

The Ghost Army
JACK MASEY

[GA 416]

Q: Your name?

A: Jack Masey.

Q: What unit were you in?

A: Company B of the 603rd Engineer Camouflage Battalion.

Q: How did you get into this?

A: [laugh] (I was afraid you were going to ask that question.) Well, I knew ultimately I'd have to go into the Army. I was around- between 18 and 19. And through friends, every- (you know) Friends are very important in life. One friend did recommend to me that I go see somebody who was a colonel on Governor's Island. And he said, "What do you want? You want to get into the Army? Can I help you?" I said, "Yes. Is there any unit around where I can use my talent, whatever you want to call it? I went to the High School of Music and Art. You could call me an artist or whatever you want." He said, "I think there-there is a unit that you might be interested in getting into. And it's a camouflage unit." I said, "What on earth is that?" Said, "Well, it's a unit- It's-it's a decept- It's a deception, things to fool the enemy. It's-it's a- it's a- It's an outfit that has been training to fool the enemy." I liked that a lot. I said, "I want it. I'd like to get into it."

Q: You train in Tennessee?

A: Yeah, Camp Forrest.

Q: Tell me about your training in Tennessee.

A: Well, one of the interest- more [interestings] I remember is eating in Tennessee, rather than training. And again, this goes back to my friend Bill Blass, who was a great eater. And he always found fascinating places to eat in. And he tracked down a very good restaurant in Tullahoma, Tennessee, where- It was-was a beautiful inn, and these women made great southern cooking, biscuits. It was a sensation. I

remember that very vividly, even more than I remember what I did down there in terms of training.

But what we did down there essentially was sort of everything. I believe we—we (you know) we did infantry training, we had (sort of) basic training, and then we were learning about what it was like to do rubber equip—rub-rubber dummies, inflate them, fake them, camouflage them. So we were given a sort of a course in what we're ultimately going to end up doing.

Q: What is the Ghost Army and the 603rd doing?

A: Well, I think we were around essentially to serve as decoys. If-if whatever we did ever worked, it would work effectively, it was— We were a decoy unit. I guess we would have been—had terrific evidence of effectiveness if none of us came home alive. That would have meant that the Germans believed everything we did. But I'm not just altogether sure that was the case. But anyway, that was the intent of having us around, to mislead the enemy, to confuse the enemy, to make the enemy think that we were maybe a different outfit, or one that they should be worried about. In other words, we were the deceivers. I would call us the deceivers.

Q: What was your role? What did you do?

A: I, being a private in those days, and I think [rode] to the noble rank of corporal, I was again trained in (you know) "blowing up dummies," as we said, inflating rubber equipment that took the shape of tanks or guns or trucks, stuff like that.

Q: How did you inflate them?

A: Well, sometimes if things were— If things went very well, there were air compressors. If things went not so well, there were bicycle pumps. And if things went terribly badly, there were our lungs. And so several of us could sit down, blow in nozzles which inflated tubes, and which formed ultimately the shape of a tank or gun or truck.

Q: In a typical operation, how many and how long might it take?

A: Well, of course if we were do— Let's say we were doing an armored division or something. And so there would be obviously a number of tanks to be inflated. I think it— I don't remember exactly how long it took to do that. But a group of us, maybe 6 or 7, could get maybe a Sherman tank, which is quite a formidable piece of equipment, inflated roughly within a half hour. By lungs, a little longer. By air compressor, a little shorter. But roughly about that.

So sometimes we had to maybe blow– inflate a tank, two tanks, 20 tanks, (you know) artillery that went with the tanks. It could take you all day to do a sizable kind of presence of an armored division, let's say.

Q: What kinds of things did you have dummies of?

A: Well, we had dummies of, if I remember, the following. We had dummies of tanks. And I think there were maybe– I think mostly Sherman tanks, which was the war horse in World War II. Then we had inflatables of Howitzers, the 103 Howitzers. Then we had inflatables of trucks, all kinds of trucks: half-ton trucks, 1½-ton trucks, 2½-ton trucks. And these were rather remarkable, inasmuch as that at a distance of about 2- or 3- or 400 hundred yards, they looked very much like the real thing when inflated. So this is the sort of thing– These are the main things we inflated.

Q: It must have struck you as strange then?

A: Well, I thought it was a very fundamentally amusing experience. I thought it was very funny, in fact, that grown men were sitting around, particularly when we had to inflate my mouth, and we all had a very grand time doing it, joking and laughing as these things took shape. It was (you know) It was a little– a little bundle of stuff, which a tank was in, all compressed before. You opened the bundle, spread the-the nozzles around, and inflated it. I thought that was a very funny thing, and it never ceased to be funny for me. I kind of never took it seriously.

Q: Was that a common attitude?

A: I don't know. [overlap] I think– It was certainly my attitude. I felt– First of all, I was– I was rather cynical about the whole idea. And I didn't quite believe that, were-were we ever to get to Europe, were we ever to see action, that these things would actually be done. We're now talking about our training period in Camp Forrest. (Fort Meade was another place where we trained.) And I simply felt that, "Can this be for real? Are we going to sit around and inflate these things?" And indeed we did. So it was for real, in the end. And again, I'm rather skeptical about how successful we were in fooling the enemy, which I never felt was stupid. I think it was a formidable enemy. And again I– Now we're projecting to Europe. We're in– Now we've jumped to Europe. And we're actually inflating things for real, to draw German fire or draw German attention. And I just felt that, "Are the Germans really buying into this?" And to this day, I'm not altogether sure that they were.

Q: What were we seeing in that picture?

A: Well, I think what we're seeing in that photo is an attempt to create a reality where really none existed, a reality in terms of depicting a scene which we hoped the enemy, if it ever photographed it from the air or from the ground, would think was real—which means we were trying to simulate tanks or people— Well, sometimes— I never saw that, but I understand we also had simulated people. I'm sorry I missed that. That would have really made me laugh. But we didn't have that. Anyway, so (in other) it-it was a setting that was meant to deceive the enemy. And so I think— It's a combination of things: of a piece of inflated equipment, maybe a-a— and it's camouflaged to make it look even more real, which rather worked rather well, the idea of camouflaging something that was fake to make it a real thing. And so I think it was a scene made to fool the enemy; and I think to probably a large extent, if they ever were around to be fooled, might have been fooled.

Q: Effort to get the details right (shell casings, etc.).

A: Yeah. We wanted to create the natural debris that goes with faking something. In other words, if-if there were a situation where tanks were around, men were of course around to help man these tanks. What kind of stuff were these guys using? Re— Stuff thrown around. (in other—) We tried to simulate as closely as possible what an actual situation might look like. So there— you know, the normal refuse of what human beings leave behind, we tried to simulate. Also (you know) I guess if we were doing— I don't know to what extent— I don't remember if we [ever] did this. If we were doing a truck, we might have put a false sort of like unit on the truck, although I don't remember having done that with inflatables. We did it with real trucks when we were trying to simulate another organization. But that's another thing that we did.

Q: This must have been great training for your later exhibit work.

A: It was. I learned a lot, fooling people [laugh] and deceiving people. And it's stood me in very good stead for the rest of my life. [laugh]

Q: Tell me about the trip over, and Art Kane's shows.

A: Yes. I remember very much the journey across the high seas. It was one of the scariest parts, for me, of my whole experience in the war. I'd never been out of— I was born in Brooklyn, and the first that I'd ever been away from Brooklyn was in Manhattan, where I attended a High School of Music and Art. To go from

Brooklyn to Manhattan was like going from New York to San Francisco. But now suddenly we were— this was for real. We were going to Europe. A war was on. People get killed in wars. And even if we're inflating things, we could be among those who get killed. I was a little concerned, also quite worried about the journey across the-the Atlantic. There were lots of subs around. U-boats were everywhere. And that was a very scary experience for me.

What-what made it a little less unbearable were people like my friend Art Kane, who later went on to be an incredible photographer, fashion photographer. He would perform funny things on a stage aboard ship, when we weren't— when there were no U-boats around. It was broad daylight, we were having fun, and he like jumped around and made fun, and became a show girl, as it were. Some— He dressed in women's clothes, some sort, either he put together himself. So he was fun. And I kind of never forgot that, and we would become later much closer friends later on.

But I-I was quite concerned about— For example, at night it got spooky. Sometimes a strange siren would go off. And we were told that when the siren went off, all the lights turned blue (there was no light), we could not whisper. U-boats had this extraordinary equipment for picking up sound. And we were told on the voyage over, which I think took anywhere from 12 to 15 days (I don't remember exactly), this happened about four times. And I didn't like that at all. To me, it was probably the more hair-raising experiences that I had during the war, of not knowing what might come next. Were there U-boats around? Were they trailing us? Might they take a shot at us? And usually these alerts would last for a couple of hours. So you had to kind of shut up, stop // They said, "No sound." Except for this blue-purple light in the bunks wherever you were, be-below— much below the surface of the water. So that was rather scary for me.

Q: [inaudible]

A: I liked, however, when we were getting close to Europe, was like this Columbus discovering America. There we were. We could see in the distance barrage balloons. I think we came in near Bristol, city of Bristol. I'd seen those barrage balloons in newspapers and magazines. My God, this was the real thing. These were the Brits putting up barrage balloons to ensnare German fighter planes. And they were all around the big cities like Bristol, all around the coasts of Britain. And suddenly there was land. It was very thrilling. I felt very elated. To me, it was an excitement, and I won't forget the (sort of) landing in Britain, in Bristol Harbor.

Q: You were in England 6 weeks?

A: (yeah) I think, longer. I remember our being for months. We were there for months because the Brits had really invented deception. I'm sure the Germans had, to some extent, too. But remember, the Brits were remarkably good at it. They were .. simulating a fake army in Dover, opposite the Pas-de-Calais, to trick the Germans into thinking that there was being an invasion there. What we were trying to do then, I think, was to not let the Germans know where we might be coming, which tied up the whole— German army was tied up everywhere, this way. They couldn't concentrate on one area. Where we ultimately landed, which was Omaha Beach, that of course turned out to be the widest area of sea. Rommel always said (General Rommel, one of the great generals), "That's where the Americans are going to come. Only a fool might think they would come that way. But that's what they will do to trick us. We think they're coming from Dover to the Pas-de-Calais. That's too easy. It's too close. I don't believe that." Of course Hitler disagreed with him. And of course ultimately Hitler proved to be wrong, because (the) we indeed come at the widest gulf in the channel.

Q: Do you remember your arrival in Normandy?

A: Yes. I remember our arrival. Was very thrilling, actually. We were in southern England now. Again, still getting practice in inflating equipment. .. We knew we would be now really using this stuff. And we heard that D-Day had taken place. We all felt very good that we weren't part of that armada. We heard that the casualties were tremendously high. And that was of course D-Day. Now we might have been talking about D+ (as the— as the practice was), to call your arrival in Normandy anything that was added onto D-Day: D+3, that would be 3 days more; D+20, that would be 20 days later.

And so I remember it very clearly. We got on smaller boats, if I remember correctly, Higgins boats, which hit the beaches. We had to wade in. And that was very scary, although I knew we were fundamentally out of danger. By that time, by the time we landed in Normandy, American troops were on the high ground. We were fighting the Germans now on the high ground, so there was no danger for us, who were coming in that late. But it was still— This was Europe. Was a thriller.

Q: Did you see signs of the battle?

A: Debris, trash, garbage, sunken ships. We didn't see— I- There were a few bodies around, but very few. We knew carnage had taken place there, because we'd read about it in *Stars and Stripes*. They didn't give us the figures. I only learned the figures later on. I think we lost 2,500 in the first 4 hours of D-Day. Germans were waiting for us. Boats really landed in the wrong place. But anyway— But it was for me, as a young 18- or 19-year-old, I was in Europe. This was terrific. And I made

it alive. I got through the sea-infested subs. I got to Europe. To me it was a thriller. I was ready to go. "Bring it all on."

Q: (Sure, shoot.)

A: Some funny things happened before I left the States, in my outfit. I think we were now in Fort Meade, close to Washington and Baltimore. And I was one of the younger people in our outfit, I think. And a very amusing decision was made. This is all— This is part of our training. We haven't gotten to Europe yet.

And one day I was called in by the-the platoon commander, whoever he was, and said, "Jack, sit down. I want to tell you something. You've been selected." I said, "I already don't like what you're saying." "You've been selected to represent Company B in terms of taking a program and taking a study about venereal disease." I said, "What are you talking about?" "Well," [laugh] "we have a problem. Venereal disease is epide— it's an— There's an epidemic going on." Actually was quite serious in those days. Talking about 1943. And around all— Wherever GIs were stationed in the US, they were— they were contracting venereal disease. And I think the lieutenant who told me this said, "And you've been selected, and I think you should feel honored." I said, "Now I'm even more frightened about taking on this assignment." "And we're going to send you to Walter Reed Hospital. And you're going to learn about venereal disease." I said, "Why me?" "Tell you why you. We find this— Officers cannot connect with enlisted men. They won't tell us. They won't connect. They won't— And if they have a problem, they're not going to go to an officer. We feel they'll be more comfortable going to one of their own, an enlisted man." I said, "Okay." "And you"— I said, "But of all the people in our out"— "Well, we feel you're kind of like— (you know) people are going to sort of (you know) kind of confide in you." I said, "Is there an up side to this?" They said, "Well, yes. You'll be in Baltimore. You can have fun. You'll be at Walter Reed Hospital." I said, "I'll take it."

I went to Walter Reed Hospital. It almost wrecked my life. It was kind of a terrifying experience. I learned about the notorious venereal diseases, which I [almost] never even knew about. Syphilis and the advanced different stages of syphilis. Gonorrhea. And this is taught at the hospital. We were able to look at cases in the hospital of people who were suffering from these diseases, men and women, just to give us a sense of what it was about. And even a disease (and I never forgot it) lymphogranuloma inguinale, one of the roughest, most treacherous venereal diseases, very special strain. So I remember this course very well. My— Again, I was there to go back to my troops, back to my buddies, and say, "I'm here. If any of you ever have a problem, come see Jack Masey. And you can at least confide in— and I'll tell you what to do." And of course we were told, if anybody came to us, we of course— we couldn't treat them, obviously, but we would send them to the nearest doctor. Okay.

I come back from this training. As I arrive back in the base, I have a new title, chancre mechanic. I was called the chancre mechanic. I thought that was rather hilar— And it haunted me for the rest of my-my years. And so okay, I'm the chancre mechanic. People joke with me.

Now, to end this particular tale, I never found a client. No one ever came to me to tell me either they thought they had this venereal disease, or what to do, until almost at the end of the war. We're now in Luxembourg (I'm now fast-forwarding) and I'm still— I am the genius in terms of detecting venereal disease. I'm waiting for somebody to come to me. And finally it happened in Luxembourg. Someone in our outfit, who's in my book of cartoons, said, "Jack, I need to talk to you. I have some strange symptoms about something." I said, "I'm excited. Tell me what it is." "I-I don't know. I have had this emission of pus." I said, "Oh. I think I know what you've got. Keep talking." I was very thrilled. I finally got someone to confide in me. And he described more of what he had. Said there was no pain, there was no— I said, "By God, you've got it. You've got the clap," I said. He said, "What's that?" I said, "You've got gonorrhoea. And it's okay. When did you meet this girl?" I knew all of this. Three or four days ago. "Go immediately to-to our hospital and check in. You're okay. You'll be okay. There's penicillin." Said, "Jack, I'm so happy. Thank you so much." It's the one, one connect I made with this training in Baltimore. And he never forgot me. He went— Everything was fine. They treated it, he later got married, had three kids, and it was a happy ending. So anyway, that was just a little aside.

Q: It could put you off sex for the rest of your life.

A: It almost did. It was really a terribly shocking thing. I saw the manifestations of all of this. But anyway, it went to show you, again the Army mis-cued. It wasn't that just because I was an enlisted man that people would break the doors down to come to me to tell me their troubles. Not at all. Fact, they probably would have been more comfortable with an officer. Anyway—

Q: One of your first actions in Normandy was in Brest. Tell me about it.

A: Well, I remember Brest simply because it was probably the most detailed fakery we ever pulled off. I don't remember anything of the magnitude of that: to mislead the Germans into thinking that we were part of some army headed towards Brest, so we'll keep them engaged while the real army was going in the other direction. So the Brest— I— For me, that was the most important and memorable show we put on. And again, we went through the whole— the whole routine. We set up fake tanks, and here we also set off these canisters which exploded and looked like guns going off, artillery pieces. We were firing, we were shooting the hell out of the Germans. Of course nothing was coming their way,

except I think there was a real artillery piece somewhere near us that fired an occasional round. I always felt that the Germans were highly amused at this, that this big ruckus is going on, and we're throwing— I mean, the firings are going on, and everything was very carefully timed. You know.

There was a firing of-of-of a— what would happen if a Howitzer went off, and then the report, which was faked by a fake sound. And so it was— the Germans were saying, “Interesting. They fired that, we just heard the sound, it means they're 3 miles [away] or something. But why-why isn't anything hitting us?” But nothing did. I do remember this, that I think they fired one salvo, just to say, “Look, you nuts. We know what you're up to. Don't-don't pull our leg too much.” And some people were hurt by that one. But they did fire one, which scared the hell out of us and we had to jump into our foxholes. That's about the biggest piece of action I ever saw in World War II, was the Brest experience.

[GA 417]

Q: [not recorded]

A: But remember, we were draftees. We were a different army. We were not the volunteer army. We were not the professional. We were not the Hessians. We were draftees, fundamentally. So a lot of us didn't want to be in the army. So it's nothing— It really had nothing to do, in a way, with-with a— with an army, as much as it had to do with serving your country. Hey, we're going to be drafted, we have to do our job, get out of it alive.

Q: Some general had this idea, had to convince other generals, have meetings.

A: You're talking about the camouflage corps now, or just in general?

Q: I'm talking about the deception, having the 23rd.

A: Oh sure. But this was again start— The British take full responsibility for this. They had refined it, they knew what they were doing, they had already set it up in Dover, as I said, and we were— They'd done it in North Africa. The British had been doing this a great deal. I think there was a wonderful quote by Churchill, who said, "The truth is so important that it must always be accompanied by a bodyguard of lies." .. I think that sums it up, what-what deception is about.

Q: Did you have any bizarre experiences with inflatables?

A: Well, again, we were told to be very careful in our handling of this rubber equipment, because it looked so astonishingly real at a distance. So of course we were told under no uncertain terms never, ever carry an inflated jeep across the road. One person could do that. That would be rather alarming, [laugh] present us as a bunch of supermen to watching Frenchmen— French (no) farmers. You had to deflate them and carry them across and put them up. So—

But in terms of having any experiences with respect to these inflatables, I don't remember anything noteworthy. We put them up, we inflated them— In fact, I don't think we did that many simulations. Brest stands out in my mind as the most important one. Maybe there were 8 or 10 others over the whole period of time we were in Europe.

Q: As time went by, they did less of them and more special effects.

A: That's right. They also did more of making sure you were seen in local French pubs with a new patch on your shoulder. So that spies, wherever they might be lurking, would be able to report in, "Hey, the 3rd Armored Division is here. We didn't know they were around." [In other words], faking stuff just by either going to local bars and chatting and being friendly—we were briefed on all this—driving jeeps around with special insignia, particularly arm patches which—My shoulder patches— My shirts were all wrecked from having sewn so many different shoulder patches on them. I remember that. They would have to get new shirts after a while, because we were giving out. So I think that's where— I do— I don't even remember the incidents that we did this in, but we did a lot of them.

Q: You were driving around in trucks, too?

A: Yes. We drove around in trucks, to be seen, and the trucks would have certain (you know) markings. "Aha. That division's in town. We didn't know that." Reports are going back. So—I think this—this was rather important. But I should underline something here. I don't know if viewers watching this program will know this.

We had broken the German code. We knew a lot. We knew how effective we were being. We know what their plans were. We knew a lot. So we were like an asterisk, I think, in terms of the real damage that had been done to Germany. The British broke the code. It's brilliant, and—

Q: Jeep crossing road—that was one of two rules?

A: Oh yeah. There was another rule. In addition to not carrying inflated equipment across the road, we were instructed in no uncertain terms never to use the rubber equipment—for example, a Sherman tank—to make love on. This was a no-no, [laugh] because it— the whole tank would go up and down, and that would be seen (you know) by viewers as something rather odd. No lovemaking on any kind of inflated equipment.

Q: The young lady might have some suspicion.

A: That's true. Exactly right. But we were such sort of male chauvinists then, that nobody else counted. This is, remember, a male chauvinist time. We were GIs. We were in war. Anything went. Okay?

Q: Tell me about your book.

A: (Okay.) One thing always appealed to me or intrigued me, from the moment I got into the US Army. Everybody else who was in my outfit, they looked like Martians half the time. I'd never met people like this. They were from Colorado, they're from Tennessee, they were from Wisconsin, Pennsylvan— I'd only known Brooklynites or Manhattanites. Now suddenly I was thrown in to another world. I was intrigued by this world, by the way, and the people who constituted this world, their accents, the obscenities they threw out, the creativity of obscenity (which was very much surrounding us all the time), the hilarity of the obscenity. So I got involved with these people I was part of.

And I - This is what I kind— ultimately led me to maybe— And I liked drawing. I did it— I did it in high school, in Music and Art, before getting into the Army. I liked making caricatures. And I thought, "My God, I've got the raw material out here. It's surrounding me. I'm going to draw every one of these crazies." And I did. And I had somebody draw me as a crazy too. And I-I got very intrigued with them. And to this day, there is still a lingering there, how different they all were, how— in every way: in upbringing, in prejudices, in outrage, in good-naturedness, in what they did. So this— The human condition, I liked, which is why— which led me to do this book.

Q: The 603rd wasn't all artists.

A: By no means. In fact, the other day I went through my caricatures myself, and picked out from those caricatures how many were artists and how many were non-artists. I think I had done roughly about 60 people, all told. No, about 80, something like— 60 or 80. But 70% were not artists at all. They either were cops, they were shoe salesmen, they were farmers, and the rest were— So the most were not artists. There're very few, at least in my company. I don't know about the other companies. I would say considerably fewer were artists. And we were looked on as kind of nut cases by the hard-working, no-nonsense (you know) backbone of America, the people who work for a living and didn't sketch. We were looked upon as slightly freakish, I felt. And I think we probably were.

Q: You printed this up as a book, in the war.

A: That's right. I-I— When I made all these drawings—and I was making them all the time, and people posed for me. And I'd say, "Look, I want to do a collection. I don't know. I'll just give"— And some said, "Why don't you do a book on this, Jack? We'd love to have a copy of this." (you know) It's-it's a remembrance. So I said, "Okay. I don't know if I can afford to pay for it. Would you give me a buck apiece or something?" And I think I got a buck apiece from every— or 2 bucks apiece. I went to Luxembourg, found a printer there, and I said, "Look, can you

put these in some kind of book form?" He said, "Sure. That'll be so much money." And I printed up maybe 100 or 200, and just— and-and gave them out.

Everybody kept them. They were souvenirs. Their names and address— There's a lead into every company— (I'm sorry) every-every platoon, which gives a name and address. I [think] none of those make any difference now, after like, wow, 50 or 60 years have gone by. But the point was to use that for everybody as a kind of way of keeping in touch with one another. War, remember, now is— We were in Luxembourg. Was getting near the end of the war. Just before the Bulge. But the Bulge was near the end of the war.

Q: I'll start out with this guy.

A: Bill Blass.

Q: Tell me about him.

A: Great guy. Wonderful. Knew what he wanted, [which is] more than the rest of us did. Read *Vogue* in his foxhole. Was— Wanted to be in the fashion world. And we— as we all know, got there triumphantly.

Q: What are we seeing in this?

A: What we're seeing here is Bill Blass trotting around, strutting [around]. He's always very well dressed. The rest of us were a bunch of slobs, but not Blass. He was always dressed to the nines, eve— We all had the same uniforms, but leave [it] to Blass to have his pressed or something. The rest of us never did. And he was a marvelous guy. Regrettably, he died a few years ago, and I lost a great friend.

Q: How about?

A: Paul [Seckel], a work of art. Paul Seckel. He was originally from Germany, Berlin. His parents had been teachers in Berlin. They left Germany not because they had to go; [because] they hated Hitler. They weren't forced out. They went to Britain, stayed there for a while, and then Seckel came to the States. Seckel, in a way, is very important to me in my kind of development. Seckel was a real certified foreigner. [laugh] He was a German who became an American citizen and got drafted into the US Army. And I found him intriguing. He was the most cynical person I've ever met, and still is alive today, and is as— still as cynical of— the most cynical person I know. Everything was suspect with Seckel. Everything. And he was usually right.

He also, as a foreigner, loved our outfit. He could not believe his eyes, that people in Tennessee (used to call them stump jumpers) would behave the way they did. He'd never seen anything like it in his life. And through his eyes, I began to see my fellow GIs in a different fascinating, freaky light. It was a great experience. And Paul was marvelous person. I shouldn't say "was." He is. [Fortunately] he's had a stroke and he's suffering right now, but he's-he's terrific.

Q: Who is this? I love the drawing.

A: Yeah. This was a wonder [guy], [Portzlein], a very tough son-of-a-bitch. We had tough guys in our outfit too. They were the, in a way, the most frustrated, because they felt they were a bunch of panty-waists like us, these artists. They were really tough guys, and they felt very frust—I think they really wanted to be in the infantry. The very few of us who are artists definitely did not want to be in the infantry. So you had a number of people who we-we had great difficulty connecting with, because these were working people. They were tough guys. We wouldn't necessarily— (I mean) Maybe a lot of them didn't have— Maybe a lot of them never even got through high school. Certainly not through college.

Q: Real culture clash.

A: Culture clash. It was—which is another delicious thing about the mixture of— I should say the red and the blue states. Forgive me, but that's what it's kind of like. And we're together. And it kind of worked, in a way, then. It was a common enemy, the Nazis.

Q: What is he holding?

A: He's holding like a blow torch. It's a blow tor— He was always building something or preparing some— He worked in the motor pool, I know. It was for fed— repairing automobiles or trucks. And he was a tough guy. He did the dirty work, not like— We guys were sketching around and having fun, and being frivolous. And he-he-he was— And I-I, by the way, liked immensely the non-frivolous types. I liked guys like this, although I didn't have much to say them. I— This was another awakening for me. Hey, this is America. It's a different place. It's got all kinds of crazy people in it, people who don't necessarily agree with you. But it's— In a way, it was a microcosm of what ultimately was going to become of America. Not only were we in different parts of America; soon the world would come to America. And there were different worlds there. .. There were the Pakistanis, there were the Indians, there were the Japanese, there were— So— But it was a microcosm of the people within the United States.

Q: Different states of mind.

A: Yes. And different states of mind.

Q: [inaudible]

A: Arthur Shilstone. Very nice guy. Wonderfully talented kid. Very— I was very fond of him. By the way, we did kind of create (we might call it) a group of friends. Shilstone was one of them. Blass was another. Seckel was a third. The— We didn't consider ourselves aloof or above anybody. We—we .. a lot— a lot in common with one another. We were all involved in design of some sort, whether fashion design or illustration or drawing. (you know) So we had a commonality. And I would say, out of the group of artists, maybe ten of us were like a group within a group, who did a lot of things together.

Q: You've made Arthur look like a movie star.

A: Well, he wa— He was a movie star. He was. I-I drew it as I saw it. Very handsome guy. Very— We were kids, remember. We're sh— ricocheting back (I don't know) 60 years. Was a very dashing fellow. And I met him the other day, and I think there's still a lot of that dash there. Doesn't quite look like that, but—

Q: You talked about this gentleman.

A: George Vander Sluis. Wonderful guy. Something— Let me tell you something about George Vander Sluis. I think he was from the west, I don't remember where. Maybe Colorado. He was a westerner. And very calm, very cool, very urbane, very elegant person. We loved his name, Vander Sluis. None of us— I think he was Swedish, [of] Swedish descent, or Danish. None of us had ever heard of such a name.

One night, I recall something, an incident. We'd just gotten— We'd just gotten to Bristol. We were now bivouacked in the Midlands, around Leamington. German planes were coming over, bombing Coventry every night. We were also— I was quite worried about: What if one of those bombs, you know, would drop before they got to Coventry? German planes came over every night, were— destroying Coventry. We were all lying in our bunks, in some British barracks. And suddenly we were like hysterical. Some— “Vander Pool. No. Vander Nut.” And we started joking around. Everybody in the bunks came up with a version of his name. He was screamingly loving it. He- It was an- It was a great night, I remember, as we all shrieked our version of Vander Sluis. And so that was another

kind of nutty, nervous letting— energy getting out of control, just so we could cope with all these fears we had.

Q: George Martin.

A: George Martin. Another work of art. And I always say this with a good connotation. George worked, I think, for a record company, very serious one in New York. Very erudite person. Smoke a pipe, which means erudition. And had a wonderful sense of humor. He was part of our club, too. And he— He was loving France. He was older than many of us were. Maybe he was real old; he could have been 25. That to us was old. Twenty-five year old, it was old. Thirty, forget it. You were over-over the hill and ancient. And I—

Q: George is still alive.

A: Have you talked to him at all?

Q: No. His memory is not—

A: He was a marvelous guy. .. Good natured, detailed, love— and loved France. I remember that about him.

Q: You got all the stuff in his pocket.

A: Yeah. Pencils, he was forever drawing—

Q: (Sit back.)

A: (Sorry.) He had pencil— [laugh] pencils galore. He was always having pencils, because he was forever sketching something

Q: Who is this guy?

A: This was the creator of all this madness, probably the maddest one of the whole bunch, me. I— It's a drawing by my friend Paul Seckel of me. And I think it's wonderful. I think it's the best drawing in my book. Seckel, by the way, is a terrific artist, and he captured my insanity there. And— Anyway, I'm very devoted to that drawing, and devoted to him. That's me, think—conjuring up all these crazy people.

Q: What's wrong with your uniform?

A: I was a mess in those— I was the opposite— If there was an opposite to Bill Blass, I was it. I-I kind of— I said, “I just want to get out of this war. I want to get home.” I didn't give a damn what the hell I wore. I didn't give a damn what the hell I looked like. I just wanted to— (you know) By the way, the war was getting— grinding us all down, although we were very safe generally in it. But a lot of us wanted out. And I guess I just didn't care enough to— (Let me take a break for a second.) I just didn't care enough to—

Q: Go ahead.

A: (Here I am.) No, I-I— I just didn't think appearances were-were something that were important right now. I thought getting through this damn thing, get there a— get through it alive, get back on the troop [shit] and go home—troop ship. So that—that accounts for my rugged, sloppy behavior, which Seckel called—caught beautifully.

Q: This gentleman, Buzz S....

A: Yeah. He was a tough guy. And—

Q: What has he got in his hand?

A: (Let me just see that.) . . .

Yeah, he— In this drawing— He was a gung-ho guy who was extremely frustrated, being way behind the lines and not being— I think he would have loved to have been in the infantry. And he was involved in an episode. I-I-I can't point fingers at anyone, but he was involved in an episode which was a little traumatic for all of us. We—

At the time that this episode took place, we were watching, ironically enough, guarding [the] slave laborers. It was now virtually the end of the war. This was in Germany. We were now in Germany. It was virtually the end of the war, and these people, these slave laborers who had been locked up by the Germans and tormented by them for years, had just gone crazy. One can hardly blame them. They were pillaging, they were killing people in town, and they had to be guarded so that they wouldn't kill more Germans. So we— Now we were guarding the Germans against the slave laborers, whom they had captured. It was kind of an irony here. And I always felt very (sort of) odd about that, but I knew we had to maintain order. After all, we were the occupying troops. We had to maintain some peace here.

One day, few of these kids (they were very young kids) broke out of their compound and were terrorizing people nearby, in-in-in a forest nearby. And we had— We were given orders to go find these kids. They were young— They were teenagers, I think, teenage Russians, who probably had been captured when they were little kids along with their mothers and fathers, just taken to Germany. Sometimes the Germans captured whole families and brought them— in Russia, brought them to Germany.

And so .. they were spreading a kind of terror. And I think this gentleman felt that this was too scare and he had to stop them. And he shot them. Now, I don't if this was— I don't know— I was not— Well, I was close by when this happened. I don't know if this could have been avoided. Probably could have. And maybe again it couldn't. I-I'm not about to be a jury, a judge and jury here. But they were killed. This shattered me, because it was the first time I'd seen up close— I'd seen a few bodies on Normandy Beach when I got [in], hadn't seen anybody dead since—this episode. And these two kids were shot in this forest, lying in the floor like (I don't know) sacks of flour. And we had to throw them on a truck. They were dead. I never quite recovered from that.

Now, in fairness to the shooter, I-I don't know what the circumstances were. I would have hoped that it wouldn't have been necessary to do that, but they nevertheless were killed. I— That's all I have to say. I-I think he might have quite a different version of what took place. And so I-I— again, I didn't know all the facts, but I knew enough to know that—

And I thought to myself, “Here I am. I'm 19 or 20. Here they are. They're 16. What kind of a blow is this? What kind of fate are we dealing with? Why am I the lucky one, and why are they the unlucky ones?” That went through my mind. It made a big impression upon me, the idea of fate, of being in the right place at the right time, and not being in the wrong place at the wrong time. A throw of the dice, which I— It's carried through my whole life this way. I've always looked at things that have happened to me that were good, as lucky breaks. Nothing have— to do with ability. To have ability is to be lucky. Not to have ability is to be unlucky. So this was important to me. I think it made a dent upon me, of consequence.

Q: You guys are in—

A: Luxembourg.

Q: Tell me about it.

A: Luxem— yes, Luxembourg. It's just before the Battle of the Bulge, some time in December '44; we're having a great time. Why? For several reasons. One, victory looks like it's in sight. The Allies are pushing like crazy towards Germany. Fact,

some cases we've crossed the Rhine. This is looking good. We're getting to Germany. And so there's a feeling of victory around. There's an abandon. Hey, looks like we might be getting home soon. We're now billeted in Luxembourg. We're with a lot of Luxembourg families. And all kinds of odd things are going on. Suddenly we're acquiring girlfriends. We're acquiring wives of husbands. This was going on. And everybody, to our— in point of view, in our view, seemed to be slightly enjoying it. I mean, we're not— we're— I think we probably caused several divorces while we were there, but we're having a good time, because we know it's near the end.

Then, whammo. Out of nowhere. (I mean) We were— I was in a building at the time, and somebody— We had little apartments there, with— We were parts of families. We were in their second bedroom or something. They said, "Pack up. We're going. The Germans are coming." Said, "What do you mean, the Germans are coming? Isn't the war over?" "No. There's evidently been a breakthrough, a surprise counterattack by the Germans through Belgium, through that—this whole area, and they're on their way to Luxembourg. We got to go; we're leaving. You have an hour to get all your stuff together. We're getting out of here. Trucks are waiting in front of this building. We're retreating." [We said], "Retreating! We're supposed to have won this war, or on the [verge] of winning it." I remember, was very depressing moment. What's happened? Where did these Germans get this suddenly eleventh hour energy from?

So we pack up, we rush down. We didn't have much to pack up, actually. And we got into trucks, and we now were leaving the city. And I remember this scene of leaving Luxembourg. When we got into Luxembourg, // American flags flying. As we're leaving Luxembourg, there're swastikas flying. This is no— in no way in— meant to indict the Luxembourg people, but it said something about Europe. They were victim to these hordes coming in all directions, and they had to be prepared to survive. I understand— It taught me about survival. I never found them duplicitous. I probably would have done the same thing, had I been a Luxembourg family, having been occupied by the Germans, then occupied by us. Now we're being re-occupied by the Germans. I was very sympathetic. But it was an irony.

As we were leaving, the enemy flags were flying. Course it didn't last long because we did stop the Germans ultimately, and in fact destroyed— This was their last thrust. I understand it was sort of: Hitler said, "Let's give it one— We can split them and"— It was another piece of insanity of Hitler. Sacrificed an entire— Probably several German divisions were sacrificed in this idiotic attempt to do nothing, to kind— sort of like split our army, which they never ended up doing. They killed a lot of Americans, but not nearly as many Germans who were killed. Many Germans were murdered by this. (I mean) Not murdered; they were— They walked— They walked into a hail of fire. We-we— once— (I mean) And they also shot American prisoners. It was one of the more [ignominious] things that

happened in the war. A terrible thing, the last outburst of Nazis. And then it was the end. After that, was over. And—

Q: Where did you go?

A: Well, after— [When] we got out of Luxembourg, I don't remember where we went, but we were no longer in Luxembourg—until the shooting was over. We were not the shooters; (you know) we were the camoufleurs. We were setting up fake— (you know) deceptions. And there was no more any reason for that.

Then we continued on our way into Germany. The Germans now were on the run. This last surprise attack blew up in their faces, and they were finished. We were now in Aachen, Germany. This is in Germany. It's near the end of the war. Or I'm not so sure of my memory. The war could— might have even have ended. It's April or May of 1944. The Germans quit in May.

I remember one thing. We're in Aachen, Germany, and I do remember something I never forgot. We're— I was in—in a bombed out library. All of Aachen was reduced to ashes. Bomb— American bombers and everything. Germans were retreating. On the floor of this library were incredible art books floating in water. The Germans were fabulous printers in their great day. To pick up these book— I took one. It was only like 10% wrecked. And I carried it all the way (I) back to the States. It was a book of like Botticellis. But I saw this culture on the floor, this wrecked culture, which Hitler had visited upon the Germans. It was an incredible illustration of that. And then of course shortly thereafter, the war was over.

[GA 418]

Q: [not recorded]

A: No, I didn't. I may have— Then I-I was mistaken. I don't remember Verdun. Possibly, now that you're mentioning it.

Q: You said it still smelled like World War I.

A: Maybe I said it smelled like— I don't know if I—

Q: Do you remember being in Verdun?

A: No, I don't. .. Maybe I was near it. I just don't remember that. But it's possible that I-I— I've many times (you know) contradicted myself.

Q: [memory]

A: No, Verdun, I know, is World War I. [overlap] And I think we may have—

Q: You did go to Verdun.

A: We did? That's suddenly— I'm puzzled that. Okay. Here I go again, disagreeing with myself.

Q: Tell me the two rules.

A: One of the rules that we had to be very careful to follow was the way we moved rubber equipment around. The rubber equipment was so remarkably realistic at a distance, that we had to be careful that we didn't come off as supermen. By that I mean, if there were— For example, if there was a jeep that was inflated, and we wanted to move that jeep to the other side of the road, a no-no was for a couple of GIs to pick that jeep up in inflate— an inflated shape and just move it across to the other side of the road. That would cause real consternation among the locals. They'd say, "My— I just saw something I didn't believe. Somebody carried a jeep across the road." So we were told, under no .. circumstances could you— should you ever move inflated stuff anywhere. You had to deflate it first on one side of the road, put it back into its packing, get into a jeep, drive the jeep across the road, open the package up and re-inflate the stuff. But you could not move inflatable things, because that would really cause concern. They were so remarkably

realistic at a distance that people just wouldn't believe their eyes, and they would have a perfect right not to.

Q: And the second rule?

A: The second one was— Rule number 2: Under no circumstances were you ever to get into a romantic situation on one of these pieces of rubber. They kind of lent themselves to it, because they were huge— A Sherman tank particularly lent itself to making love on. And that was a definite no-no. You didn't want a Sherman tank to look like it was sagging and jumping and pumping around. That would have been a huge embarrassment. So these were the two rules.

Q: A giant air mattress.

A: Giant air mat— It was a giant air mattress.

Q: The DP camp was a terrible sign of what had happened to people in the war.

A: Grotesque. Well, let me— These slave laborers. When we were guarding them, we were then told at one point, (you know) now they were going to be repatriated to the Soviet Union. Train's going to Moscow. We noticed that they didn't want to get on these trains. And I remember I— (you know) We had guns that— "You're going home. Aren't you happy?" "No. We don't want to go home." And it's the first time I became aware of the fact that Stalin had another side to him. Not only was he an ally, but a killer at the same time. And they had heard rumors, all of which later proved completely correct, that they would either be killed when they got back or sent to Siberia or something. And I—we said, "How do you— I mean, aren't— Don't you miss the motherland? Don't you miss Ru"— "We don't want to go back. We won't make it alive." And these were families (maybe a husband, wife, and kid) not wanting to get on these trains. We forced them on the trains. We thought that he may— "I think they've got it wrong." Hey, Stalin was our ally for this entire war. Paid the ultimate price, Stalin. Lost about 20 million. But he was now, we didn't realize, starting to kill more.

All of these people got into trouble when they got back. Stalin didn't want any Soviet citizen to see a captured Soviet. Again, why? They would tell them about Germany. "By the way, there's some wonderful things about Germany. We lived there for four years. (you know) You could do"— I mean, this is another sort of totalitarian state. But he did not want them to know about that totalitarian state. It was too dangerous. Word would spread. Stalin's great comment was, "Be very careful about ideas. It's like throwing a match in a lighted forest." I mean, "throwing a lighted match in a forest. Can burn down within hours." So this was

the kind of paranoia, terror, which these people were hearing about, deep in labor camps in Germany.

Q: Did you ever witness the sonic deceptions?

A: Well, I heard the sonic things going off. They were very good. The sounds of tanks moving around, the sounds of men talking, the sounds of people moving into an area, getting ready (you know) to do real things—it sounded great. But, again, I have no knowledge. It sounded good to me. I was right there making these sounds. How did it sound to others? I have no idea. But they were great. Was a terrific job. The simulation of sound of GIs moving around, of tanks moving around, of half-tracks, of trucks, of men speaking, they were brilliantly done. But did they work? I don't know.

Q: The ultimate question when you're putting up a show: Is there an audience?

A: Right. If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, is there a sound? This is a great philosophical question, .. which has been asked for centuries by philosophers? Is there a sound if there is not a human being with an ear to hear it?

Q: [father's point re: "Let there be light."]

A: Very good. But it's— I did— It is a philosophical question.

Q: Was your unit putting out a believable show?

A: Yes. But is anybody believing it? Is anybody around to believe it?

Q: Are there spies in the—

A: Is there an audience for it? What is the reaction? I don't know. Maybe my—my fellow veterans know. I never saw any— I never heard anybody say, "Wow! We believed it and we did this." I never heard that. Maybe in classified documents in the War Department (which was then called the War Department, now the Defense Depart—) there prob— there may be some proof of this.

Q: Operation Viersen, crossing the Rhine, simulating a practice for river crossing.

A: That's right. I think— It's very fuzzy what happened. I—we— I know that happened almost at the same time as the Remagen Bridge crossing, which was a major, major undertaking by the US. It—that— Crossing that bridge really got us into— got us across the Rhine. The question was, a hypothetical question: Was our simulation of a crossing further down the river, did that help make— draw fire away from Remagen? In other words, did that crossing—or attempted crossing—on our side of the Rhine, where we were told there were Panzer divisions waiting for us, did that fact that we attracted those divisions (which would have been something [you know] very interesting) take away from the opposition on the other side of the Remagen Bridge, therefore making a US crossing possible? That was always a kind of a \$64 question. I again don't know. But Remagen Bridge, I always felt, was a kind of part of that equation. That worked. What we did was a simulation. I don't remember how far we got. I don't think we got very far. We certainly didn't want to take a Panzer division on, on the other side of the Rhine. And we certainly weren't able to make a crossing. So the crossing never took place. But the activity of a crossing could have attracted sufficient attention.

Q: You want them to think you're strong enough that they won't attack you, because you don't have a lot to defend yourself with.

A: Nothing. But were they— These were seasoned Panzer divisions. They'd been through everything. A lot of them (you know) started out in North Africa. Germans had phenomenally talented, experienced fighters. They knew what they were doing. And they could, I think, tell simulation from the real thing—I think. I don't know. But it could have been, they were worn out too.

By that time— What am I saying? I take it back? By that time, kids were now in the Panzer divisions. The-the German regulars were killed by that time. // [just] (you know) They were picking up kids now, and drafting them in the German army. (Just let me wipe this off a tiny bit.)

Q: You had friends who died in the war, while you were on this “lark.” That must strike you hard?

A: It did. I lost friends in the war. Very good friend of mine who I grew up in Brooklyn with, was on a American submarine, and it was hit by the Germans. He was killed. Same age I was: 19. I was troubled. I-I wouldn't say it kept me awake nights, but I never forgot it. I still remember it now. I remember that kid. I said, you know, “There but for the grace of God go I. I could have been in that submarine. He could have been in the Camouflage Corps.” I had many thoughts like that.

A friend of mine today who—a very good friend, we went to the High School of Music and Art together—was in the infantry. He was around the Battle of the Bulge. He paid his dues. And he got trench foot and had to be repatriated. He is now a disabled vet. And so— We're still [very] pals today. But he— We joke about this. He said, “Jack, you son-of-a-bitch, you got away with murder.” And I said, “I did. And you didn't.” He said, “I did”— And he was a very tall guy. He still is quite tall. As a tall guy in the infantry, he carried a Browning automatic rifle, a BAR. And they were after him speci— All Germans were after him. Knock out the machine gunner. Get him first. So he [completely] being shot at. And as a big guy, he— (you know) He needed to be big to carry this around. Weighed a ton. He said, “Jack, I always felt my next mission was going to be my last. But I got through, luckily. Luckily, I got trench foot. I got the \$64 pass home,” and came back alive.

Q: How do you sum it up when you look back?

A: Sum what up, exactly? The whole experience?

Q: The whole shebang.

A: It was— (A) The experience, what was it like? (A) It was great to be on a winning side. (B) (I'm thinking in broad terms now) It was great to have played a role in the defeat of the Nazis. (C) As a young kid, it opened my eyes up to another world, Europe and beyond, and changed me forever. I got to Paris, I got to Germany, and I knew I would come back, and I did. So it opened up my horizons phenomenally. It was a great experience. The greatest was, I survived it. I was able to have this experience.

Others were not so lucky. Many GIs were killed certainly I was mentioning, over 2,000 were killed at Omaha Beach on D-Day. My wife's husband (who died, so I could marry her) died 3 or 4 years ago. He was on D-Day. He got through the thing. He's my hero, my wife's former husband, who died. (Didn't die on D-Day. Just died of emphysema because he was a chain smoker.) But he got through that day, the longest day. He's a hero. And I've always envied him. And we were friends even before my wife married him. I knew her husband many years ago. We were in the Foreign Service together. So again, I count my blessings. I got through it, unscarred.

Q: It must have been a great incubator. So many people went on to amazing careers.

A: It was wonderful. I'd never before been with so many people together for so long a time. It's like 2½ to 3 years. These people were part of my family. Wouldn't matter where they came from, whether they [were from] Kentucky or Colorado or Tennessee. And it was sad, in a way, when it was over. The family was broken up,

family was changed. And I was a little sad when the war was o— I was happy, thrilled. We didn't have to go to Japan. The bomb had been dropped on— bombs had been dropped on Nagasaki, Hiroshima. No more war. And I remember, after that euphoria— Course we were quite worried. We had come back to the States, ready to ship out to the Far East. Truman was my hero. Yes, he dropped this grotesque bomb. Ended the war and saved lives. [There]'s a big dispute about that. The Japanese were ready to quit anyway. That's to be determined.

Then it was over. We got, I think, selected out in Florida, sent home to our various homes. I was in a uniform; I remember coming back on a train from— I forget where I was in Florida when it happened. The—the place where we were selected back— (in other words) “You're civilians again, good luck, here's change, here's enough to keep you going for 2 months.” I was sad on that train ride home. Happy, I was going to see my family again; sad that a connect had been lost. Another family of mine had broken up. I knew I'd probably never see most of them again. So I had this mixture of joy and sadness. And that carried on for a while. Great to be out, was going to go to Yale 6 or 8 months later, GI Bill, a whole new world was opening up. At the same time, all these guys who had been part of my life for 2 or 3 years were gone, thrown to the four winds.

Q: Tell me about the “kitchen debate.”

A: Very happy to do that. After having left the Army, 1945— I'll give you an instant— an instant update. ...

I went to Yale, '46, got out in '50. '51, I ended up in India in the Foreign Service, where I got to do a lot of interesting things. I did a big fair in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1956. First American pavilion ever shown in Kabul. I made it happen with Buckminster Fuller. I was very pleased at that. Buckminster Fuller and I became friends as a result of the Kabul fair of 1956.

Then I suddenly found myself, because of my success (mostly of course it was Bucky's success, it wasn't mine; I just happened to have picked him), I was asked to get involved in a big exchange of exhibitions in the Soviet— with the Soviet Union. 1959, Soviets came to New York, in the Convention Center (which has now been torn down), and we were invited to put on a major exhibition of America in Moscow, Sokolniki Park. It was there that I got Buckminster Fuller to do another dome. He did a dome there, much bigger than Kabul. Hey, now we were in the USSR. These were the heavy hitters now. This was the “others,” the communists, and we were bringing America to-to-to the Soviet Union. I found that a challenge of great magnitude. And to make this challenge work, we did a lot of things. We had all kinds of exhibits there. We had a fashion show. It was a live fashion show, took place 5 times a day. We had an art show, an art exhibit, which got more Americans mad at us than they did— than Soviets did. It was modern art.

And we also built a model house at this presence— This is the American exhibition in Moscow, '59, 1959. Model house had a kitchen in it. At the opening of this exhibition, then Vice-President Nixon showed up to escort Premier Khrushchev through the im— whole— And by [the way], we had a very large exhibition here. Several acres were covered. But the kitchen in this house was a model kitchen, a model house. Small, but wide enough— (we) We widened it a little bit to get a lot people through.

Khrushchev and Nixon ended up in front of the American kitchen. And Khrushchev said, “I don’t believe that any Americans can afford this house.” He was not altogether wrong. [laugh] Partially wrong. Some Americans could. It wasn’t a sort of a-a house that you could pick off the rack and pay f— But it was a reasonably affordable [house]. They had a terrible fight there. That also took place in-in-in a TV studio. So they fought for two hours about the Soviets’ system versus the American system. It was an intriguing experience.

Actually Nixon did quite well, given the fact that he had to use Russian interpreters. Khrushchev of course had nothing to worry about. He didn’t have the world press looking at him. Everything of course was controlled substance then. The Soviet people would get whatever the Soviets wanted them to get. Yet— So he was kind of— kind of terrific. So they both battled each other. They both, in a way, came across winning. Ultimately, Nixon went on to be president.

The 25th anniversary of the “kitchen debate,” we had a reunion of everybody who worked on that show in the Soviet Union. We had it in Washington. And it was a very interesting thing that took place. By surprise, at the— We had guides who had been there; they were all now 25 years older. Those guides would have been 25 or 30, were now 45 or 50. All the designers who took place, whoever were still around— We had a great feast in the— in the Smithsonian, which let us use it. At the feast that took place— And by the way, Pepsi-Cola paid for it because we had let Pepsi in, 25 years earlier, into the American exhibition. We had a great feast of Russian food, Russian vodka, five different kinds; everything flowed like borsht.

By surprise, everyone’s astonishment, Nixon walked in. This is 1984. Nixon was out of power. He’d already been disgraced by Watergate. Yet it’s remarkable. He strode in with five Secret Service people, and said, “I’m indebted to all of you out there. You who are all guides, you got me elected by the kitchen debate. I also want to say something else,” he said. “I taunted Khrushchev; I have a lot of respect for Khrushchev.” This was like astonishing. Never said this before. “And I feel Russia’s a very vibrant country, and it’s not the evil empire, as Reagan had called it.” He disagreed. “We’ve got to get off this name-calling. Got to live in the same world with these”— Really astonishing stuff. That was ’84. Six years later, there was no Soviet Union. Everything— Not a person— Not a shot was fired.

Anyway, it was Nixon’s final on-stage performance, having started in Moscow with the kitchen debate, having ended at the 25th celebration, the 25th anniversary, suddenly saying, which he prob— (Nixon was not an unintelligent

person), “This is a— This is a world where we have to live with people we don’t agree with.” There’s a lesson to be learned by this statement. End of story.

[End of Interview]