

Bernie Bluestein

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COHEN: Today is June 18, 2019, and I'm Leah Cohen, interviewing Bernie Bluestein, of the 603rd Engineers Camouflage Battalion, the 23rd Special Troops, also known as the Ghost Army, and he served there from 1943-1945. The Ghost Army was charged with impersonating other allied army units to deceive the enemy. We're also pleased that his son and daughter-in-law are here in the room as well. So, about the interview, let's first talk a bit about your background, then a bit about your service, and finally about your life after the war, as well as your reflections upon it. So, where and when were you born?

BLUESTEIN: I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, August 13th, 1923. We lived on the east side of Cleveland, and uh, I had pretty much a normal Childhood. I enjoyed drawing when I was younger, and um, I still enjoy doing that at home, and I decided to pursue that a little further when I went to high school, I picked a high school that dominated in art so that I could specialize in the arts, and perhaps apply for a scholarship at the Cleveland School of Art, which is where I wanted to attend. I had envisioned myself as becoming an industrial designer someday and so all my intentions were that time were devoted to heading toward that goal. I studied the art, at the high school, and worked up a portfolio, entered the portfolio in a competition at the art school and won a full scholarship there the following, the following semester. So that got me my start in my art career.

COHEN: Do you remember when you first discovered your love of drawing and art?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yes. My father used to sit by a table and he used to like to copy little cartoons. Little Mickey-Mouse's, and Popeye's and things, and I thought that was kind of neat and so I perused the same thing when I was very young. Like, maybe six years old. I did the same thing, I copied him and then I pursued it a little further. Instead of doing cartoons, then I started doing pictures of animals from newspapers, movie stars from some of the newspapers. Uh, it was a lot of fun, I really enjoyed it. That gave me my, gave me my interest in art, really.

COHEN: Did your father have a strong interest in general in art?

BLUESTEIN: As far as art is concerned, not really no. No. My father was a tailor and my mother was a seamstress, but later in life they were of an influence to me as far

as what I did as far as sculpture was concerned. I don't know if you want me discuss that now.

COHEN: Well that sounds interesting. How were they an influence in terms of sculpture?

BLUESTEIN: Well, because growing up uh, my father had a sewing machine at home and my mother did her sewing and throughout the house there was pins and needles, all over the, all over the apartments where we lived. And um, when I, When I retired, I went to ah, I enrolled in a school, in a college a junior college. Harper College in Schaumburg, Illinois and I took their art courses, and one of the art courses was sculpture, and I decided that at one point that I was going to try find a subject matter that I could use for my subject matter, and uh, I picked pins and needles, and for the past twenty years now I've been doing all kinds of pins and needles in all fashions and in all materials. And in aluminum, and bronze, cast bronze. And cloth, and ceramics and any medium you could think of, I've been exploiting all the all the ways of doing it. You know.

COHEN: Part of the landscape of your childhood that you, that you're now representing an art?

BLUESTEIN: Right, right.

COHEN: Um, what was the, what were, parents, well you mentioned your parent's occupation, but what was it like growing up in Cleveland at the time?

BLUESTEIN: What was it like living in Cleveland?

COHEN: Or growing up there?

BLUESTEIN: I don't know; I was a pretty protected boy. uh, I remember we lived in an apartment that was below ground. I remember uh, my mother used to lift me up every time a fire engine went by so I could look out the window that was partially out of the ground so I could watch the fire engines go by. I thought that was kind of fine. And I did the usual thing. Played baseball in the streets with the fellas. Did whatever the fellas did at those, at the time.

COHEN: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

BLUESTEIN: I have a sister. She was four years older than I.

COHEN: So, um, could you repeat where you decided to study art for college after you, you know, after you completed your portfolio and won the prize. Where did you decide to study art?

BLUESTEIN: I'll say this again. Now, I'm pretty sure, after I, after I graduated from art school, from art school or from high school?

COHEN: From high school.

BLUESTEIN: Oh. Well I knew I wanted to go the Cleveland School of Art because that was available. That was right in the city, in Cleveland. So, it made it convenient. I could live at home and go to school there.

COHEN: And um, could you describe the courses that you took there?

BLUESTEIN: Oh, I took the typical courses: mechanical drawing, figure drawing, painting, sculpture, um, and then I majored in the last two years in industrial design, yeah.

COHEN: So how many years were you there before, the war?

BLUESTEIN: Well I was there for almost two years, about a year and a half before uh I got into the service, and then I was in the service for over two and a half years and then when I returned I went back to art school and finished up the courses, and I graduated in 1947.

[0:07:08-Camo Class]

COHEN: So you had mentioned in the biographical survey that when you were in college you saw a notice looking for um students to take a camouflage course and that um, this would guarantee that the people would not be in a combat unit. Do you want to talk a bit more about the course and your thoughts about it?

BLUESTEIN: Well the first thing is at that particular time, the war was going on, and uh, I was nineteen years old, at the time, and I knew that I was going to be drafted soon, and I noticed that there was bulletin on our bulletin board at the art school that said that the [US] Army was looking for art, young artists, for a new unit they were making, a special unit that was going to be a combat unit. And I thought that was the thing I needed because I really wasn't looking to be drafted and put into the infantry. I didn't really want to go into that. So I rolled into the course and in this course, they taught us all, all about camouflage. How to, how to... What colors are to be used in camouflage. How to use the colors in camouflage. How to camouflage people. How to camouflage building. All the techniques. Everything you have to know about camouflage. It's the basics about camouflage, and after I finished that I guess I qualified, then I qualified to uh, getting into this unit so. I then went, got enlisted into the service and requested to get into this, into this particular outfit.

COHEN: Would you like to give an example for the non-artists of how you would camouflage, let's say a building or a person. Like what, how you would approach it?

BLUESTEIN: How I would do it? [inaudible]

COHEN: Yeah. Like how you would do it, for people who are not artists and don't know much about paint or color. Could you give an example about how you would camouflage a person, or a building?

BLUESTEIN: Oh, oh. Camouflaging the person is easy because today, even today, they have people wearing, hunters wearing camouflage suits. Uh, the reason for the camouflage suits is that so they won't be seen, and basically that's the same kind of a thing that we would, were doing year... I mean at the time I went through the service, and uh, we applied that same technique to buildings. If it was a, if it was a manufacturing plant, and it had uh, obviously a, uh, a look of a plant, of a manufacturing plant, we would disguise it by putting things on the top of the roof that would just, that would change the shadows, so the, the shadow wouldn't end so that you would see not a rectangular building, but something that looked more like foliage. And uh, that, that's pretty much what we did. Air fuel we uh, I made the, I made a plan on how to disguise an air field of nineteen airplanes to make it look like a farm. It was disguised, disguised to look as a, look like a farm.

COHEN: So would you have different things painted on the air field or...?

BLUESTEIN: Well, I mean then of course then we got into using the uh, the dummies, of course, and uh, by using the dummies and then they, and then what we, we were already faking. We were letting, letting the enemy know that we had equipment there which there wasn't really equipment. It was dummy equipment.

COHEN: How, how long did the camouflage course last?

BLUESTEIN: Oh, that was only one semester. Yeah.

COHEN: So after you completed the course, um, how long was it until you were in the Army?

BLUESTEIN: Oh gosh. I can't remember. It was very shortly soon after. Matter of maybe weeks. Yes.

COHEN: Where did you do basic training?

[11:30]

BLUESTEIN: My basic training was done in Fort Hayes, Ohio, and I don't remember how long that was. That was the normal basic training to teach you how to become a soldier. It was about two weeks I guess it was.

COHEN: What was the kinds of activities you were doing?

BLUESTEIN: For me it was for doing a lot of, KP work and, work like that. I mean, not too pleasant work.

COHEN: [laughter] Were there also marching?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, we learned how to march, and we learned how to set up tents, and we learned about rifles, and we learned all the basics about you know army life.

COHEN: So after the basic training was over, um where were you sent next?

BLUESTEIN: I was sent to Fort George G. Meade, in Maryland, and that's where this camouflage unit was. It was called the 603rd Engineers, camouflage battalion. And there I mingled with uh, other members of the, of the unit, and uh, most of whom were artists. So it was kind of neat for me. I was able to be amongst other artists. I was kind of young at the time, and quite a few of them were older than I, so, they made pretty good images for me to you know, to follow. And um, um. We learned the basics there at Fort George G Meade how to construct these things out of wood and canvas; the original ones. We made airplanes out of, out of wood and canvas, and we made replicas of guns, of tanks, of trucks, and um, about the middle of it after, about the middle of our, my time in that particular camp, the government came out with these uh, they thought they had something that was a little better for us than these wooden constructions to carry around. They decided that they could make us inflated, inflatable uh rubber, rubber replicas, and uh, all we had to do was unpack them, take them out of a case, attach a hose to them and blow them up, and inflate them with air I should say, not to blow them up. Inflate them with air, and uh, install them. Put that whatever we had to do, around to make it look real and uh, then learn how to deflate them real quickly, put them in the bag again, and take off again so. That was our training. That was our training.

COHEN: So out of curiosity, when you were still working with the wooden frames and canvas, um, how would you know how to make the models, like would you be looking at um the spec plan books or you know, if you wanted to create a Sherman tank, how would you do it?

BLUESTEIN: Well, we had plans of what the actual thing was. If it was, let's say a truck, we had to plan of a truck, and then we constructed it out of thin strips of wood. It was pretty much, I always told people, it was very similar to when I was a kid we constructed airplanes in a very similar manner where we used thin strips along the, some supports, and that formed a skeleton and then we wrapped that skeleton up in tissue paper. I mean, when we made the airplanes, of course. We did the same thing with wood, the regular wood, wood strips in service and then cover that with canvas, that we painted with all the camouflage identification.

COHEN: So after they began with the rubber vehicles, um, would you paint them or tweak them visually to a degree? Like in addition to inflating them, would you be painting insignias on it?

BLUESTEIN: Well, no, I mean, we had to make, we had to make sure everything was authentic, like in some of our operations when we put a tank on the, into a location, the tank didn't just appear there. If it was a real tank, it had to be run in there. So we had some other truck come along and make fake tracks to look like they uh, like...the tanks were actually moving into that area there. And uh, and then we placed other things uh, other tents and things nearby so that it makes it more like a camp or like something like were stationed there.

COHEN: Did you also work in conjunction with other units like the unit that was devoted to sound?

BLUESTEIN: Yes we did.

COHEN: How did that? Tell us a little bit more about it?

BLUESTEIN: We actually worked with uh, three different groups. I mean we were one group, we were the camouflage unit, and we worked with the rubber dummies. Along with us we had a signal outfit that had sound equipment in it, and sound equipment was the sound of troop movement. All kinds of trucks moving, tanks moving. I mean it was very authentic I mean still to this day uh, I'm amazed by the sound because I was in one of those units and I heard all this noise, and I knew it wasn't us, we didn't have the equipment to that noise, so what we were doing is we were trying to let the people in that area, we came in the dusk, and uh, they thought a lot of troops, big troops a lot of troops were coming into that area, and there were only about eleven hundred of us, so... And um, uh, well, let's get back to what we had. We also had besides the signal corps, we had an engineers. The engineers were there to help maybe to protect us a little bit. They were more like the infantry, and then we had another signal outfit that did some radio transmission. They used to radio broadcast the same radio broadcasts that the units that we were uh, imitating would broadcast so that the Germans would

get these messages and say, "Hey, that's the real outfit, they're communicating with each other." So that worked for a while.

COHEN: Were you personally involved with any of the coordination and planning?

BLUESTEIN: No, no. I was only, I was just a private, okay. A private first class. As a private first class, all you do is uh, you're handed down the orders to do certain things, and you do these things, you know.

COHEN: So what were some of the other things that you did in addition to working with the uh, dummies?

BLUESTEIN: Oh we made the, when we simulated these different divisions, what we did is we simulated them. We made it so authentic that we dressed like these people. We made patches, we made uh, imitation patches to duplicate theirs, and wore those so that any of the enemy would see us, would see, say that we were the authentic infantry division, which we weren't. We would make all kinds of signs, and uh, I was in the, I was in the part of the unit that made these signs, and made these uh, patches and uh, and uh, that was my job, and uh... I was involved only in one mission, we were in, actually, twenty-one missions. I was only involved in only one of them, the last one, which was the Vierson one, and uh, that was the most successful one. That one we were again, 1100 people, 1100 troops, and simulated two divisions, that we're about 30,000 men, and uh, we got the enemy to think that we were these two divisions. They shot at us, which was a good sign, that they, our job was successful because they thought that we were the real divisions, and the real divisions were up the Rhine a little, further up the Rhine and they crossed with very minimal casualties.

COHEN: Do you want to give the context for the viewer about this operation?

BLUESTEIN: Well, the context of it was that, we wanted to relieve our troops, in other words, we wanted to make it easier for our troops to do, to make, to do their maneuvering.

COHEN: Like to cross the Rhine?

BLUESTEIN: To cross the Rhine okay, and to make it easier, we figured, well, we'll be the, we'll be the, I can't think of the word, well we'll be the enemy okay. Again, I have to repeat again, uh, when I'm talking about that, one of the things I didn't want to do was to be fighting the Germans, and having them shoot at me, and me shooting at them, and here I am, at these Viersen thing, literally saying to the Germans, "Hey, you got to shoot at us, because here we are. We are these fake divisions, okay. Shoot at us." And our mission was successful, because the following morning, they did shell our positions, our unit, our installations, and

uh, and uh, we had very minimal casualties, thank goodness, and I was very fortunate. They hit our... I was just, just had breakfast that one morning and they shelled the mess tent, and uh, and I was very fortunate not to in the, be in the vicinity.

COHEN: Were there any other close calls as well?

BLUESTEIN: Well that was the only one for me, it was, I'm sure the other people, the other troops did have...

COHEN: I'll just to jump back a little bit in time. I was reading a bit about it, and they also mentioned that there were, had been training at Camp Forrest near Tullahoma, Tennessee. Were you part of that training there, as well?

BLUESTEIN: If you ask me what we did, I can't remember uh, I really can't, but I know I was there.

COHEN: That's okay. That's fine. Um, so I'm wondering when you were sent to England? When you boarded the ship to go to England and what that was like?

BLUESTEIN: Oh well, that was highly exciting, I mean we knew where, we knew what was happening, and uh, we uh, we boarded the ship, I think it was at Newport News, and uh, I don't have the dates here, I can't remember the dates of when left and then when we got there. I think we were on the ocean about ten days or so or something like that, and we finally go to England and uh, the first place we went to was a place called Walton Hall, in England, and.... Fortunately, for the officers, the officers stayed at Walton Hall, which is a castle and we stayed in the tents outside of the castle... My throwing, adventure there at the Walton Hall was that uh, I just finished breakfast that one morning and I went out and sat under a tree just to rest, and I heard a roar in the sky, and it got louder and louder, and I looked up and the sky was getting darker and darker, and all of a sudden I see approaching was planes, multitude of planes, over every description you could name, of all kinds of planes, and it wasn't until they went by they went by that I realized that was D-Day. That was the day that they made the landing, D-Day. We were there at, in Walton Hall, you know.

COHEN: Had there been any preparation or notification that D-Day was imminent?

BLUESTEIN: No, we had no knowledge of it.

COHEN: What type of training did you do in England?

BLUESTEIN: Nah, just the same basic training, yeah, going up. Lot of marching, coordinating, things like that, and uh, installing our uh rubber dummy's and just keeping ourselves, you know, busy doing that.

COHEN: One thing that I wondered about is on the one hand, the US Army wanted to find creative people to work in the 23rd, but on the other hand, when we think of Army, it also required discipline and obedience. Like, did you find within your group there was tension between the two?

BLUESTEIN: No not really. No, I mean for some people it was very difficult, the discipline part, a lot of people resented them, they didn't like to be bossed around, but that's what the Army was. The Army was a matter of uh, depending upon where you were on the ladder, I mean, if you were lower on the ladder, you had to do what other people told you to do.

COHEN: And what do you think of the leaders that you had, the uh, people like uh, I have forgotten his name right now, um the people who had started the um, for the commanders of the 23rd, like, what leader I believe the name is, I think the name is Colonel Weeder?

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, what about him?

COHEN: So, were you satisfied with uh, the leadership?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, I found nothing wrong.

COHEN: Okay, so, was the 23rd involved in Operation Fortitude, Fortitude, like the deception campaign that tried to encourage the idea that the main assault would come from Calais in the south versus at Normandy, Beach? Like was the 23rd involved in that operation? No? That was prior?

BLUESTEIN: No. No.

COHEN: Um, the other thing you mentioned before was that you were impressed by a lot of the artists who were part of the 23rd, who were already professional artists. Are there like certain men who uh, you admired in particular?

BLUESTEIN: Oh, definitely. Oh, I used to watch one artist there, he bought, he found some, some uh, some plaster, and he started making a, a uh, sculpture, I mean, a sculpture of an old English girl with an umbrella with a dog on the end of the leash. I can still remember her, and I thought he was the greatest person/greatest artist in the world. He also painted. He did a lot of painting, and I admired those people because again I was a student. I was previously a student, and so when I saw all the talent, and uh, I just, absolutely boggled my

mind. It really did. Painters, some of them were painting things that were just unbelievable and sketching and it inspired me to do a lot of sketching too. I wasn't too much into painting, but I did a lot sketching. Yeah.

COHEN: Do you still have your sketchbooks?

BLUESTEIN: I have some sketches, yes, I have a sketchbook and some sketches.

COHEN: Well two questions. How did you get ahold of supplies, you know, I don't know, charcoal, or things like things like that?

BLUESTEIN: We all brought that from home. I mean, that was part of our, part of our baggage, you know.

COHEN: The other thing that I was reading about that when, at Walton, there was an out building that was used as a gallery, I think called the attic?

BLUESTEIN: No, I'm not familiar with that at all. No, that's new to me. That's new to me.

COHEN: Okay well, I'll show you the picture later on, but I guess...

BLUESTEIN: I have no idea what that is.

COHEN: Okay, and the other thing that I keep reading about is probably the most famous, um artist, uh, became the fashion designer, Bill Blass.

BLUESTEIN: Blass.

COHEN: So were you friendly with him? Did you like his work?

BLUESTEIN: No, as a matter of fact, no. The reason for it is, again, Bill Blass wasn't in the company, and each of the companies didn't get close to each other okay. They did their own thing. I was in Headquarters Company. So, Headquarters Company kind of stayed back a little bit, and the Companies A, B, C, and D, more or less did their work, okay. As a matter of fact, I had a friend from Cleveland also, that was in the same outfit, and he was in company D, and I never saw him throughout the entire, in our entire endurance in the, in the war. I never saw him, and he was in my, in my, 603rd engineers.

COHEN: So basically you were with the headquarters company and that was who you saw?

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, that's all basically, yeah. It was really odd.

COHEN: Um. Yeah.

BLUESTEIN: There was also another one: Kelly. There's another one by the name of Kelly, an artist, who has some work, art work, here in the museum of art in Chicago. Yeah that's, that was in our outfit. Yeah. Yeah some of his paintings are in there. So there were some pretty talented people. We had people who designed lettering for books, and I mean all kinds of talented people that did all kinds of things. Portrait painters, uh, you name it, oh yeah. I think it was about a year ago, two years ago, I bought a pair of glasses, new glasses, and guess what it had on the side of it? Bill Blass. [Laughter] Pair of glasses that were his design. He died just recently.

COHEN: Oh. Was there anybody who took you under their wing in terms of art or otherwise?

BLUESTEIN: Well, I was befriended by a couple people, yeah. Yeah, I was friendly with them. I was pretty friendly with this one fella who I just, because of what's going on now, of course, I called him up in New Jersey, and he was in my company, and we knew each other, and I've got picture of both of us in the same picture, and uh, it's nice to talk to him after seventy something years. Again, when I saw what he looks like, of course, and of course when he saw what I looked like it wasn't the same young nineteen or twenty-year-old guys. It was uh, ninety-year-old person. It was a little different, it was a little shocking. [Laughs]

COHEN: Was this the first time? Like you hadn't seen each other in seventy years?

BLUESTEIN: First time I had ever had corresponded with him. Never, never, never, never... The only person that I had corresponded was this fella that I had never seen that was from Cleveland that was in my outfit. I used to call him when I moved from Cleveland to Chicago. I used to call him up every year to wish him a happy new year and whatever. [Laughter]

COHEN: So here you are, you're in England. You hear the planes flying overhead on D-Day, what happens next?

BLUESTEIN: Well, well, we just proceeded doing what we were doing. Whether... I can't remember how long afterwards we left, we left there and went to France, and we went to France and uh, we crossed the Channel, of course, and uh, we went to Omaha beach, and, I was a bazooka, um, I was a bazooka man, and so I had to carry this extra thing, this long thing, along with my field pack, and uh, everything else, all the other equipment and we had a long walk to get to where we were going to our encampment. We were going, we were, we got of this sometime late in the day, and by the time we got to the encampment, we were all so tired. I'll have to relate this to you, and give you this and maybe you don't

want to, maybe you'll want to cut it out, I don't know. But when we got there they told us that most of the people that were already there, had already dug latrines, had already do foxhole's, and the reason for the foxholes was that at night, German planes would come over to cause a little havoc. They would fly over and of course, the Americans would shoot at them, and then all the shrapnel would come down and cause a lot of problems with the GI's that were down there, okay, so, um... We were told we could, we could dig a fox hole if we wanted to, but if we didn't want to, there were latrines, I don't know if you're familiar with a latrine is, okay, we could put our tent, our uh, sleeping bag up next to the latrine, and worst comes to worse, if there's an invasions or something happens with these Germans, we could just roll over into the latrine. Well, that night I decided what I was going to do, was I was gonna kind of zip myself into the bag, put my hands over my head, and just see what happens, okay. Well sure enough what happened was, planes came over and I decided that I wasn't going to go into the latrine, okay. Stayed in my sleeping bag, and I got up in the morning, and I wanted to make sure I was all okay, in one piece. I was. I was very thankful for that, but when I started to roll up my sleeping back, I noticed there was a hole in it, and it was right somewhere between my legs, a piece of shrapnel had gone through the... I was really lucky that just a matter inches it could have hit me. I had got that piece of shrapnel at home. It's one of the relics I have. So it's one my, one of my first experiences, my very first experience in France. The first night.

COHEN: Wow. Was the encampment already up on the cliffs, like from the beaches?

BLUESTEIN: Say this again?

COHEN: Was the encampment, up on the cliffs?

BLUESTEIN: No, it was somewhere, oh I don't know, when we went to this encampment, we were, we walked for miles. There were no, we didn't have trucks there, we walked, and we saw some of the devastation from the invasion. We saw a cow in a tree, it was blown up into a tree. That was very, disheartening, to see that, we knew it was going on. Um, and then from then on, we just went to various places, and from there we went to various places in France on our missions.

COHEN: So out our curiosity, did you dig a foxhole for the second night?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, wherever we went we dug foxholes. Wherever we went, and uh, my next encounter was something I didn't particularly like, was, you dig a fox hole, you're digging down into the ground and you don't know what you'll find. I'm not a spider person, but all of a sudden, I would see this huge hairy spider, you know, come up and [laughter] that was very disheartening. Very scary that, it had all kinds of things along the way. It just uh, a lot of little things happening along the

way. Uh, the fun things like, uh, the guys... We passed an apple orchard, most of the guys went there for the apples. They had the apples, and I guess the apples weren't very ripe and most of them got sick. I was fortunate I didn't have any. They also, when we went to one place, uh, we were near a winery, I guess they were giving vodka out to the GI's. I didn't drink, I wasn't a drinker. They all came back, and they were all sick. The reason for it, it wasn't aged long enough and they got sick [laughter]. So all these, all these things happened during the war.

COHEN: Would you stick to your rations like, what did you tend to eat and drink?

BLUESTEIN: Oh, well, I ate the regular rations that they gave us yeah. I mean, that wasn't the best, C-Rations and K-Rations you eat the right things that came out of a box or out of a can or, you know. We didn't have any home, any kind of home cooking, I mean, you know, there's nobody to do any cooking for you, because you never stayed in one place long enough. The only place where you had any home cooking was when you stayed in a place for a time. Like we spent a little time in Luxembourg, and at that place we had our cook, cooking our meals for us, you know.

COHEN: Do you want to talk about that, I believe I was reading that in Luxembourg you were based in a seminary?

BLUESTEIN: A seminary, yes, yeah, yeah. We went into this seminary, and this seminary was used by the Germans. The Germans were in, Luxembourg, you know, Germans... Luxembourg's right in between France, and uh, Germany, so, depending upon, depending upon who's making the advances, it's either Germans in Luxembourg or its Americans in Luxembourg. They uh... Oh I have to add to that while I'm at, I'll enter what I'm thinking, by saying, one of the things, one of the people there at the uh, in Luxembourg showed one of the uh, residents of Luxembourg, uh, I visited they said, I admired a sign, a, uh, a, uh, religious painting they had on the wall, it was really a pretty painting and she says, "Oh you want me to show you something?" So she took the painting and she turned it backwards and guess what was on the other side? Hitler and the swastika. So depending upon if the Germans were going through, they would get rid of the, the religious scene, and expose the Hitler thing, to show alliance with Hitler. They didn't want to be enemies with Hitler while they were going through, while the Germans were going through. That was kind of an amusing thing.

COHEN: They had their own deception campaign, as well.

BLUESTEIN: They had what?

COHEN: Their own deception campaign.

BLUESTEIN: They did their own thing; they knew what they had to do. Oh yeah, definitely.

COHEN: So the whole time that you're going through France, how did it work? Like what were your... what was the goal of you when you were in the headquarters moving from place to place in France? Like, what were some of your jobs?

BLUESTEIN: My jobs was just um making, like I said, making patches, and stenciling cars, stenciling the equipment. When you simulated these uh, these other divisions you had to make it very authenticated, so we even identified the trucks with the identification of the units that you were simulating so that they would look really authentic. They would look like the real thing.

COHEN: Would you yourself have to wear one of these uniforms with, with fake patches of a fake unit and go to the villages?

BLUESTEIN: Only the... Yeah only the one time, I said I was only involved in that one, that one in, in Vierson. I was in that last, that very last one. That's because they, that was the big one for them, and they wanted it to have as many people as they could, so they got everybody to go, even H & S Company which is the one I was in. Yeah.

COHEN: Um, what was it like, well I don't know if this was, sorry let's start again... Were you, um, in any of the French villages when they were being liberated by the US Army?

BLUESTEIN: No, none of them. Nope.

COHEN: Or in Paris after the liberation?

BLUESTEIN: No, I was in Paris for only one day, and that was, that was, no liberation at that time. I mean it was... You know, the war was going on, you know, you know, everything was closed up. The Louvre was closed, they didn't have, uh, that wasn't open. All the artwork was put in either into the uh, basement, into cellars, or, or hidden elsewhere, or taken out of the Louvre, and uh, Eiffel Tower, you could only go up part way. You couldn't go the entire way, you know, everything was kind of keyed down, because the war was still going on.

COHEN: Could you describe your trajectory a bit over France. Like, you know, what were some of your main stops along the way before reaching Belgium?

BLUESTEIN: Oh gosh, we did stop off in Versailles. We saw the Palace of Versailles. Um, I uh, I can't off hand, yeah, I just can't off hand. Yeah.

COHEN: That's okay. It's probably... It's not a problem. Um, um, oh one thing I read in the article in **The Forward**, was that the Nussenbaum had mentioned that he attended the um, the religious services for Rosh Hashanah. I think this would have been when you would have been either in Luxembourg or near Luxembourg and I wondered if you were part of that, as well?

BLUESTEIN: No, all we did is, we went to services in England, in Birmingham, I think it was. As a matter of fact, we met the chief Rabbi of England at that, those services. I, I can't remember that in detail, but I know we went. The Jewish fellas, the Jewish people went there for the services in England. Yeah, yeah.

COHEN: Um, in general, what was the camaraderie like? Like, did people get along well with each other?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yes. More or less, I mean, I don't know if I should say it in front of the [pause] it can be cut out, I guess. But it was an awful lot of antisemitism at that... Awful lot of antisemitism. And being Jewish of course, I did have to do a lot of dirty jobs okay, I mean, had a lot of coal duty, garbage duty, honey bucket duties and things like that, because of that... My sergeant happened to be very antisemitic. My friend and I, Seymour Nussenbaum, and you know he's also Jewish, and we keep talking about how antisemitic this guy was and uh, how we had to do some odd ball jobs because we're Jewish. It was pretty dominant. Yeah, you know, that's not in any of your papers or anything like that. But, it's uh, that's coming out of me who was a participant, and I can tell you that it definitely was. There was one particular guy in our outfit, his name was Andrew Zeebe, and he was from Florida, and he said, oh, he'd make nasty remarks to me, and I wasn't a very aggressive guy. I wasn't strong, I wasn't athletic. I didn't do any athletic stuff, but one day he got to the point where he really annoyed me, and so I went on top of a hill and he and I were seemingly alone, and he started at me again, and I said still, you know, I said to him, "I'm getting awfully tired." And with all my strength, I really did this, believe it or not, I just took him by the shirt and I lifted him up off the group and I threw him on the ground, and I says, "If you're ever nasty to me again," I says, "I'm about to do something worse than this," and I suddenly I head [clapping noise]. There were some people nearby that had heard that. They knew that, I think they knew that he was picking on me and they were kind of proud that I would do that, because I wasn't very aggressive, and I showed them my... I just had it up to here, and I had to let it out, oh yeah. So that was part of the reason, you know, that was a problem in the service for me. When I was in Fort Hayes Ohio, it's like a joke okay, but it wasn't a joke because I had K-P duty, and they made me scrub up the kitchen floor with a tooth brush. Yeah, yeah, and that was because I was Jewish, yeah, definitely it was. [laughter]

COHEN: And it still is prevalent.

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, yeah, but that's beside the point, but that was, that was, that wasn't only in the service, that was going on during that time. There was a lot of antisemitism going on all over at that time. All over.

COHEN: I think you mentioned in the form that in the Art Institute in Cleveland there was one professor who was also antisemitic? I think you mentioned in the pre-interview questionnaire that one of the professors at the Cleveland Art Institute was antisemitic and was somehow uh, I don't know, putting stumbling blocks against you finding work there. What was that about?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, sure this is the guy that was the head of the Industrial Design department. I mean that was my major okay, that was my big subject. But when I graduated, he never, everybody got jobs all over. A lot of them went to, to uh, to Michigan to Detroit to the automobile industry. He found them jobs all over. I never got a job, never. I had to hoof it on my own. It was difficult for me to find a job, it was. That's what started it, and then I had difficulty also when I went to offices, that a lot of them were antisemitic, and I finally ended up in New York at a design office that was owned by two Jewish brothers. Nathan, Jules Becker. That was my first job.

COHEN: That's how you got started in your career.

BLUESTEIN: That's how I got started. In New York. It was hard for me. I went to Gary, Indiana looking for jobs. Uh, when I was in Gary, Indiana, I'd lived in Gary, Indiana, and I worked near Gary, Indiana, at a place called Chesterton, Indiana. I worked in a sign company because I couldn't get a job, you know, in a regular industrial design place, so I worked for a sign company. Yeah, I went through a lot. I did, I did, I did. Nobody knows about it but me, but I don't like to tell people about it, and uh, I mean, there's no need to tell people about it. I mean, it's just my life, this is what I went through.

COHEN: Well it gives a different perspective. Like did you ever see the documentary, **GI-Jew?**

BLUESTEIN: GI-Joe? No. Oh GI-Jew?

COHEN: Yeah, it's a documentary that came out about a year or two ago.

BLUESTEIN: No.

COHEN: And um, it's sort of looking at American Jews being a part of the uh US forces and I think there they sort of feel maybe that it became a turning point, so you know, it's interesting to see that not every unit, not every situation, you know, it varied nonetheless, so. Yeah, yeah. Um so sort of going back to Europe then, you

were part of the operation, um in Germany that allowed the 9th [Division] to cross the Rhine River, and then I believe you, your unit continued on to German as well?

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, we finally left Germany... well actually we didn't, we didn't uh, we didn't stay in Germany, we were staying in Luxembourg, at that particular time, and uh, but then when we got enough points to go back home to send us back home, they added up points. You went by points. If you had enough points, you'd go home. If you didn't have enough to go home, then they sent you to... Uh, the war was going on in Japan, so they were sending you, the GI's... Fortunately I had enough points to get back home so. Because I had spent so much time overseas and uh, and uh, the particular outfit I was in. So they sent me to uh, to uh Camp Shelby in Mississippi, and uh, my experience there was um, first thing they did was to line us all up in a line, and uh, it was some sergeant or somebody would say, "You, you, you, you, and you, step out." The people he pointed to were all people that were over six feet tall. He said, "You're all in the MPs, whether you wanted it or not." MP, and this was in a discharge center, so that wasn't a really good job, I mean it wasn't a real comfortable job for me because I'm not an aggressive person to go up to a GI who's been fighting in the war, who's really been fighting in the war as an infantryman, and tell him, "Hey, GI, you've got to straighten out your tie, or do this here." I mean he'd punch me silly. So, I endured it. I was an MP there until I got the discharge, and uh, when I finally got discharged to go home, I finally met up with my friend from Cleveland and we hitchhiked home from Shelby, Mississippi. We thumbed our way home. We had a lot of, lot of good experiences in that, I could relate all the experiences about that too. It's unbelievable. I mean I have, we were trying to get rides. It's a long way from Mississippi, to uh, Cleveland. Many miles, oh, we had to get, you know, as many rides as we could to get up there. So, one times there was a hearse that was going in the opposite direction we were going, and we said to him, I said to him, I said, "Hey, Marion, if that thing was going in our direction, I don't know if I'd even want a [ride]. I mean, if he stopped for us, what you do?" He said, "Well, I'd probably take a ride in it." Well then, it did, it did, it did turn around, it did come back, and we did hop in, I mean they gave us a ride. And we got a ride to another point, and then we got stopped. We, we, another stop was a couple in a real old car dragging cans behind it that were just married, and it took us, took us for a ride. Then another time we were stopped by a big limousine and I don't know what was in there, but I was sitting in the in back with these big guys sitting next to me, and I think they were all gangsters, they were in this limousine. They were the mob. I was really scared. We were both in that. So we had a very adventurous trip back home, but was worth it when we finally got home, finally got, we went, we dropped, we dropped him off at his house first and his mother ran out. And I thought that was, that was emotional for me to see her. Them get together, and, it was nice. But then I went home and the first thing happened when I went home was I was sick. I used to tell my son that I

had, when I just got home, the very day/night, I got home, I got pneumonia and strep throat, so I had to be rushed to hospital. Hines hospital in Cleveland. I was there for about a week and a half.

COHEN: Were people who were giving you lifts grateful to you, like seeing returning soldiers?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I think the most gratitude I found was when I was on this honor flight. You familiar with the honor flight?

COHEN: Yeah, do you want to talk about when you went?

BLUESTEIN: Oh that was very emotional for me. I mean. I mean all this, again, we were never talked about up until that point, again, that was never nothing was really ever talked about us, okay, and uh, and we were in the Army. We did our job; we did what we had to do. We thought nothing of it. Okay. You had to be a soldier. So you enlisted, or you er, or you were, you were inducted into the Army and that was it, you did your thing. Now all of a sudden, you get to the airport and there's all these people standing there, thanking us for, for our service and it made us think a little bit about it, you know, oh my God. Look at what we, I mean, look at what we did during the war. I mean, I'm not talking about the 603rd, I'm talking about just all the rest of the GIs as well that were in World War II. So, it was very emotional when I came home, Keith was there also with a big sign, welcome back, Dad. That and uh, it was emotional that people would just run up to me and shake my hand and hug me and thank me. It was pretty emotional, and everybody I talked to that's gone since then had the same feeling really, because like I say, we never really got any accolades, we never got any, any thanks for what we did, you know, it was just something we had to do, we did it, and that was it. It was a chapter in our life, but, here we did put our lives in danger, and some of us lost our lives, and some of them lost their lives and uh. So, it was a very emotional time.

COHEN: It was finally recognized, fully recognized.

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, it was really... I mean we went from the airport. At one airport there were, they had the hoses with the water spraying up on, everything that you could think of, that, that would just wholly emotional time... I was in the Army, again, like I say, I have to, if you want to cut it out or not, I wasn't an Army person okay. I was, I was, when I grew up I was pretty much babied, I had never been away from home, so it was a new thing for me to adjust myself to learn how to live by myself, okay, just you know, I'm nineteen years old, but I'm not a grown person, okay, and so I had, I had problems with getting my adjustment, okay. So the Army wasn't the thing that I really, I wasn't a gung-ho guy, macho guy, okay, so I did what I had to do in the service, I did it to the best of my ability,

got it all through, went back to my, went back to my school, and continued with my life. And I really forgot about, well, first of all it was highly secret, so we couldn't tell anybody about it, anyway, but I didn't have anything I wanted to talk about any way because, it wasn't the most pleasant thing of my life, okay, I mean, going off to war. It wasn't pleasant for me, okay. So something I did, I had to do, so it's in the background okay, somebody asked me about it, I could talk about it okay, but I never, volunteered to talk about it, and uh, that's the way it's been, okay. So, now with all the attention I'm getting now, now I'm a superhero, okay, and I can't really, I can't really take myself as a superhero, I just happened to be one of, of uh, originally eleven-hundred men that were in the outfit, okay. I'm not the hero, okay. There are other people that are who are the heroes too. Other people who lost their lives too okay. So, um...

COHEN: But still...

BLUESTEIN: It's hard for me to take that role, you know... I mean I get all the attention. I'm on the front page of the Tribune and all these things. I mean, god, everybody would, "Boy, would I love to be that that popular and everything else", but I love it, and everything else, but I'm not a, I'm not that type of a person, okay? I'm more of an inward person, than a showman okay, and...

COHEN: But it gives an example of dedication, and also different personalities and their different types of dedication and that's what I think is very impressive. You know, one person might be in combat, the other person is creating deception, visual discription, you know, it's, you know, it's, and everybody did a lot to... everybody did a lot.

BLUESTEIN: Everybody what?

COHEN: Everybody did a lot. Like, look at the different types of people in different roles.

BLUESTEIN: Oh, there's no question, it was an un... it was a spectacular thing, I mean, when I think about it, I mean, God, it's really great. I mean we saved the lives of an awful lot of men or 30,000 men or troops that we saved. I mean, I never really, I never thought about it okay, but we did, okay. We put our lives in danger, we were shot at. We were waving at them, "Hey, Germans, shoot at us, okay." Because that was our intent. So, we did, okay. I understand that.

COHEN: So when you returned home was your, were your parents surprised, did they knew you were coming?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah they knew I was coming home. Oh yeah, they were happy, oh yeah. They kept me back, but I wasn't there long. I mean I was there, went to art school for a year and a half, and then I graduated and then I decided I had to

look for a job. Couldn't find a job in Cleveland, so I went to Detroit. I went to New York. I went to all over, couldn't find jobs, again, partially, and, again, I say it, but antisemitism, and I think I didn't get a lot of jobs because of that. And, but I, I'm really happy with my life, I mean, everything turned out, I had ups and downs in my life, of all kinds, okay, but I can't complain. I'm going to be ninety-six years old. I've lived this long, in my life, okay. I have a great family, okay. I love them very much, and uh, I mean what else can I ask for, okay, I mean other than to keep going, I mean to keep going. I want to keep going. I want to keep going. I got to physical therapy twice a week to help we along with my balance to help me go on because I go to school every day. Five days a week, so that I can keep myself when I have an interest, because I'm, I grew up in a generation when they were fifty and sixty years old, they used to send these people, to old people's homes, and have them sit in a rocking chair until they die, and shoot. I mean, nowadays, it's different. Now the young, now the older people are much more educated. They go to gyms now. The old seniors go to gyms now, and it's really great. They want to live, okay, so they have a more positive attitude in life, and that's good, that's what you have to have. You have to have goals, you have to have ambitions, you know, and I've got those things. I'm lucky I still don't have all the hard wrinkles that a lot of people my age have, and still able to walk around a little bit. Walking isn't as good as it used [to] be. I use the stroller now, the walker now but, I still walk, okay, which is good, so I can't complain. Okay.

COHEN: That's great. Well, I'll just rewind a little bit, where did you meet your wife and where did you...?

BLUESTEIN: When I came to Chicago, I met my wife. I don't think I want to go into that. No.

COHEN: Okay. So, so, so, what types of courses are you taking now?

BLUESTEIN: Well right now I'm taking two courses. I'm taking sculpture, and I'm taking figure drawing. I love to draw the figure. I love nudes, nude women, so I can sketch [laughter]. No, and I'm doing sculptures, and like I said, I'm doing the sculptures of the needles so right now I'm doing something close at hand with the needles because I'm making a needle into a cane, because here, I could use a cane, okay, so I made three of them already, I'm working on a fourth one right now, so that's keeping me going, and I've tried every course that they had. I've, I think you know, I go to, I went to Harper College for thirty years, this is my thirtieth year. They don't want to get rid of me, that don't want to pass me. I'm not good enough, I guess. But, it's been great there, they've been a good incentive for me to keep it going, and I've tried almost every medium that they have: printing, and printmaking, and painting, and ceramics, and casting, and you name it, I've tried it. The only thing I haven't tried was glass blowing. Glass work, and I haven't, I'm thinking of trying that maybe now.

COHEN: Wow so sounds good. Well, you're probably with young people a lot of the day.

BLUESTEIN: All the time

COHEN: All the time, and um, what message would you like to leave other students or people like them?

BLUESTEIN: Well I leave them a lot of messages. Kids need a lot of learning because they have very poor habits. They don't have any sense of responsibility. They don't, they don't meet deadlines. They don't do anything. I'm there, I stay there for long hours. I get there early in the morning. So, again I'm not an instructor, but I'm an object that they look at, and they uh, kind of take some of the good things out of me. I don't know how many bad things I have, but they take the good things out of me. Yeah, and I, I you know, I just encourage them. I tell them my way of life and what causes me to be this old, to be living, and philosophy of life, and help them with their art work, and do whatever I can, you know, I'm close to them. And there are a lot of other seniors there too by the way. It's not only, it's not only youngsters. It's a lot of other seniors there. Yeah, youngsters, sixty years old, seventy years old. [laughter]

COHEN: Sounds good. Um, is there something that we didn't talk about that you would like to talk about?

BLUESTEIN: I can't think of anything. Say, you know it's hard to, when I talk about myself, I can talk a little freely because I'm pretty aware of myself. The Army is something that is long past and when you ask me these questions, it's pretty hard for me because again, it wasn't one of my most favorite subjects in life, okay, and so, it's difficult for me to come up with the right answers to you. I mean, not the right answers, the right answers are the answers okay. And it's hard for me to do it... Because I didn't really think that much about what I was doing, I did those things that I was doing, okay, but I didn't like to do them, okay. I did them because I had to do them, okay. So that wasn't a thing that would be in my memory. Things like seeing and hearing those planes, that was a shock to me. That was something that really caused me to remember that, okay, but the regular Army life we did as again. If I knew the plans, what they were from the top, if I was up there, and knew what was going on, it would have been altogether different, really, it would be. I wouldn't know what the plans were, what we were doing and everything else. I didn't really know what we were doing, all we were told was, "Move here. Move there. Do this. Do that." Okay, you understand what I was talking about?

COHEN: I do. I do. I know what you're saying. Yeah, you weren't given an overall plan or objective.

BLUESTEIN: Right. Right. Our overall plan was to deceive. We were camouflage, so we were supposed to deceive the Germans with our camouflage stuff, and with our rubber dummies. And that was it, okay. I mean, how we did it, what we were doing. Only the guys up at the top knew what we were doing really.

COHEN: Nonetheless, do you have any other vivid memories as you do of D-Day or any other, let's say funny anecdotes that come to mind?

BLUESTEIN: I've got all kinds of funny ones. Funny, what are some more. Um, if I'm not sitting in front of you here I probably would be able to come up with a couple of them.

COHEN: I don't know if this involved your particular group or not but I was reading in the book on the Ghost Army, um that um there were some soldiers carrying a rubber...

BLUESTEIN: Fake tank, and the French people saw that, and they said, "Oh my God, what am I seeing?" And one of the other, one of the other soldiers says, "What am I saying in this?" the soldiers just look back and said, "The Americans are very strong." Not telling him it was a rubber dummy, he was just, "Americans are this strong. They can lift this tank up." That was funny. Yeah there were a lot of funny dolts like that. I thought that was cute. I... I enjoyed, we had a, we had a tour of, you know about the tour, we took a tour last year of our outfits uh, path in Europe. You know.

COHEN: Was that the one that was led by Rick Beyer [Director of **The Ghost Army**]?

BLUESTEIN: Rick Beyer?

COHEN: Yeah, Beyer. Yeah.

BLUESTEIN: I was the only one out of the eleven-hundred that was there. So I was the only one that was the "hero", and again that was very, upsetting to me really, but I was on a bus with sixteen people, as a matter of fact yesterday I saw two of the people that came to visit me from that tour. They wanted to visit me and see me. They were really nice people that were on the tour. The tour was very nice. I saw, went into the seminary I was in, and uh, saw a lot of the places. We didn't go the entire tour was two weeks. I didn't think I could do the two weeks, so I met them half way and I met them in Paris, and we went from Paris to the end which was in Germany, and it was very enlightening for me too to hear all these things, because he's a good historian. He had that thing all. He knows all about that thing. Probably more about it than I do. When he gave his little lectures about it, it was good for me too, because it gave me an enlightening about what we were doing and, and uh, it was very nice. I really enjoyed it, and uh... These people that visited had a father that was in one of the engineer's divisions. He's

101 years old now, and he didn't go last year, but now since I went, they talked him into it. He's going to go on the next one. Seymour Nussenbaum never went. None of them, none of those that are left went except me. So I got a medal of honor in Luxembourg. They gave me a real medal of honor. So...

COHEN: Um and did you find that the memories were coming back more vividly?

BLUESTEIN: Well, like I said, not really. I remembered the seminary. I try to remember even in the seminary. They took us to a place where we saw Marlene Dietrich. She came to visit us from the USO, and I just couldn't remember that setting, okay, and that chapel, it was in the chapel, and I just couldn't remember it.

COHEN: Do you remember her singing?

BLUESTEIN: Do I remember her? Oh yeah, I got pictures of her. She also played a musical saw, believe it or not, she was able to do that. I don't know if you're familiar, in the old days, they used to have in the old, amateur hour, they had the people that, you know, how to make a saw, like an instrument, like a regular saw. So, she had that, along with her singing. She was very good yeah. I mean there were good things and bad things. And one of the good things, I had a good buddy that would, that was in our troop and in Fort George [G. Meade], Maryland, when we went overseas, there was an open... No, it was when we were crossing the channel. I can't remember which it was. The ship was big. You know they have these big holes in the middle of the ship where they load the stuff down inside. Well, they usually have ropes around that to keep the troops from... One of my friends tripped over the rope or something and fell and died. Yeah, so I have a picture of him. So I mean, there were a lot of things I do remember that happened and all the little things like that. We had a lot of talented people in our outfit in going overseas. They would put on shows for us. Oh yeah. Okay these shows, to keep us entertained.

COHEN: During the ships? During the uh...?

BLUESTEIN: During the trip across, ya, [the Atlantic], you know.

COHEN: Did you take part in some shows as well?

BLUESTEIN: No. I wasn't. I'm not, I wasn't, I wasn't a showman. I was a good audience. I knew how to applaud pretty good. No, but I enjoyed what they did. This guy, Seymour Nussenbaum, said he was one of the singers in that. I can't remember him singing, but... I can't remember.

COHEN: So I understand that um the information was classified for so many years—

BLUESTEIN: Not until the middle of the 1990's. 1990's.

COHEN: Would you talk about it with, let's say Keith, or anybody else in your family?

BLUESTEIN: They didn't know anything. I mean all I told them was that I was in the camouflage division. I did, and we made, we inflated rubber dummies. I didn't tell him what we did, or I mean I didn't tell him what the missions were, and then again, I didn't know that much of what we did either, so what can I tell him? Okay. Understand? I couldn't tell him much. Not as much as being exposed now. Now everybody knows about everything because it's now been delved into. There were diaries that were kept and uh, and through these diaries now we got all the information about every place that we'd been, who was there and what medals were given. I never got a medal, by the way. The medals were given out, but I don't remember ever getting a medal. Oh, by the way, speaking of getting a medal, I guess they're working on, Congress is working on, so that the rest of us that are still living can get a medal of honor in Washington.

COHEN: Oh that's really good.

BLUESTEIN: They're working on it. This woman that just came back from Washington, she says that she and her daughter were approaching their Congress person and you know, talking about it, because there aren't many of us living yet, that are still living, and I'd like to see it done now while I'm living rather than have it done posthumously, where I won't know about it. But I'm not so sure about getting it from Trump, I don't know I how would handle that. 'Cause he's the one that gives those medal of honor things. [laughter]

COHEN: Maybe it will happen. Maybe there will be a change of government in the next election. I don't know. Um, um, and um what did you think of the documentary that Rick Beyer...

BLUESTEIN: Oh God that was great. That was absolutely great. I just loved it. It was very thorough, very informing for a person who never heard about the, about the Ghost Army, that said it all. Told about the three... about the different divisions, the signals... Did you, you saw it?

COHEN: I haven't seen it yet, but I'd like to? I'd like to.

BLUESTEIN: See it, it's absolutely great, and I was in a new book. Now like I said, I just this book Wednesday. I just came off the press. I guess. The guy who offered it just brought it to me Wednesday.

COHEN: Actually, I'd like to write the name down in case for our library's collection.

BLUESTEIN: He's name is Jerry Souter. S-O-U-T-E-R. Jerry and Janet, they both wrote it together, and it's called, *The Ghost Army: Conning the Third Reich*.

COHEN: Thank you.

BLUESTEIN: Yeah. It's really a good book, it's mostly about, it's mostly about the whole thing, with the British involvement in it, and uh, and then it leads into our being in there too, and when it has me, about us, it's got me in it. I'm the guy, I'm it I guess. He picked me I guess.

COHEN: So you're profiled there too that's nice.

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, I'm profiled in that thing there, you know, all over the place, you know. Yeah

COHEN: Well, I was reading that the officers were studying a lot of the British deception and when you guys were training; did you work directly with any Brits?

BLUESTEIN: We didn't no. If anybody did it would be our officers with their officers and not us again. I could say I was just a lowly private first class. [laughs]

COHEN: I had one other question, and again I don't know if it was the headquarters company or not that some of the 23rd was involved in um administrating a DP camp in Germany. Were you involved in that?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, again, well I remember that, but I wasn't really directly involved in that, and I remember there was a camp that we had for them. As a matter of fact, we had some of Russian girls from that camp that used to do our laundry for us. I do remember that. Oh one good incident that also that I could tell you that's kind of an amusing thing, is that uh, when you're traveling as a troop or through a country, you don't have to the uh, the uh, wash, uh, facilities. So you've got to get water, from the little bit of water you have. Put it in a helmet and use that as to wash yourself. Well they surprised us one place in France, and I forget where it was, where they built this structure, this big structure that had water coming down out of for showers for the GIs. So we all ran up there and god that was really great. And then of course once we got up there, we heard all the giggling and the cackling from the French girls that were standing down below the hill looking up at us, you know, watching us take our showers. [Laughter] That was funny. The French people seemed pretty nice. English people were nice. Some of them were hard to understand, particularly ones that had the cockney accent. I was driven from one place. We in Stratford on the Avon, and we went to another place, and I was thumbing my ride, and I got to a car with this guy. He was a real Englishman, and he started talking to me, and I couldn't understand a word he said. He was a blimey, a cockney. He had a cockney accent, and I just couldn't

understand a word he said. It was so funny. Here's a guy speaking English and I can't understand him. [laughter]

COHEN: Did you speak any other languages?

BLUESTEIN: I didn't, I have a little book at home that has a, it's a little dictionary. It, they gave us from the Army so when we got overseas, if we want to look up words to talk to people, we could use that. But I never learned-- I mean I could say, "Parlez-vous Français," or you know a few words, but I never studied any languages in school.

COHEN: So, Ara was telling me that there will be a movie coming up as well. Like not a documentary, but a fictionalized?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah that's right. That's pretty funny. It's going to be uh, I can't remember his name? Say his name? Oh Ben Affleck. Yeah, Ben Affleck, he's going to star in it and direct it, you know.

COHEN: So have they consulted with you?

BLUESTEIN: Not with me. I don't think they're going to consult with me. [Laughter] Yeah, that should be interesting.

COHEN: Well, um is there something... Oh yes, I do have one more question. What types of things did you make when you had some downtime? What types...

BLUESTEIN: Okay, the first thing I did was I made a little, I took a twig and I made a nude. I liked nude figures even at that time, and I carved it a little nude figure and I brought that home, and so when I got home also, when I called Nussenbaum, he said, "Oh you know what. I made the same thing. I made a carving, too, out of a twig." We both made knives. We were able to make a regular hunting knife with a scabbard. I made one of those. And one of the finest things I thought I made, and I can't believe I really made it, I made out of, out of, out of shells, bullets and shells, I made a tray, a little tray, flat tray, and on the tray is a big, a picture with a pitcher's handle on it okay. And a little tiny cup, and inside the little tiny cup is the little teeny spoon, it's about that big. Oh, that's fine, yeah. I brought that out to show these people, yesterday. They wanted to see those things. They took pictures of us.

COHEN: Yeah, that would be really cool to have the pictures of that.

BLUESTEIN: All right, I'll have Keith take the pictures of that. Yeah.

COHEN: You know, previously we had an exhibit here on World War I where they also had some examples of Trench Art, you know of, making different sculptures, or

vases out of shells, and, and bullets. You can see them on the website, that's what that reminds me of; that same impulse.

BLUESTEIN: I see. I see. Right, right, right. Well that's what we did on our down time, because when we had downtime we had nothing to do. Most of the people went out and sketched or painted or sculpturing, sculpturing, you know. Those are the things they were familiar with, so that's what, we did that. I got a pick, a couple of drawings I did of a couple little kids that were watching me, sketchings, I made pictures, made a sketch of them in my little book: two little boys and their sister. Yeah. I was never, considered myself really a good artist because I was just a young guy starting out. So uh, in his book here he's got all those pictures. He asked everybody to send pictures and I never sent any of my stuff. May, I probably don't, uh, maybe I'm downgrading myself, I don't know, but, I have a few things. I don't think that they're as good as some of the things I see in the book there. But they're sketches

COHEN: Oh, I don't know, and like you were saying, you would have had less experience that so many.

BLUESTEIN: And that's what it is, I felt I didn't have as much experience. They were more experienced than me, you know.

COHEN: There was one page in the book where they showed water colors and sketches of a bombed out church in Trier.

BLUESTEIN: Oh, right.

COHEN: Were you, did you draw that too?

BLUESTEIN: No. Never drew that. No. As a matter of fact, I think we passed that thing on the tour, and they had one of the guys, oh they, Rick Beyer, took the reproduction of it, and stood in front of the place so that you could see the painting and see the church. It really was, it really was a good sketch. Those guys were good. Those guys, most of them were good. They were good painters. I never was good in painting in art school. It was one of my worst subjects so, I never did any painting. I did all pencil sketching, but since then when I went to Harper, when I started Harper College, I started in their figure drawing class, and uh, the figure drawing teacher was a painting instructor, and he said, "Hey Bernie, why don't you try out painting, I got a painting class." I said, "I will." Well it took two years of him nagging, and I finally decided to do it, and I went out with him and I did some outdoor painting, and I already thought it was nuts. It was really good. It just shows you how you change over those many years. I was able to handle the brush a little bit different, then I did when I was in art school, and I thought I

would really enjoy it so, I've been doing a lot of oil painting and stuff. Did a lot of portraits of my grandkids, and landscapes now and so, I'm doing it now.

COHEN: When you were younger, did you prefer to work in three dimensions, than two?

BLUESTEIN: Oh yeah, I did, as a matter of fact. Yeah. I did a...I used to like to do, start out with soap carving, it was very popular, in those days, instead of wood, you could use soap, and carve, and started carving soap, soap. And then I did, started in wood, and I remember one in particular thing I did, is I carved a horse, a horse in kind of like uh, not a three-dimension, it's like one of those walls...

COHEN: Like a frieze?

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, right. Base relief, right. It's... I put that right in front of uh, mounted it on a horseshoe shape, and uh, I had it for years, and my doctor liked horses, so I gave it to him, one of my doctors. Yeah, so I liked to do anything artistic at that time. I used to like to do all kinds of things artistic, you know. I was really into art. I liked art. I was just lucky, it's just in my genes, okay. It's just, fortunate, okay. What can I say?

COHEN: Did you ever have a wish to uh, represent what you went through in the Army during the war, visually, or not so much?

BLUESTEIN: No. You mean as far as what? As far as painting or, speaking, or how?

COHEN: I was thinking more visually. Like if you had a desire, I don't know, to paint?

BLUESTEIN: Paint something?

COHEN: Paint or make a sculpture?

BLUESTEIN: Or carve something?

COHEN: Right, right.

BLUESTEIN: Not really. Not really. No. I think I did enough war things in my sketches and stuff like that I don't think I have to do any more to satisfy me or, uh, I could probably do it better than I did then, but I have not desire really to.

COHEN: I remember seeing an exhibition by you know the Canadian artist, Alec Colville, who had been a war artist for the Canadian Army, um and also after he returned, like he did not return to uh, you know, to war subjects. Yeah. Yeah.

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, well a lot of them do.

COHEN: A lot of them do. Interesting.

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, that's not my thing. Pins and needles.

COHEN: Pins and needles. [laughter] The schneider [i.e. tailor, in Yiddish].

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, I've become the pins and needles guy at Harper College. Yeah. I mean I got one needle there, the one big one I have, one of the things I did. I wanted to make the eye of the needle big enough so that you go, "I could walk through it." So it's about six feet high. I can... The opening is large enough so if I stand, if I stand inside of it and get my picture taken with a lot of people and next to it the point of the, the point of the needle is standing out of the ground like that. A big one.

COHEN: What a great Idea, like on such a scale.

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, no, yeah, no. It amazes everybody. Yeah, then I got another one which is really a large one, but you only see the very top of it. I scaled it so that the very top of it stands about this high, and it's the eye of the needle, okay, but it's not whole eye. It's just part of the eye of the needle. If you made the rest of the needle that went all the way into the ground it would be about half the distance of a football field. The whole thing. So I wanted to get some kind of a thread for it, too. So my son and I went to a boat yard and we got one of these old ropes they used to use on boats to pull the boats in that were about that big, and I, and I brought it home, it was all full of mud and everything. I had to clean it out. It was hard for us to carry. My son almost hurt himself carrying it and putting it in his car, and it really looked good. But that's the thread to that big needle. Yeah that turned out pretty nice so.

COHEN: All for the sake of art. Is there anything else you would like to talk about, or do you have suggestions of things that we might have missed [to son, Keith].

BLUESTEIN KEITH: No not really. I think you pretty much covered everything. Yeah. You did a fantastic job

BLUESTEIN: Yeah, I'm sorry about... When it came to the army stuff, I'm not that, into it as you know. It's hard for me to get things out of it. Okay, it's hard for me. I can't. I mean they're not strong things that are in my mind that I can just say, yeah, yeah, yeah, this thing here, because I never put that much importance on it, okay. It was always in the background so, things that I want to remember, okay. I mean. That, for some reason I wanted to get it over with, so I could get back to school, continue my education, then go on and do my thing, as a designer. That was my goal.

COHEN: Yeah. You had the focus and--

BLUESTEIN: I had a focus on that and--

COHEN: It was necessary, but it wasn't a pleasant interruption.

BLUESTEIN: That was a break in it. It was an interruption. It had to be done. The war was on. You know.

COHEN: Well, I will join the other people who have thanked you.