary. Dave was from Connecticut, and I was from Saskatchewan. The three of us went to this dance together, and they had a deputy sheriff there and he had a billy club. Well, he evidently didn't like the way I was behaving myself down there because he was going to hit me with his billy club. I didn't know that. I'd had a little to drink. When he lifted up that billy club, Tommy Cole grabbed the billy club and Dave hit him. All at the same time. [laughs] Well, next week I'm back at the dance hall Saturday night, and he came up to me and he was awfully nice to me. He said "You know," he said, "I'd like to get that billy club back"

"Well," I says, "I don't think I can do that because I think they sent that to Calgary." I said "Tommy sent that to his dad in Calgary for a souvenir"

"Oh," he says, "I was about to pay five dollars for it," he said.

CR: [laughs] Oh, that's wonderful. Well, Leonard I've taken up a lot of your time. Maybe that's a good...maybe that's a good one to quit on. That started in Helena, and it brought you back to Helena.

LG: Brought me right back to the dance hall.

CR: Do you know what they plan for the next reunion?

LG: I think it's London, Ontario. I haven't heard where the next...They usually have about four of them lined up.

CR: [unintelligible].

LG: They never have come here earlier than five years. It was supposed to be every five years. Generally, there's one in Canada and then one in the States, so I don't know where the next one is. It will likely be in the States. It should be up at the West, I think, because they've had them out East quite a bit.

CR: One gentleman was saying that this probably would be the last one that he would make in Helena. Maybe that's what he meant because—

LG: Every five years. Well, I have talked to a guy, we were having pie just a little while ago, and I said, "Well, we won't make very many of the Helena ones."

"Oh, maybe we will. You and I will probably hit four, five, six of them yet."

CR: There you go, the last one. But again, thanks so much.

LG: Well, thank you. You were very—

[End of Interview]