David Markow Oral History Interview

August 17th, 2012

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Hansley: Today is August 17th, 2012. This is Chris Hansley and I am conducting an Oral History Program Interview with Mr. David Markow, a World War II veteran. Mr. Markow, can you give us your full name and when and where you were born?

Markow: David Markow, no middle initial, born and brought up in New York City, September 20th, 1918.

Hansley: Could you tell us what is was like growing up in New York during the '20s and during the Depression?

Markow: I looked upon my surroundings, and my experience, as normal. I have found out since then in describing my childhood to people at my retirement home that they had nothing approaching it. I had a distinct memory, as an example, during the depression of men standing on the street corners selling apples, wearing Chesterfield overcoats. Those are the single breasted overcoats with velvet collars. I've been asked, "Well, why would they be wearing their overcoats?" That was their best piece of clothing, and just in case they had a chance at a job, they wanted to present themselves as best they could. They had sold all their other clothing. The other thing I remember about my childhood is how good the food was in the Horn & Hardart Cafeteria that was in our neighborhood, which was

Mid-town Manhattan. The Automat was on 47th Street and 8th Avenue in Manhattan. There were two things I remember most distinctly. The large African-American woman, I think their job requirement was that be large, to intimidate people. You could throw down; you needed your money in nickels, to play the machines. She had a leather thumb guard, and she threw nickels down always in groups of five. If you put a dollar bill down, you got four piles of nickels. They also had a cafeteria section in the Automat. My second memory is that out of the machines I got beef pot pie, for four nickels, and chicken pot pie for three nickels; it was good.

Hansley: That's the main thing. Right before the war you enlisted in 1940. What was the thoughts of the people around you, like your parents, how are they handling what was happening in Europe?

Markow: As far as my parents were concerned, they were very depressed at what was going on. I know that's an all-encompassing word, but the feeling on their part, or feelings on their part came through in just about all the activities. What had been a cheerful family before, I had an older sister and older brother, [and] I was the baby of the family. It was no longer cheerful. So far as my acquaintances and friends, after I enlisted, according to them I'd done the dumbest thing in the world. I was so tied up in my own mind with the reports and all the news channels over the radio, and then the newspapers of about what was going on Europe particularly with regard to the Jewish people, my people, I just couldn't keep my mind on the work I was doing which was public accounting and I was working for a Certified Accountant, which was necessary that I put in two years (cough)

excuse me, before I could apply to take the examination. I just felt that I was so wrapped up my concerns of what was happening in Europe, the clients were not getting my true effort on their behalf. I finally decided the devil with it and I went down to Whitehall Street. It took me three days to be accepted. And that was it. My parents were not involved in my decision at all. They did not object; neither my Mother nor my Father.

Hansley: How much time passed between your actually enlisting and before you actually entered the service before you headed for boot camp?

Markow: The next day.

Hansley: That was quick. Before, you were already in the service, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. What was the attitude at that point, where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Markow: When Pearl Harbor came, I distinctly remember that day occurs, it was a Sunday obviously, and half the company, I was at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland, and half the company was off on pass, either in Baltimore or in Wilmington. We were midway, we were on Chesapeake on US 40, and I was the Senior Non-com, I was a Staff Sergeant at the time. When I enlisted, I enlisted for one year. The one year was up, and I re-upped. I kept my grade which was Staff [Sergeant]. People started panicking. The lower grades didn't know what to do, and I was the Senior Non-com, so I told 'em what to do. Everything calmed down.

Hansley: When you first joined the Army, did you go in knowing you were going to be in the Engineers, or that you were going to be doing Ordnance, or did you go through regular boot camp first and then get assigned?

Markow: When I went down to Whitehall Street in New York City to enlist, they asked me, the draft hadn't started, they asked which branch of service I would prefer. I asked for the field artillery and they said, "There are no openings." At that time, if I remember correctly, the authorized strength of the Army was 125,000. They very rarely were at full strength. But I asked them then, "Well, what was open?" They told me it was Medical Corps, Infantry and Quartermaster. No, Ordnance, excuse me. All I can think of, of Medical Corps was being a bedpan chaser; in my mind I was too old for the Infantry. I was 22, so I said "I'll take Ordnance." I never figured out what is question, "What do they do?"

Hansley: When were you assigned to a unit?

Markow: We left for boot camp the next day. That was at Raritan Arsenal in New Jersey it was Metuchen. It was a black powder depository. I was there at boot camp until early spring. Very early spring, and then I was transferred to the 40th Ordnance Company in Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

Hansley: Would please give me the name of that arsenal again please?

Markow: Raritan Arsenal located in Metuchen, New Jersey, situated on the Raritan River which was not far from New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Hansley: Was most of your training done there or did you have to go to different places for training and if you could describe the training please?

Markow: What training we had, hardly existed. In boot camp you're supposed to be trained generally. I think most training posts are similar in their training. The Army had been caught short, I believe, because we didn't even have enough clothing available for us to be issued complete uniforms. It took a week after we have arrived at the arsenal, to receive shirt and trousers and underwear. I wore out my own shoes the first week, before we got GI shoes. Instead of receiving shirt and trousers since we're in the Ordnance, and we're supposed to be mechanics basically, we received coveralls. The other item, I was, the principal item of clothing I was issued. No cover, no jacket. I received the hat cord for the cowboy hat, the Stetsons, so I wore that around my neck, because I never got the hat. The training consisted of being able to take a rifle apart and put it back together. When we did guard duty we did not use rifles, we used shotguns. In case somebody was stupid enough to try to climb over the fence, they didn't want to take a chance on us missing the body and hitting an igloo with powder in it, and blow the whole damn place up. We used 12 gage riot shotguns, loaded with double 0 shot. When we had to present arms, we were told to put the damn pieces over our heads, not look at the muzzle before we blew our heads off. That was the training we got. We had one particular incident, which is we looked upon as a reward, we didn't know for what. President Roosevelt, in the winter of '40-'41, went to Philadelphia to give a speech. His train was to pull into Frankfort Arsenal, they needed a security guard, so they called upon the Ordnance Department to provide enlisted

personnel, we went down to Philadelphia armed with the riot guns. When the car came in with the President aboard, I happened to be on the post near where the car parked. I was as close as 20 feet from President Roosevelt when they carried him down the steps of the car and put him in the limousine. That's something I always remember.

Hansley: When did you start your training for Ordnance?

Markow: It was much like a job you get for the first time. When they figure you'll be intelligent enough to figure it out yourself. That's about the why I was trained down at the Proving Ground. I was assigned to the ordnance, Post Ordnance Property Office, which controlled the issue of all supplies for the training grounds.

Hansley: When did you did you go to Aberdeen? What is Aberdeen, because a lot of folks don't know what Aberdeen is.

Markow: I went down to the proving grounds in early spring of 1941. I remember because it was a sunny day. The Proving grounds are exactly what the name says. They have towers; visualize short towers, similar to our present radio towers. They were square and had wire running across them. The idea was that the artillery piece being tested fired a shell through these squares. There was a line of them that went quit a distance. They each gave a signal. That signal gave the ordnance people the information to make up what is called a gun book. Every artillery piece has a gun book. When a gun is to be sighted on a target, the gun book gives them

the information they need as to what degrees they have to work with in aiming the piece.

Hansley: Does each piece have its own gun book? Or is it a general book for that type of, same type of equipment?

Markow: Each gun has its own gun book. I might interpose. The Ordnance Department at that time was principally made up of commissioned officers. Not enlisted men. Their primary job was to be at industrial operations, private companies, operating on a government contract, and it was up to the Ordnance Officers to check and inspect what was being produced. To see that it was in accordance with the government contract. This is for weapons and ammunition.

Hansley: What was your opinion of quality of the training you got at the time and did that change later on and if so why?

Markow: It changed. The whole concept of the Ordnance Department as a supply arm for the line Companies was rather strange. The way they got their support, let's say, was by the line outfits, the various infantry, armed force cavalry, artillery. Each approximately four months or so sending their best Non-Coms to the Proving Ground, we had a school of maintenance. They were instructed on various aspects of the equipment. They then returned to their own companies and they were assigned the duty of keeping the ordnance, the weapons principally, in good condition. The change that was underway at the time I went in, it hadn't been publicized at all, was that there would be ordnance troops. They wouldn't be people sent in from a line. There would be ordnance soldiers. It was their only job

to do the work, the work of furnishing the using arm with ammunition. Be it small arms or artillery with weapons, and it was up to them to keep them in good repair and make sure that they were supplied.

Hansley: Did that actually continue during the war though, if that was what they were supposed to do?

Markow: That's exactly what they did.

Hansley: That did stay.

Markow: One thing we found, well, I don't want to anticipate a question...

Hansley: That's okay. What were the, living conditions, like at Aberdeen?

Markow: The first condition we had, we were raw recruits coming in and we were introduced to one of only three existing regular Army Ordnance Companies. That's all there were in the whole Army. The sight I'll never forget, was waking up on a Sunday morning, in this big group room, it was a hall more than a room, full of cots - beds, single beds, no double decker's, we had linoleum floors, it was a country style living, or some of the cartoons that you have seen. However the sight that impressed me was at the foot of every bed, was what we call a footlocker, it's a trunk that held all our goods. On top of the trunk were many empty bottles of shaving lotion. Now it should've been obvious what they were being used for. Remember we were getting paid $21 a month. Twenty-five cents of that we never saw, that was taken out immediately for the old soldier's home. Somewhere there's a rocker with my name on it. The reason there were empty

aftershave lotions, were the GIs were drinking the stuff. They couldn't afford the whiskey.

Hansley: How long did you stay there?

Markow: I was there until I shipped out in June of '44; '44, '43? Forty-three, forty-three is fine.

Hansley: You were at Aberdeen for several years?

Markow: Yes.

Hansley: What stands out in your memory at being at Aberdeen? You were there as a raw recruit and after two or three years you were definitely seasoned?

Markow: Yes! The thing that struck me, I remember we were given stories before we ever got in the Army, about how rigid everything was. That was not so in my experience, my personal experience. If you had what you thought was a good idea, and this is not being facetious, you were able to speak to someone of a higher rank be it non-commission or commission. Without being chewed out for being stupid. If the idea was impractical, you were told why. Let me use myself as a case in point. I went in, not even knowing what the ordnance did. When I left in June of '43, I'd been appointed a Warrant Officer. In order to be a Warrant Officer, you had to take an exam. Which was completely oral, and you appeared before a board. The board I appeared before had a regular Army Lieutenant Colonel as president and six other officers. Every single one of those other officers had been Non-Coms. They had been in charge of big details of people, in

the Proving Ground going through training and instructions. I felt unfortunately for me, since I continued being in the Post Ordnance Office, many times I had refused their requisitions. They may want a certain item and I told them they couldn't have it. They wanted a certain quantity and told them it was too much. These were the people who were sitting on the board and deciding whether or not I should be a Warrant Officer. They must have been fair because I became a Warrant Officer. And after being on the Post that long, I was given three days to get off. Because a wire had come in from the Pentagon, saying that Warrant Officer JG, Junior Grade, David Markow, serial number, was to be transferred immediately to the name of the provisional outfit. Post Headquarters sent a wire back, "We don't have one." "You do now, ship him." That's how I got off the Post. Let me also, if I might give a sidebar. The reason I put in for Warrant position, was that I had refused to go to Officer Candidate School even though our Commanding Officer had directed that the people in his Company were to take an exam, and those who qualified were to go to the class. I wanted no part of being a Commissioned Officer. The thing that worried me basically was that a Commissioned Officer also has to sit on Courts Martials. I didn't want that, I couldn't even think of it. I quoted an article of war and said as a, Officer of, a Non-Commissioned Officer of the first three grades, I have a right to refuse to go to school, and was correct. However, our Commanding Officer who was a Major General and figured what he did was really not smart for the future and I better get out, which is why I was sitting to take the exam.

Hansley: What were the first impressions of the men in your unit that you had? Did you know any of them already from maybe your neighborhood, or what did you think of the Officers?

Markow: I'm sorry. Which people that I knew?

Hansley: Men in your unit?

Markow: I hadn't known any of them.

Hansley: Did you become close friends with them or did you keep any of those friendships after the service?

Markow: I became friends with a few. I maintained no friendships afterwards, because I was suddenly transferred after V-E Day.

Hansley: When did you deploy overseas?

Markow: That's what the provisional offer turned out to be. I was transferred, the outfit was located at Newport News, and it consisted of about, I would say, we all got together in a huge what looked like an ex-hanger. I would say about 800 personnel. It turned out that only about seven or eight of that number was Warrant Officers. Everybody else in that tremendous crowd, were Commissioned Officers. We left that after get together we left within five days, shipped out.

Hansley: With that five days, did you have a chance to go back home, or to have your family come to see you off?

Markow: No. We couldn't use the telephone, and all mail was censored. We didn't know where we were headed for, but that didn't make any difference.

Hansley: You shipped out of Newport News?

Markow: Yes.

Hansley: How was the journey going across? What kind of a ship was it? What did you do on board? How did the sailors on board act toward the Army?

Markow: It turned out the ship we were assigned to, was a former cruise liner, the SS Mariposa. We were fortunate that we were the first Army unit to be transported, so much so that when we went down for mess, there was still, linen tablecloths, linen napkins, silverware, glassware, everything was beautiful, which was certainly a wrong impression. It was delightful. The next morning which was our first morning, we had pulled away from the pier and we were on the outer harbor. I had asked one of the crewmen, "Where are the rest of the ships in the convoy?" He said, "There are no other ships. You are it!" He must have taken a look at my stricken face and said, "Well the reason there are no other ships, is your ship is too fast. You will have air cover for two days, from the commonwealth states and you will have air cover from your destination for two days. Whatever time you're going to be in between, you're going to be on your own." That turned out to be about three days.

Hansley: You were out to sea for seven days?

Markow: Seven days. We still didn't know where we were going. All our orders said, if I remember the terminology correctly, it said for duty in a temperate clime, which meant, anyplace. When we packed, we had packed long johns, and tropical.

Hansley: How did you pass the time on the ship for the seven days?

Markow: There was a lot of gambling going on to while away the hours. The rest of the time was spent looking around in my mind at what I saw. Troops were writing letters; they were writing in books, which I guess were diaries, and like me, they just sat there wondering.

Hansley: Did you hear any rumors? What type of rumors, were going around the ship, as to where you might be headed?

Markow: One of the rumors was that we were going to be ending up in England. That nothing could happen to us really, because Eisenhower had requested the Army band. The Army Band was on board. Certainly they wouldn't let anything happen to a ship carrying the Army Band. Would they?

Hansley: Where did you arrive?

Markow: We arrived at Port Lyautey, L-Y-A-U-T-E-Y. The port was located near Casablanca. The grounds we had to bivouac, which was called Camp Lyautey. The only thing that made it a camp was the fact that we were billeted there. There was a pile of straw and a supply of mattress covers. We each got a mattress cover and told to go make a mattress. Which, we did. Once you're asleep it makes no difference.

Hansley: Did your unit get reinforced? When did you begin any operations, any preparations for the next operation?

Markow: For the next operation, you mean beyond Sicily?

Hansley: Yes. How long did you stay in Sicily?

Markow: I was staying on Sicily so far as the ordnance was concerned, was because we had to prepare the artillery for shipment to Salerno for the landing there. Unfortunately the Sicilians could not stop stealing. They would send children over the walls and fences to steal the hemp rope that we used to move the artillery pieces. Without the hemp, you couldn't move the trailer on the artillery, which means you couldn't aim it. We constantly had to have a supply of hemp. We were stuck on Sicily. The operation itself was over sometime in July. We were stuck there until the following, I think, March or April of the next year. Our contribution to the operation at Salerno was only a few relatively, few artillery pieces. Our own particular outfit did not participate.

Hansley: Once Sicily was fairly secured, were you able to have and R&R?

Markow: Wednesday was the R&R day. Apparently the officers in charge were kind of worried about having about having Warrant Officers on their hands because they billeted us all together regardless of the branch of service. We had a mixture of which turned out to be very handy, of medic, transportation, engineer, ordnance. When time came for R&R the efficient stock number system that the Army has was very handy. Because the same stock number applied to grain alcohol, 190-proof, regardless if it was used for lens cleaning in the ordnance, for straight

alcohol in the medics, for compass fluid in the engineers, we could get the alcohol, add some burnt sugar and make whiskey.

Hansley: When did you start preparing for you next jump?

Markow: When we got to Italy finally.

Hansley: When was that?

Markow: That was in the spring of '44. We didn't know it, but we were not going to continue in Italy. At least our outfit wasn't. We were, destine to go for the landing in Southern France. Before that, this other officer and I, we put on a crying act with our Commander, and got three days in Rome. We were stationed in Naples at the time. We went up to Rome for three days, and joke is, I can't remember how the devil we spent the evenings. All kidding aside, I couldn't even tell my family. There what, how did we sleep? We don't know. Rome to us was the first clean city, we had seen since we left the states. It actually did not stink of uncollected garbage that was there since the early days of days of Christianity. The Romans were very meticulous. We had a good time, in that as an example, when we went to the Vatican, we went to St. Mark's Cathedral, and course there were stairs leading up were the Swiss Guard is the foot, but the Swiss Guard is not about to challenge a couple of American soldiers from going up the staircase. We looked over part of the art collection, and then there was a balcony running around the base of the dome over the Rimini chair. The black twisted piers that were supporting the canopy over the chair. Everything looked like toys, the height was so great. I found a door blended well into the foot of the dome. The city was just

ours. We walked up. It turned out we were up on the top of the Cathedral, St. John's Cathedral, behind the line of apostles looking down on the square. We took some pictures.

Hansley: In your paperwork that you had sent us, you indicated that you had an audience with the Pope?

Markow: He had a great audience chamber, huge room, and the whole 8th Army had representatives there, including the US 9th Army, or the 5th, excuse me, got the numbers mixed, there were colorful uniforms all over the place. Ranks that we couldn't figure out, we tried, the feathers that were wore by the Brazilians on their shoulder bars, the South Africans, the Indians were there, some of them wearing turbans, they were climbing up the breviary to get a better look at the Pope, and just the GIs in their suntans. The place was packed. But they made sure that everyone of us got a picture of the Pope, supposedly signed by him, as souvenirs.

Hansley: When did you head into the South of France?

Markow: It was the 4th day, this was a three day pass, the Commanding Officer impressed on us, we damn well better, be back on time. The 4th day we packed up and headed for the airport. That was the first day we were back from Rome. That was my first airplane ride.

Hansley: Where did you fly from? Where did you fly to?

Markow: It was the airport, outside of Naples. I forget the name of the town there; it was something with Celio Vecchio, I won't try to spell it, because I'm not sure. We

landed about ten kilometers North of Marseilles. We got there and there was an Air Corps bulldozer there and one operator and one supervisor. The supervisor is to point out the places to be leveled. The fellow on the bulldozer drove over and asked us what, what the hell are you people doing here, we're not finished laying out the ground? The pilot of the C-47 recited to him the date, and the time and the location. We're here on time. The guy in the dozer said, "Ok! But, it's your ass to go back to the city." A six by six showed up, to take us. We were packed in the C-47, to take us back into Marseilles, and head, South. There was scattered rife fire on the way.

Hansley: Was Marseilles fairly secure? Or did you have to in and secure it?

Markow: The section of the city and which we were interested, which was the dock area was secure. The thing I remember is, there was a structure at the end of the, what shall I say, the waterway, which was the entrance, and it looked like a huge derrick, they soon corrected me, they said, "That's the half of the bridge that is still standing." They had the tower and the suspension to the middle and the road that lead out to it. But, the half on the left as we faced it was gone. But the other thing I can recall is up on the hill to the South of where we were, which would be towards the Atlantic, was a huge white church. It was the Saint Riquier. We went up there out of pure curiosity, it looked so beautiful, so white and whole. It was whole, we went in and suspended from the ceiling were models of sea going vessels. Sea going vessels dating back to B.C., they were ships this big, ships this big. Apparently it was up to the Captain if he wanted his ship blessed. Now the, sum of the ships looked like they were launched, as I said, B.C. but they were

carried over from whatever was there before. There's also one other site we saw that could've done without. Never saw a woman until then, without a head of hair. They had one and they were marching her and a huge crowd behind her. Turned out that she was a well know prostitute who'd been on the favorites of the German forces. They had shaved her head, and she was being marched down the main street of Marseilles which was call the Canebriere, I could guess at it'd be foolish. She looked terrible, they didn't hurt her, I heard later, they just left her there down at the piers.

Hansley: Did you come under any fire when you were leaving Marseilles? Or as you advanced?

Marlow: Not there, no.

Hansley: What was your next…?

Markow: Where did we go from Marseilles? We started our trip North we could almost draw, or lay a ruler down, we're right up the Rhone Valley and on up the Vosges Mountains, are on the right, and it turned out that our responsibility really 7th US Army and 1st French Army. The 1st French Army was the group, I forget the General's name I don't think it was Giraud, it definitely was not, what was the Frenchman's that everyone thought was so wonderful, they couldn't stand him? They came up from Chad in Central Africa marched.

Hansley: Are you thinking of Charles de Gaulle?

Markow: Yes. Charles de Gaulle. They hated him.

Hansley: Why?

Markow: They thought he was more political than military. Also, that he broke the code of the French Military Officers.

Hansley: What did he do?

Markow: Whatever code they had, the fact that he would hover, they suspected that there was something German there, too. Nothing they could prove.

Hansley: Did the mountainous terrain in the area cause you any troubles?

Markow: We lost three trucks. We had a transport truck company assigned to us to service the Ordnance Depots. The best route, route for them to go down to Marseilles was to hit along the river as soon as possible, because that was a straight run right down South. Unfortunately a strong wind at times blows from North Africa into France. These trucks were caught on a projection of the road by the wind and blown off the face of the mountain down into the ruin. We lost three that way.

Hansley: Did you ever come under any German sniper, or artillery or small arms fire?

Markow: The only small arms that were directed at me, was the time we landed North of Marseilles. Other than that it was artillery and air power that was the bane of our existence. We stayed South, I'm trying to visualize the map, we were headed North, it at to be South, we were headed North, the Voges on the right, and just out of there perimeter. Because destroyed Ordnance supplies doesn't do our people any good. What we had to do, and I was glad I was not in ammunition. My responsibility was in general purpose weapons and supply. My opposite number

was a Captain, his responsibility was vehicles. Both track and wheeled. I had small arms, artillery and fire control. The Lieutenant Colonel was still with us, he had the ammunition. Now to leapfrog our stuff, what we did was cannibalize some GI buses and convert them into ordnance shops, on wheels. We could send a mechanic or two in the bus, which is now a shop. Send them on into one of the using arms or the line companies that needed trouble and didn't have anybody there. But to leapfrog ammunition, that's a job glad somebody else had. There was one funny instance back in Sicily. Patton's idea was this, and he proved it. With us as the guinea pig, we didn't it know it at the time. He would lay out where we were to be, by date, by location and by time. There was one time we had an objection from the ordnance people in the 7th Army. Because when the infantry of the 7th were advancing one particular company, there was a picket line out front moving, and one of Lieutenants in charge of the ordnance ammunition came down to great them as advancing customers. The Army people objected to the ordnance being there before they were. Our defense was, I still remember our Colonel, Colonel Sievers, he, had a very low number. He was being made the goat by the 7th Army. Patton conducted the meeting, he told the ordnance of the Army, the 7th Army, his, Army that it would be taken care of. That satisfied them, they left, he, had our Colonel stay. Our Colonel told a few of us about what happened. The General walked over threw his arms around him, shook his hand and said, "I'm glad there's somebody in the god damn Army who can follow orders."

Hansley: That definitely sounds like Patton. What was your next stop after that? When did you go to the Battle of the Bulge?

Markow: The Bulge was to our east, no, to our west. We did not have to physically move. We just had to be sure our people were out of the way, that we had nothing moving across there move. They were moving right to left. Our movement was north to south. So we held everything back for that day. And they moved everything out of the way and proceeded further north.

Hansley: Where did you go north?

Markow: We crossed well we went through, what was the name, "guttural sound." There was, the French name was les-Nancy, that's it. We went into Nancy first, and there I'll never forget the sight, there were a group of guards, blue jackets, with white hats, walking down the street in Nancy towards me and my friends. As a rule, I had them stop and I said, "What are you people doing here, the ocean is the other way." He said, "Somebody's gotta take you over the river." We crossed into Germany at et-la-Chapelle and went through Kaiserslautern; I know you've got on the map. I'll never forget the stink of horses. There were dead horses to beat the band in Kaiserslautern. The wonderful mechanized German Army was soon using horses to pull the equipment. There were dead horses to hell wouldn't either. The allies had to use bulldozer to get the path cleared for the trucks to get through. It was awful. We crossed the Rhine at Ludwigshafen-Mannheim; you can try to use a map to spell those.

Hansley: I will.

Markow: On the way there I had a funny experience, it was a pleasant experience. I did know German, but as we were going though, I had three personnel carriers under

my command. Even though I was an Ordnance Officer, Chief at the time, I shouldn't have had command of anything. We were supposed to be paper people. I came to a big building with giant concrete pillars out front. I had enough German that could determine that these were German Government owned building. I took a right, had the weapons carriers come up the driveway, we had crow bars we pulled the lock off, and had a winery. I never saw a wine cask that big. If there had been no end in the barrel you could have driven a six by into there. That was the beginning of the winery. The troops of course wanted to take the first stuff there and go. I said, "No, no keep going." Each time they came to a stack, no not yet. We went in very deep and we loaded up the three weapons carriers, left, didn't destroy anything but the front doors. The doors were fine it was the locks that were gone. I told the troops, the men in the weapons carriers, these will be divided in two lots. You Non-Coms are going to have half of them in your office in your filing cabinets, and it's up to you to keep everything orderly. If I hear one instance of anything out of hand you'll lose all of them. The other half I gave to the Officers Club. The next morning I got a call from a Chief of Ordnance. I said, uh o, I'm in for it now. Sure enough I step in the door and he said, "Mr. Markow, I understand you have located a source of wine." "Yes Sir." "Do you think you can find me some?" He reached in his pocket. I say, "Certainly, I was figured on going back there." [I] pulled out a roll of bills, I said. "I didn't buy them." He said, "You'd be surprised and he handed me the money. See what you can get." He had been in World War One. Sure enough, we go back to that particular village, German village, the civilian government, the US civilian government had already

moved in. They took command of everything. You had to go to their office give them the money and they would tell you were to go to get the wine and how much you would get. That's how quick they moved on certain things. You recall that Shaf Headquarters moved to advance. At Shaf advance turned out to be Reeves. Reeves, is the headquarters of the Champaign Country. The Army moves when it has to.

Hansley: Where did you move to next?

Markow: When we crossed the Rhine, at Ludwigshafen-Mannheim, big sign, courtesy of some other engineering outfit. We went into a concern at place called Seckenheim, S-E-C-K-E-N-H-E-I-M, just the way it sounds. Completely civilian, except for the Concern, are you familiar with the Concern?

Hansley: No.

Markow: A Concern is usually an open space confined by buildings on at least three sides. The open country almost enclosed is used as parade and drill grounds. The buildings are used both for administrative purposes and military exercise and dormitory. It's a term used both by Germans and French.

Hansley: What were the conditions there?

Markow: Very peaceful. Very, very green, lush until you looked down the lower slop of a hill and you saw the cabins of the slave laborers. I didn't wish to go into them and never got near them. I could see them, I knew what they were, they, would be about 50 yards off the road.

Hansley: Were they still being used?

Markow: They had been used until we got there.

Hansley: Had they been abandoned or did your units…

Markow: They left when we had arrived. Seckenheim I'd say is about 15 kilometers before Heidelberg. We were given strict orders to stay out of Heidelberg. The Allies were treating Heidelberg as an open city, as they treated Rome. There were, no military obstacle, I guess is a good term, in Heidelberg, so they went around it. We stayed at the Concern in Sechenhein until VE-Day.

Hansley: How long were you there?

Markow: I would say five months.

Hansley: What did you do for those five months?

Markow: In those five months we continued to direct the support of the 6th Army group, which consisted of, the 7th US Army, and the 1st French Army. The French had the devil of a time routing the Germans out of the Voges Mountains. There was a time when we were still in France, I'll never forget that, we were in a town below Dijon, I forget the name of it, were we had our depot. This French soldat came in and he was desperate, and he had paperwork, and he needed ordnance. It was just him and the vaguely came in and the paper. I called up the Captain in charge of the company of trucks and told him how hard up the French were in the mountains, and would he be willing to furnish about four trucks. He assured me

he would. He'd see to it himself. I asked the Frenchman, the soldat. Does he have an idea of what is needed? Everything! We filled out the 4 trucks some other way.

Hansley: Did you go anywhere else after that?

Markow: No. When V-E Day came [and] there was a tremendous day. The next day I received orders to go directly to the Pacific. Fortunately I still had friends in the Adjutant General's office. I was able to get my brother's unit number. He had been, if I may go back a little bit. He had been, in civilian life, a chemical engineer. He's five years older than I am. He'd been drafted into the Medical Corps. He was made probably I think he was a Corporal. He got the raw recruit. Once they knew their left from their right, they were taken from him, and he got a new group. To say he was going crazy is putting it mildly.

Hansley: Where was he?

Markow: He was at, Fort Lee, in Virginia, which was the head of the Medical. I prevailed upon him; I convinced him that the Ordnance had an OCS on all posts. It was established there at Aberdeen. I told him that he could get in there. He didn't believe it; he said he knows nothing about ordnance. I convinced him by telling him, "You know how much I knew." He applied and he was accepted and he made it. He was transferred to the Air Corps. His outfit, were, I'll probably get the P number wrong, so I won't use it. It was a fighter squadron of Thunderbolts. When the war ended was in Kassel, Germany, K-A-S-S-E-L. His outfit had received, for their actions in Belgium the outfit had received the Croix de Guerre. He was the guy.

Hansley: What was your brother's name?

Markow: My Mother?

Hansley: Your brother.

Markow: Felix. The thing that was funny in our family, was that his outfit was being sent back to the states. I got back there accidentally. We couldn't ship out because the outfit was sent back down the same way we came up, back to the Marseille area. I was at the replace, at the staging area in Arles, which is in the Southern France waiting for a ship. My brother was to go out through Belgium to go to the states. I was headed for the Pacific. We finally got a ship, this was in August, the delay, was the God send. While we were, well just before we sailed, incidentally to rub it in, I was made Transportation Quartermaster to get our outfit aboard. The bomb was dropped. The war was still on, ship sailed. There were about 12 ships like ours. All, if you can picture them all headed for the Canal. One made it had to go through. Once you reach it, you were it. You went to the bottom of the list. The day after the bomb dropped we got our orders to come home. Then our luck changed. Home was to be New York Port.

Hansley: What was the feeling on the ship, um, when you found out that weren't going to the Pacific?

Markow: We almost attacked the Captain. It was a Coast Guard Assault Transport. He calmed everybody down and said, "Gentlemen please I cannot shift cargo in mid-ocean. However, I have enough supplies on this damn ship happy. So relax." It was a wonderful time. The thing that was funny though, when we got to New

York, we no sooner touched in at 52nd Street on the Hudson they shipped us over to [Fort] Dix. Dix got rid of us in a hurry. I called home, my poor Mother. Called home and, thank you, my Mother, "Dave where's Felix?" Without thinking I said, "What's a matter Mother, you want me to go back?" The poor woman was waiting for my brother.

Hansley: In the course of your Mother finding out that you were back stateside, she was wondering where your brother was. Where was he and when did he get home?

Markow: He was still in Belgium at the staging area, waiting for a ship. There was the big shortage. All the Allies had the same problem. The South Africans tied up shipping a long time, but they had to get home too. He got home about three weeks after I did. Within four days that I was home I took off for Memphis. My girlfriend was down there, she had joined the Navy while I was away. I wrote back to her, "Why? Why did you join the Navy?" She says, "Well all of you guys had left, it was too lonesome around here."

Hansley: Did you two ever see each other again?

Markow: I married my girlfriend.

Hansley: Okay, she became your wife.

Markow: She always outranked me. She was a Lieutenant in the Navy.

Hansley: You had to salute your wife.

Markow: Yes.

Hansley: What was the feeling coming home? Were you greeted with any kind of a parade, or anything like that?

Markow: We were ignored. It rankled, rankled deeply. We were ignored. At Dix, all we were to them was a problem. They said, "Get out of here. We'll let you know when we want to see you again." One of the men in our outfit was smart enough, and word got around fast. He said, "Are you going to charge us for this as our vacation time our leave time?" They said, "Why of course." "We're not leaving." They had no place to put us. "Okay okay! You won't be charged for it. Ride the town." Then we left.

Hansley: You were given leave basically?

Markow: Without being charged for it.

Hansley: Did you have to go back in order to get mustered out?

Markow: Yes.

Hansley: When did that happen?

Markow: We arrived there [in] August. I'd say about two months later.

Hansley: Where you on leave then?

Markow: That would be November.

Hansley: Were you on leave that whole time?

Markow: Yes!

Hansley: Where were you when you were on leave?

Markow: Back to New York City. Funny thing went down to see my girlfriend and we planned to get to, over in Arkansas, a resort town that's over there. We're checking out because we have to clear the guard at the gate, who was a Marine, my wife pulled out her ID to show him, I put the bag down and reached in my blouse to pull out my ID, and Marine Private, looked at me and said, "That's alright Sir, we know who you are." I was the only dog face on the whole post. (Laughing)

Hansley: How long was it before your future wife was able to leave the Navy?

Markow: She didn't get out until March.

Hansley: Of '46?

Markow: Yes.

Hansley: When were you married?

Markow: July '46. She picked the 14th of July, so I wouldn't forget the date.

Hansley: Why?

Markow: Bastille Day.

Hansley: Since you had been in France that would make sense. A couple of other things, did you hit any milestones while you were in the military or overseas. Obviously you hit your 25th birthday, any other big events, maybe in your family that you missed, because you were overseas?

Markow: No. I just remembered a funny incident, if I hope. This is back; I had just arrived at Aberdeen Proving Grounds. I was in for three months, as far as a civilian was concerned I was a soldier. But I was still a civilian. My folks would try to keep me supplied with goodies they knew I liked. The drop cookies that you pinch off, my Father, I found out later, would sit there and one by one, fill up the wax empty milk containers. I would also get one pound salamis. I received salami the first week I was down at Aberdeen. The office of the, for the Post Ordnance of Property, was in the same building as the Commanding Officer, who was a full Colonel, regular Army. [My] package arrived. I opened it. I always carried a Jack knife, I don't have it on my belt now but, I have a different knife in my pocket. I asked the Sergeant, everybody else in the office was civilian, well the two other people, two women who lived in the village of Aberdeen, would he like some salami. He said sure let's just step back in the stockroom. We went back there, I'm there, the salami under my arm, cutting the pieces, any amount, and the Colonel walked in. This is a guy who's been in the Army, my section Chief, the Sergeant he'd been in the Army all his life and he's as dried out as a piece of jerky. He's that thin, all wire and muscle and you could see him close his eyes, stood at attention, he could see his career just vanish. I'm standing there with the salami and my Jack knife. I'm still a civilian. I turn to the Colonel and said, "Would the Colonel like a piece of salami?" He said "Certainly. Thank You." Turned around and walked out. The Sergeant never heard word one from the Colonel. Not word one. (Giggles)

Hansley: I'm looking through things here quickly and just to see. Is there anything I didn't ask that you would like to cover?

Markow: Are you familiar really with what ordnance is?

Hansley: Go ahead and tell us about it.

Markow: Ordnance in general is the weapons of war. The Army in general divides it in two groups. We have the ammunition, which is everything from blanks through pistols, rifles, machine guns, artillery, and some of the artillery, when they speak of inch they are speaking of the diameter of the weapon. When they speak of a three inch gun, they mean it requires a shell three inches in across. That's a lot of shell. Overseas we didn't have to worry; I don't think anything over an eight inch Howitzer which is a hell of a heavy weapon. A Howitzer fires at a sharper angle than a gun, because it goes a shorter distance. The rest of the ordnance consists of weapons, track vehicles. I had annual maneuvers and in 1942 they had maneuvers down in Louisiana. At that time the Quartermaster called, which was responsible for all wheeled vehicles, trucks, jeeps, ambulances things like that. It totally collapsed, as in nothing moved nothing. They just wrote out a nice piece of paper and said in effect, from here on the Ordnance Department will be responsible for all tracked vehicles, as we were, and all wheeled vehicles. That's fine, except we didn't have the people. Most of the requirements were for Commissioned Officers. We began having Ordnance Companies. They called it the *Replacement Center* and the *Unit Training Center*. That was right on Aberdeen Proving Grounds where you had a section marked off completely for us. They were training that

way so that they could not only ship it, store it and know how to use it, but they could also repair the blessed things. They knew when they were safe to use and not safe to use. If we couldn't fix it, then it had to go all the way back to the States. So I noticed a big difference. In order to get the troops on hand for the wheeled vehicles, they didn't in my estimation, was the same thing they did in the Civil War, they went to automobile dealers and they said, "Depending upon the size of the outfit, if you would bring your service outfit with you, we would give you the rank of, and they were handing out ranks all the way from Captain to Colonel." They first had to go through our hands, at the Proving Grounds, to give them some training in being a soldier. We weren't going to teach them anything about the vehicle, that's was their job. They would come out and on their graduation day they would get stripes, they would get insignia. A lot of the automobile dealers, a tremendous number, they agreed to do it. There would be no punishment if they refused. They would just be included in the draft, that's all. Take their chances. It happened that way. We had Ordnance Companies maybe with one or two real soldiers in them, Ordnance people. Otherwise they didn't exist. Patton had the idea, he said, "We intend that since we have to a war, the smart thing to do is to be able to move fast. Be mobile. If the troops have to move fast, why shouldn't services and supply have to do it too?" Which means Medics, Ordnance, I mean the whole ball of wax. They had to get up off their duffs and go. All right! I don't envy the Medics anymore then I envy the Ammunition Officer. Considering all he had to do. But they did it. That was one reason we cannibalized the buses and made them mobile shops, we could send them out.

When we went like mentioned, the depot South of Dijon, we had satellite depots around, trying to get as close to the service, to the using arm, line companies as we could and still be able to operate. Those outfits also would send out buses. We'd get as far up as we could. The further up we got the smaller we had to be. That was it; that was the Ordnance.

Hansley: A little bit of a smaller target.

Markow: Yes, absolutely.

Hansley: Did you ever meet any of the higher ranking officers, like General Patton?

Markow: Yes. They went through. For instance, they did not have to go through protocol in order to talk to a soldier. I mention the Colonel and the salami, now he was a regular Army Colonel, and luck was you had to be in for a long time to make Major, let alone a chicken Colonel. They took him off they said, "Headquarters ought to be in Washington at the War Department." They transferred him there. They made him a General.

Hansley: Who was that?

Markow: His name was Hatcher. It was a small club. I mention Colonel Sears as being a Chief of Service, Chief of Ordnance overseas and I happened one day to mention to Colonel Hatcher, not that story it was something else, and he said, "I know Colonel Hatcher, I'm going to meet the ego." (Laughter) He knew him when.

Hansley: Anything else you'd like to add?

Markow: No. The thing to me was that the Army was not a bad place really. People insist, I don't know if they still do or not, but I'll give you an example, you had asked about the reaction of the people after I had enlisted. I mentioned some of my friends said that was the dumbest thing I ever did. What one said, "You should've gone into the Guard or asked about the Reserves." They thought that wasn't as bad, and that was the term they used, bad, as the regular Army. To them the Army was just a bunch of drunks [with] no value there. It wasn't that way at all I found out. The time when the Ordnance, when the War Department, decided that there would be ordnance enlisted personnel and they would keep the people they had. One of the men that'd been working with me, at the time, down at Aberdeen had been with the Cavalry outfit that's at Arlington, which is an elite force. He was so mad and disgusted, he, you couldn't talk to him. He got over it after a while. He insisted on me taking is white leather gloves. He didn't want them, and he refused to have them anymore. He said, "If you don't take them, I'm going to throw them away." The troops at Fort Myers are the only ones that wore the white leather gloves. There were troops in the old Army that were proud of their outfit, and they acted that way. I'm sure that broke off every once in a while, and had a drunk. Everybody, well almost everybody does. That was about it really. I'm certainly not sorry I went, and without having in mind that there was a war on or anything like that. I'm not sorry about the things I did there, I won't regret them. Some of them might have been done differently, but no, no.

Hansley: When you were, since you were enlisted. How did you and some of the other soldiers that you were with who had also enlisted feel about the people who came in as draftees, any animosity because they waited, to get a number?

Markow: No.

Hansley: To wind up in the war?

Markow: No, I said everybody has their own problems. You have many good reasons why you do or do not do something. No they just felt, as anybody would, I think, that you have a certain period of time in which you could bitch and bellow all you want about your hard luck or about your draw in the number and things like that. But enough is enough. If you went on too long you were soon told, turn it off. Other than that, no I would say no, we didn't have that. The funny thing is, I happened to mention the National Guard and the Reserve, a funny thing, I don't know what is on the report, but when time came for me, separation time, they give you a speech and they try to get you to join the Reserves. Frankly I was looking to join the Reserves but he continued his explanation, and went on to say of course the Reserves are not available to either General Officers or Warrant Officers. I could understand General Officers, because they're always subject to recall as long as they're alive. What about Warrant Officers, I could never get an answer. When the Korean affair was going on, I was married and I had one child, at the time, and it finally got me because I had a second one on the way. I wrote a letter to the Adjutant General's Office. Very formal, I asked, I told him what my age was and what [my] experience was, and gave him my serial number. I asked,

"Would I be subject to recall? Or what is my status with regard to be in the Reserve?" [I] didn't hear answer one! Not a thing, not a drop dead, which needs you nothing, nothing. I didn't bother anymore. When I had the third son, I figured, well three and out. I don't think they'd want me now.

Hansley: Then I think we've probably covered everything.

Markow: Okay.

Hansley: Mr. Markow, thank you very much for coming in we really appreciate it.

Markow: Thank you.

Hansley: We're glad to have your story and that you told it to us.