

MILLER: And he got up on this big thing and he said, "We're gonna take the next bridge on the river. It's crucial. Anybody want a gun can come with us!"

JH: Oh, for heaven's sake!

MILLER: (laughs heartily) And we all got guns and went down to the river. And by that time the bridge was fairly well taken, so we were just sort of then a marauding army on the loose. And he just . . . he jumped in his jeep, and I remember the sirens were going and he has his two big pistols on his . . . his pearl-handled revolvers. And he said, "Come on." He said, "Come on. We'll just go kill more of them!" (laughs)

JH: Dear!

So you joined up with Patton?

MILLER: So, we joined up with Patton for a very short period of time, and then the logistics of things was that we just couldn't move that fast with him. We were . . . we were ill and we were underfed. So, within a couple of days everybody had sort of straggled back in. And then the next echelon of people came in to start moving us out.

JH: So, you really went back to your own camp?

MILLER: So, we . . . well, then we were moved 'way back Yes, we were moved back to the . . . we went back to the camp because there was food there and there was medicine there by this time.

JH: Where was this?

MILLER: Well, this was . . . we were . . . we were probably about 75 to 100 miles north of the Italian border. We were quite close to Innsbruck . . .

JH: Ah! So you're back in Austria.

MILLER: . . . by this time. Oh, yes! We were . . . we were just moved south and south and south, you know, as we [the Allied forces] came down.

I've just recalled the first place I was taken

MILLER: to was Oder, Oder am Main. And then we were moved to Munich and then we moved further on down toward Innsbruck when we were overrun.

JH: Yes.

MILLER: So, then they really set up an airlift and they took us to a camp called Lucky Strike, which was one of the main evacuation bases when they were establishing the foothold.

JH: And where was that?

MILLER: Well, this was on the French coast.

JH: I see.

MILLER: And, oh, it was a swarm and nobody knew who belonged to whom. And this . . . this cowpuncher who had had an 8th grade education, came . . . we flew back together and he said, "You know, Ewing, you've got all this education," and he said, "you've studied architecture." And he said, "I'll never see Paris again." And so we sat . . . well, we thought about it for a day or so as we were sitting in Lucky Strike, and he finally said, "Nobody knows we're here." And so we jumped. And we . . .

JH: Oh, you did?

MILLER: Yeah. And we hitchhiked into Paris.

Now, if you can imagine us. I was in Yugoslavian pants and an American air jacket and an English cap and an American shirt, I suppose. And by this time, I had some GI boots that had been given me.

JH: Well now, could you walk at this point?

MILLER: I could walk numb.

JH: Your leg was better?

MILLER: Yeah. The leg was better. I'd had no medical attention, but the leg just seemed to have cured itself a little bit from all of its problems. It wasn't . . . it was looking rather poorly, but at least it wasn't hurting.

MILLER: The . . . he was worse. And he had a string of hand grenades strung around this way, and we both had some German zip guns of some kind. And we were hitchhiking our way in, and they thought we were part of the free French Army. So, we passed all the way in to Paris, you know. And we got to Paris and we must have spent 10 days in Paris.

We went to . . . we reported in again and told them that we had walked back from (commences to laugh) . . . and we had hitchhiked our way back. And so they paid us a second time, and that gave us enough money that we could stay there. (continuing to laugh) I don't think anybody's ever caught up with that. They were just handing out money to anybody who came through the stores.

JH: It must have been chaos.

MILLER: It was chaos. And Paris was on the other hand just lovely to somebody who hadn't seen anything at all. You know, it was springtime and the little street cafes were open and there wasn't much food, but the girls were pretty. And the banks and the Seine and the buildings were untouched; they hadn't been really bombarded.

JH: And you were free.

MILLER: And we were free.

So, we had a marvelous time. And then we went back to Lucky Strike and reported in again. Nobody missed us and the same people were still there. (laughs heartily)

JH: (laughing) They didn't even know you'd gone!

MILLER: And so . . . they didn't even know we'd gone. And we had two weeks in Paris, and we got back just in time to get aboard the boat and go home. (laughs)

JH: And they took you back to the United States?

MILLER: Right.

JH: Now, how did they . . . how did they get rid

JH: of you so to speak?

MILLER: Well, they took . . . they divided us into sections of the country and I went to Fort Ben Harrison.

JH: Oh!

MILLER: In Indianapolis.

JH: In Indianapolis. Was this because of the Middle West or did you just . . .

MILLER: Yeah. Sure. Because I was going to Toledo, Ohio . . .

JH: Yes.

MILLER: . . . and they gave me a . . . I got all new uniforms and all new this, and I was sent home on a rest and recuperation [leave] of about three months.

JH: And what was the date?

MILLER: Well, this would have been the summer of '45.

JH: Of 1945.

MILLER: And then toward . . . at the end of my rest and recuperation when I thought I was going to have to go back -- and we all thought we were going to the war in the Pacific -- why, they dropped the first A-bomb [atomic bomb].

JH: Ah!

MILLER: And then soon after that the Japanese surrendered, before I really got back into active duty.

So, by the time I then reported in, they were beginning to muster people out. And having been badly hurt and having been a prisoner, I was one of the first. So, I was released in time in '45 to get back to school, if you can imagine. (laughs) And entered . . . went back to the University of Pennsylvania. I think . . . I think that they had delayed . . . goodness, as I remember, they had delayed the opening semester until middle October or the first of November, something like that.

MILLER: And . . . so my life in the military came to an end at that point.

JH: Well now, did you continue on in the Reserve?

MILLER: No. No. No. I was mustered out with a disability.

JH: Ah, yes. That's right.

MILLER: Because by this time my leg was really acting poorly, and they really couldn't find out what was wrong with it. But it has been a source of annoyance ever since, as you know.

The welcoming home . . . you know I sat with a couple of fellows the other night talking about . . . they're both Vietnam /veterans/ and they're very much interested in having the nation recognize what they've done. And one is . . . one was in . . . it was difficult. /He/ wasn't a prisoner but he was certainly in the middle of the firefights over there, as difficult a situation as any of us faced in War II. And I must admit that coming home in that hero capacity . . . coming home from a war that everybody thought was great -- the war to end the wars -- coming home to all the lavishness of parades and people introducing you and people fussing over you, probably did a lot to ameliorate the hurt that everybody had. Of course, it was there. Of course, we were just scared out of our wits most of the time, you know. There's no time in any form of combat where it's comfortable. I don't care. It can be exhilarating and it can be And when you're out of it, you can say, "Wow! I'm glad I was . . . I did it! Or I'm through it!"

JH: But still terrifying.

MILLER: But still /it is/ just awful to have to go through and to have to steel yourself to do it.

And I think you're right. I think that only comes with young . . . young groups. I just don't know how . . . I don't . . . I could not do that. I have too much knowledge of what happens now.

JH: Um hm. Well, is there going to be something

JH: come of recognition of the Vietnam

MILLER: I don't know. We're . . . we're going to begin to start a country of people who ought to work on this. I think it's coming . . . I think it's here now. I think people are talking about it, how awful we treated those young men because we just didn't happen to agree with a war that went sour. And we blamed them! And we idolized the people who ran off from their country, and I just never could understand that.

JH: Yes. And this must hurt them a great deal.

MILLER: Why, it does! It does. You know to idolize people who ran to Canada I thought was just Well, I think you can disagree with your country and I think you can stand up and say, "I disagree" and, by golly, I will take the consequences. But to run away and then expect to come home, I think is a dastardly act. I don't see any bravery in that at all.

JH: Does this whole experience color your feeling about the military today?

MILLER: Oh . . . I'm not . . . I'm not one who lived in my military experiences. I've had too many fine things happen to me, and I never wanted to . . . this is one of the first times that I've ever sat down and sort of really talked the thing through. I never wanted to hang around the bar at the /American/ Legion and swap the stories. That just never appealed to me.

JH: I never have heard you speak of your experience before ever. You very successfully put that behind you.

MILLER: Um hmm.

JH: Well, you said to me when I asked you to do this that it was because so much more of life lay ahead.

MILLER: That's right. It opened itself up, and it

MILLER: wasn't the big moment in my life to have stopped a shell in an (laughs) airplane, you know. That just . . .

JH: Yes.

MILLER: The other thing is it was . . . that for many years it was a very emotional thing, having lost all of those men to whom I was very close.

JH: Yeah.

MILLER: And having to go back and see their families and talk to each one of the families about what they did and how they lived, you know.

JH: Was there a formalized responsibility on your part or was this something you assumed?

MILLER: That's just something that you assumed. I didn't see all of the families. Some of them were too far stretched and some didn't even want it. You know they didn't want to have to go through that.

JH: I'm sure that's true.

MILLER: But it was sort of a thing, well, why were you saved and why wasn't someone else?

JH: So, in a sense it was a burden?

MILLER: Well, there's the burden and it's a guilt for a period of time, until you get old enough and mature enough to sort of realize that it wasn't your choice one way or the other, you know.

JH: That's right. Fate did this.

MILLER: Fate did this to you.

The . . . the other thing about youth is that the deprivation . . . I don't really feel that I was deprived. Now, I . . . I wasn't incarcerated like the fellows in the Japanese prisons where they were just reduced to bones, where they just hurt you know. They were so starved or the diseases were

MILLER: so bad. I do have to say that with all of the cruelty that the German Reich exhibited in some ways, in other ways it was very much a part of our society that seems to like making war in a gentlemanly kind of way. There was a code, you know.

JH: Isn't that a paradox?

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: Considering . . .

MILLER: Yes, it really is.

JH: . . . the treatment of some sectors . . .

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: . . . at the hands of the Germans.

MILLER: And the American-Jewish fighter pilot got the same treatment as the rest of us although his kin in the German camp wasn't being treated the same way, you know. That's another paradox that even at that time of youth I thought was just so strange.

JH: Now since then, you have traveled in Germany.

MILLER: Um hm.

JH: Did you have any difficulty doing this?

MILLER: I did the first time I went back, yeah. My wife really talked me into going back. Once I was inside, it wasn't so bad. I ran across people who had been prisoners of the Americans, and I told them that I had been a kriegsgefangener and we exchanged sort of stories and it . . . (chuckles) it We muddled through. I'm not very fond of the German temperament in many ways which I find authoritarian. But I suppose that they're . . . there is as much variance in that people as we have in ours. (laughs) We have some authoritarian in this . . . in our set of circumstances, too -- in our cultural life.

JH: Ewing, we appreciate your sharing this.

MILLER: Well, thank you.

END OF TAPE