

# Marvin Sussman

April 29, 2019

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Cohen: April 29, 2019 and I have the pleasure of speaking with Corporal Marvin Sussman, a D-Day veteran of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry squadron of Troop A of the VII Army Corps who served during World War II, from 1942 to 1945. So, let's begin at the beginning. Where and when were you born?

Sussman: I was born in Chicago, 1923 August 23, 1923 and was raised in Chicago, mostly in the Lawndale area, 3800's West Roosevelt Road approximately. Left from there into the [US] Army.

Cohen: And what did you study in school?

Sussman: Oh, it was a typical Chicago grammar school and high school. Nothing special. As a matter of fact, now that I look back on it, and compare it with what my grandchildren have learnt at York High School in Elmhurst. They graduated with a knowledge of calculus, I didn't even have a knowledge of algebra when I graduated. On the other hand, I was very interested in history, and English lit and I thought I had some very good--Mrs. Fitzgerald was a very good English teacher in high school and I was rather satisfied with that. I had Mr. Karcher was a German immigrant and my German teacher and he was excellent. So, maybe it wasn't science but it was language, I thought the school system was pretty good.

Cohen: In light of the fact that one of your teachers was originally from Germany and you had an interest in history, were you aware of the rise of Nazism in Europe?

Sussman: Oh, absolutely. My father would come home with the newspapers, from the age of, well, let's see, 1933, I was ten year's old, Roosevelt was elected. The um, election was a big deal. I was living in the 24<sup>th</sup> ward which was Jack Arvey's ward [i.e. Arvey was a prominent Democrat political leader from the Depression until the mid-1950s] if you know anything about the democratic machine at that time. Jack Arvey was bigger than Mayor Daly and that was his ward.

Cohen: Oh.

Sussman: This big and that was his ward. Every window had a picture of Roosevelt but Hoover was not present. 'Course it was a Jewish neighborhood and Italian. About Half Jewish, half Italian but it was a very democratic ward. Absolutely.

Cohen: So it supported Roosevelt and not the isolationist...

Sussman: Oh we were quite aware of politics at the age of ten. Then, of course, Hitler came to power at that time already and antisemitism was a serious subject. There were meetings all over the 24<sup>th</sup> ward. So, it was very obvious, we were well aware of it. Yeah.

Cohen: Did you experience any antisemitism, locally?

Sussman: I'm sorry.

Cohen: Did you experience antisemitism in Chicago?

Sussman: Not in Jewish neighborhood although I should say that my brother went to Crane Technical High School and somebody punched him in the mouth because he was Jewish and he lost a tooth or teeth or something like that. And there was a big ruckus about that. Yes, there was antisemitism and we knew about it but we didn't feel it in our neighborhood. Yeah. We were aware of it.

Cohen: Out of curiosity, did you speak Yiddish at home?

Sussman: Well, my father never spoke Yiddish unless his sister or brother would come for weekends. Then, the family would sit down and they'd speak Yiddish. Then, I'd hear it. Now, my mother was raised in New York and came to Chicago, maybe as a twenty-year-old and had a New York accent and came to the United States, maybe at the age of two, as a very young child and so she spoke with no accent. My father came at the age of twenty-one, in 1906, bringing his younger brother and sister with him and he spoke with an accent but he was very interested in learning English and he was a book collector. He had collected at least a couple thousand books. My cousin, Sol, he's my – his younger sister had a son, Sol, who was also a collector of books and he and my father would collectively look at books. So my father was very passionate about Charles Darwin and the fight between Darwin and religion and he had a shelf of books about atheism. So we kids were raised as atheists. My mother was also an atheist. Both of them ran away from severe Orthodox Jewish homes that they ... just clashed with American culture and my father, of course, had been radicalized already in Russia because of the pogroms in Russia and he had escaped at age twenty-one at the risk of his life. So, my father was always an intellectual. As I say, he never spoke Yiddish because he wanted to learn English. He also spoke several other languages, you know, which you had to be --- if you grow up around Minsk, you had to know several languages. Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah. Where were you when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Sussman: That's an interesting thing! As I understand it, if you are shocked, your brain is impressed at that time. People remember where they were when Kennedy was shot and I remember on Pearl Harbor Day, I was working on Sunday, filling orders in a jewelry house, in the Near North side of Chicago and I was standing in front of a safe, a huge safe with drawers of jewelry in there and I was filling an order, taking something out of

the drawer. To this day, I remember when somebody told me that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, I can still see those boxes, those drawers with the brass fittings on them. They're still in my impression. I remember that absolutely.

Cohen: It was such a shock?

Sussman: It was a shock, yeah, absolutely. Because it meant that all my plans were off. There is a new world. In one instant. In one second.

Cohen: What were your plans before the attack?

Sussman: Well, I had a scholarship to go to Normal College and I was thinking of that but I needed some money. I would get some money and do that and maybe go into teaching. I didn't really know. I had no real plans. My parents never even thought of me... we didn't have enough money, really, to think about college and so we had no real plans.

Cohen: So after Pearl Harbor, did you think that you might be drafted?

Sussman: Maybe?

Cohen: Did you think that you might be drafted?

Sussman: Oh, there's no question about it. We were told immediately that if we didn't volunteer during 1942, we would be drafted in 1943. There was no question about that and um, so it was either the picking of your own, your own branch of service or waiting to be drafted into the Infantry. So, that was the choice and everybody was drafted. My cousin, Sol, had lost an eye at age eight due to a childhood disease and in 1943, at age thirty, he was drafted into the [US] Army with one eye.

Cohen: Oh my!

Sussman: That's what – that's how much they needed bodies. Yeah.

Cohen: You mentioned in the pre-interview questionnaire that you erroneously thought that being in the [US] Cavalry would be safer than Infantry. So, do you want to talk about that a little bit?

Sussman: Of course, I knew nothing about service. I understood that the Cavalry goes out and gets information and that seemed better [unintelligible]. I had a kind of a picture of war as being like World War I where you're in trenches and you had bayonets and charging with bayonets and so it seemed like it would be better to be in the Cavalry and go out and get information rather than be in the Infantry but that had nothing... You know, World War I and World War II were entirely different. The Cavalry is sort of the eyes and ears of the Army. It has to always be in contact with the enemy and if it's – If they had nothing else to do, they can just dismount and become Infantry. And if they are needed for scouting, well then, they mount up and get on the road and so there's always something to do. It's never easy.

Cohen: So, where did you enlist?

Sussman: In Chicago. In downtown Chicago and the interesting thing about that is that your story telling thing I've been doing—started out by the fact that as part of the enlistment when you go to ... they give you an aptitude test, a general classification test, GCT, and some months before my enlistment, I noticed an ad in the **Popular Mechanics Magazine** that offered for a few dollars they would send me the test so I can preview it and .... practice on it. Which I did. And I scored very high and that got me into a situation where the colonel wanted to send me to West Point at a certain point – I had thirty days of experience the VII Army Corps had a quota of five men to be sent to West Point and he was ambitious to have it come from his squadron but, unfortunately, I was wearing glasses and so I didn't qualify.

Cohen: Okay. So where did you do your basic training?

Sussman: Camp Grant was near ---not far from Chicago and that was the normal one month of training or six weeks, I forget but there you get to learning how to march and do all that. Of course, I had to have my basic training as four years of the ROTC at Marshall High School. So because I was already thinking that sooner or later, we would be at war with Hitler because of the Spanish Civil War was on and it looked to me like war was coming. So, I joined the ROTC that began at Marshall High School. So, I had two basic trainings.

Cohen: What was the ROTC training like? For example, did it take place during the summer—  
[interruption]

Sussman: It was a lot of marching, not what I thought it would be but there was some shooting practice but all in all, it wasn't very good. I didn't think it was that good.

Cohen: So, how did it compare to the real basic training?

Sussman: Well, it was the same marching, we – I forgot what they called it – manual of arms and all that. So as I say, I had two basic trainings.

Cohen: So, here you are. You've had already some prior experience, you have very high aptitude tests if not for your eyesight you would have been at West Point. So where could they decide to place you or how did they decide to train you?

Sussman: I didn't fit in at all because my father was a renter and renters don't paint the house, they don't fix things...My father didn't have a car so all I knew was how to read and write. That was, basically, what I could do. Whereas almost everyone, with rare exceptions – a half a dozen guys out of a hundred and forty men in the troop at full strength --- All the others were farm boys, raised rural, working on farms, and they could fix anything and they could drive cars, they could fix motors, they could...do anything. And... so, I was kind of useless until they found out that I knew French and German and then I became useful.

Cohen: [laughs] Okay, you mentioned having learnt, studied German in high school. Had you also studied French in high school?

Sussman: No, I had -- well, I live in an Italian neighborhood and had mostly Italian friends and was in their homes often. When I was very young, I had a babysitter who was who raised, who watched me, as well as her own children and spoke Italian and so I picked up a lot of Italian. I had two years of Latin, as well as two years of German and then in England, before the [D-Day] Invasion began, because of my high score in the GCT, I was chosen with a half a dozen other guys to learn French by phonograph records. So, I spent almost six hours a day for a couple of months listening to French records.

Cohen: Was the goal for you to be able to communicate with the local people?

Sussman: Yes, that was the goal—

Cohen: To be like an unofficial [translator]—

Sussman: Interviewing civilians for information and helping and helping out. So, that was – it was very nice learning French and I liked it! I liked it very much. I'm a good student and maybe that's all I can but I can do that.

Cohen: [Laughs]. No, you seem modest.

Sussman: I couldn't run a tractor or, of course, I could learn how to run a tractor but – As I say, these farm kids could do everything. Yeah.

Cohen: So going back to the States, you mentioned that you had done some training in Fort Meade, South Dakota. What was that like?

Sussman: Well, again, that was more basic training a lot of – use of machine guns and we had bazookas, learning about land mines, and a lot of rifle practice. We got, we had—we were training with rifles with the 1903 Springfield rifle.

Cohen: 1903?

Sussman: Not the M1 Garand which is a semi-automatic, which you put in a clip of six or eight – was it? And you just keep pulling the trigger but with the Springfield 1903 Springfield 30 caliber, you had to pull the bolt back after you fire. After you fire you have to pull the bolt back and then shove it forward again and find the trigger and then get your sights on it, again and so it would take a few seconds between shots if you want to be accurate. So, we... but that's... we trained with that rifle and later, when we went overseas, we got the Garand and we trained in England, again. But a lot of our training in, well, we did a lot of marching, not marching, running in South Dakota, in cold weather and climbing hills, running up hills with a pack on our back and so it was physical training more than anything else.

Cohen: You mentioned that you had had three MOS's. One of them you described the training for right now – for the rifleman training but I think that you also had training as light machine gunner and as a radio operator?

Sussman: We didn't have radios in South Dakota. We left in January, '43 for the Mohave Desert and we got our jeeps before leaving. Before leaving, we got our jeeps with radios and all the equipment that was on the jeep, an awful lot of equipment and we leant how to use a radio. I became a radio operator in the desert. We were in the Mohave Desert for, oh, up 'til July. From February to July and maybe, even into August, if I remember and there we learn how to use the jeeps and armored cars. Did some scouting on road scouting and we were preparing to fight in North Africa at that time but that was – that seemed to be the plan but that didn't work out. We didn't, never went to North Africa. But that was the kind of training, we did.

Cohen: Then you mentioned that you had been living in Camp Maxey and doing squadron practices as far as the Mississippi River. When did the unit move from the Mohave Desert?

Sussman: Well, we went, if I remember right, We went, sometime around July or August, we were give a two week furlough to go home and when we came back to Camp Maxey, we did road reconnaissance, learning how to drive down a road and observe, look for ambushes, tried to get into trouble and then get out of trouble and... so, we did that at Camp Maxey and, sometime, in – it was November '43, we were sent to Fort Dix for port of our embarkation and we went overseas from there.

Cohen: From there. Hmm. For the non-military, could you describe what the road reconnaissance was like? Like what would you do as opposed to the others? How is it practiced?

Sussman: Well, if it's a long road and you can see for a mile, well, you just go for a mile. You don't see anything, any problem. But if it's hilly country, then there's going to be bends in the road and at a bend, there might be an ambush so the trick was to observe before you go to a, to the next bend in a road, you want to look carefully. And we had field glasses and usually, a squad would work a point, that is the point being the first group to go down a road where we don't know what's on the road and the way, it would work, each jeep, each of the two jeeps had a thirty caliber machine gun to the right of the driver and 50 caliber machine gun on a post behind the driver in the back seat. It also had a two huge radios and a ton of equipment and one jeep would rush toward the next – after observing and not finding anything and one jeep would run toward that next bend in the road. And the other jeep and the armored car would be pointing their weapons at the far end of the, at the next bend, and the armored car had a 37 millimeter cannon which would shoot white phosphorous rounds. And it also had a 30 caliber and a 50 caliber machine gun. So, if all machine guns were fired once, you would have, in three seconds, you'd get over a hundred bullets, concentrating on one place. So that was...we were well-armed. We were very well-armed...in case, we did run into an ambush and there were situations like that. Generally, we could move along pretty rapidly.

Cohen: And were you being trained in a jeep or in armored car? Or both?

Sussman: I didn't spend much time in an armored car. I'm glad about that. I preferred the jeep very much. I mean it's a matter of -- I don't know – claustrophobia, maybe? Or

something like that. It just seemed to me that I could get out of the jeep easier than get out of the armored car.

Cohen: So, if necessary, you could escape?

Sussman: Yeah. But both the... both vehicles had radios and you had to know how to use the radios, use Morse code and there was voice, also. You had to know how to operate the radios. So, we were well-trained.

Cohen: Did people have to know different roles? Like in other words, there was on the one hand know how to operate a radio, do Morse code and on the other hand, how to operate the guns? Like how did it work?

Sussman: You have to know everything.

Cohen: Everything.

Sussman: Ya. You're trained on all the...weapons. We even had mortars, also, trained on all the weapons and not everybody trained as a radio operator. We were able to send and receive twenty words a minute. They looked for people with aptitude to do that. So, I was among a few radio operators but there was always at least one in every vehicle, maybe two who could operate the radio, ya.

Cohen: The radio and had to operate other things as well?

Sussman: Yeah. Everybody had to know all the weapons. We even had gas mask. We had gas masks, too, and never used them but we also on a jeep we had a huge camouflage net and digging equipment and our backpacks and ten days of eating rations and a five gallon can of water and five gallon can of gasoline.... It was loaded. It was a loaded vehicle, yeah.

Cohen: How was the camouflage net used?

Sussman: Well, you just... when you park during the day and sometimes, even during the night because you, at a certain point, we would put that camouflage over. Now, the Germans didn't have air superiority. We had the air superiority but the Germans were sending jet planes with cameras and they would fly everywhere and take pictures and bring it back for study and so, we had take precautions.

Cohen: Okay. So one thing that struck me is that the US Cavalry was at a time of transition, that the beginning of World War II, it still had horses. Later only mechanized...

Sussman: They – the horses left shortly before I got there so I never saw the horse but the transition was, as I understand it, was gradual, they had at a certain period, both vehicles and horses and finally, decided they'd have do without the horses. It's interesting that the Germans, although they had, maybe a dozen fully armored and fully motorized divisions, all their other infantry divisions were – used horses for transportation.

Cohen: Interesting.

Sussman: A huge amount of horses were used by the Germans, yeah. We had none.

Cohen: Did you get the impression when you were training that it was still a new technique? Like were the instructors fumbling a little bit to figure out how to work with the motorized cavalry?

Sussman: No, actually the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, when I came in, it was the Regiment and it became – the Regiment was broken into two squadrons in England but the Regiment had six troops ... it had, well, it had a, well, one of the troops had an even light tanks at a certain point...Now could you repeat the question. I've missed something there.

Cohen: Oh, I think I'm also getting a little lost. I was wondering if the instructors were used to working with the mechanized cavalry.

Sussman: Well, yeah...I think, as they say, that they had to learn how to use...the difference is this: with horses, you were always in fields. You were not on the roads, that is horses go over land and so cavalry would operate in fields, away from the roads but with vehicles you can't operate on ... you have to stay on the road. So it was an entirely new conception for cavalry to not be in the fields, be in the roads. 'Course when we dismounted, then we were off the road. So, we had to know both. We had to do both but, now there was a point at which they very early, they had Harley Davidson motorcycles and those didn't work on sand in the Mohave Desert, I guess, and... So that didn't work out. So, I guess they got rid of – they finally settled on jeeps and armored cars.

Cohen: Can you describe the type of terrain you practiced one while stateside?

Sussman: Well, the Mohave Desert was just flat except for hills, valleys, valleys and hills, sand that...every kind of landscape you could think of is there. Well, we travelled everywhere. 'Course when you're on a road, it's either a bend in the road or not a bend in the road. Otherwise they're all the same.

Cohen: Yeah. At what point in 1943, was your unit sent to England?

Sussman: Well, that was again, it was November. We got part of... we were in a convoy, I think it was November, '43 and we—it was a...it wasn't quite a month but it was several weeks. My memory is dim about exactly how long it took but we landed at, I think it was Liverpool and we were stationed beneath – that is – we had our home in England in a Quonset hut, one platoon in a Quonset hut, and of course, we had nine...so, we would have nine or ten Quonset huts for the enlisted men, something like that and they were located underneath the grand stands at Goodwood Park, which was the racing course in Southern England, in Sussex, and that was our home but we did road reconnaissance up and down the southern coast of England until not long before D-Day, from November '43 to maybe early May '44.



Cohen: Um, where you and the others given information about D-Day attack? Like that during this sixty? Day period...

Sussman: Well, we were told something about, we'd be put on landing craft and how we would behave in landing crafts. We were given that information but nothing specific. Actually, it turned out that that kind of information was – didn't turn out to be useful, [not] very useful for us because of what we actually did on D-Day. It was an entirely, an entirely different thing.

Cohen: Just going back a little bit, do you have any recollections of your sea voyage to England. Were you seasick? How, what was it like?

Sussman: Are you talking about the boat trip?

Cohen: Yeah, just going back one step.

Sussman: It was...there were drills for abandoning ship but not much else. Guard duty, occasionally but just trying to while away the time, for the most part. Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. And once you were in England, did you have any free time to, you know, any weekend leave, an evening leave?

Sussman: There were passes. I had one pass to London but, generally, if we wanted a break, we would have weekends. We could get out and walk around and Chichester was about eight miles away and we walk there and get a beer and walk back, about eight miles. And we did that. Of course, as far as travelling long, we would need a pass so as I say I had one pass to London. It rained all weekend, in April '44, and I think that we did the best we could. There was a lot of gambling and drinking beer, weak beer, and writing home and reading messages from home, there's **Stars and Stripes**, the magazine, there were some, the Red Cross would have books for us, if we wanted to read. We'd get things from home. There's a lot of boredom and, of course, I didn't smoke but the other guys did. So I gave 'em my cigarettes and there was a lot of boredom.

Cohen: Would you write a lot of letters and to whom?

Sussman: I wrote probably as often as anybody. I think that I wrote once a week. I got a letter, at least, once a week. My family was very interested in what I was doing, yum.

Cohen: Yeah.

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: How are you and the others treated by the British civilians when you would have a pass?

Sussman: Oh, they...maybe there was some—not by civilians -- the other soldiers thought we were spoilt. [laughter]. The British soldiers kinda thought we were spoilt. I guess we were.

Cohen: Why do you think that?

Sussman: Well, I guess our rations were better than their rations, maybe. Or something like that. But, we didn't have much contact with the .... Now, our contact with the English were mostly with civilians who served the camps, bringing in supplies and taking out what was their waste and stuff. We didn't have a lot of contact with civilians. There were, I think there was one dance that – we did have passes and you could meet people – but the...we...I don't know it could be that there was a language difficulty with the, between British accent and southern English-American accents. There were some language, serious language difficulty and especially if you ran into a Scotchman. Then you had a real serious difficulty, yeah. [Cohen laughs]

Cohen: How did the men within your own squadron get along?

[pause]

Cohen: How did the men within your own squadron get along? You mentioned different backgrounds...

Sussman: We got along fine. There was some incidents but not serious. The, well, I should say, maybe I didn't answer one of your previous questions, correctly. The 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and Regiment. I started to say that, was a regular Army outfit. So, all the sergeants had ten or as many as twenty years, almost twenty years of service, some of them, who didn't go overseas because they were too old. But corporals had, at least, five years when we came in and most officers when we came in, when I came in, were either West Point or Virginia Military Institute. So, these guys knew—they knew everything and they were excellent non-commissioned officers. There was never any question about what to do or nobody was in ever in any doubt about what had to be done. Yeah. That was, we were—it turns out we were, I guess, as close to the idea of a special operations team as they had in World War II. We were, for example, on D-Day, A Troop and C Troop were given the mission of landing two hours before everybody else on an island that was off the coast, just to see, just to make sure that the Naval guns, there were not manned. It was a fortified island.

Cohen: Was it the St. Marcouf Island?

Sussman: St. Marcouf, yes. And if there was a special job to be done, we were the kind of unit that was able to do it. It was [chuckles]. If I was thinking to avoid service, dangerous service, I made a big mistake [laughter].

Cohen: Just going back one little step, what was the morale like of your unit leading up to the invasion, when it looked like it was coming close, when it looked like you'd be crossing the Channel, soon. What was the morale like?

Sussman: Well, you know, we had been living in Quonset huts for well over six months, about that time, and we were desperate to get out. So, D-Day came as a relief for us. It was too much. So, there was excitement. I would say that the mood was excitement more than anything else. Whatever danger there was, was not immediate. It was off in the distance and so the mood was excitement, anticipation, and, of course, we didn't know where

we were going until less than twenty-four hours before we ... nothing was said until we got on a ship and then it was...almost at the end of that... not very long before we took off, yeah.

Cohen: Which ship were you on?

Sussman: Well, it was in a landing craft.

Cohen: And were you part of that group that did reconnaissance on the St. Marcouf Island?

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: So, could you talk about that a little bit?

Sussman: Well, by the time we got there, it landed...we knew there weren't any...

Cohen: --installations?

Sussman: Germans going to prevent us from landing. So the landing was just straightforward but the danger was in landmines which didn't happen until we got well inland and then it was obvious that there were no German soldiers on the D-Day on the island so the danger was purely landmines and so it was not quite a war, yet. It was not contact with the enemy, not really. Yeah.

Cohen: So, here you are. You're on the island and then would you say, about a day later the invasion on Utah Beach started?

Sussman: The invasion started not long after we found out that the island was [free of Germans]. We found that out within, let's say, we landed at 4:00 o'clock so by 4:30, we knew that everything that had to be known and at 5:00 o'clock, we could see the landing craft passing us by, almost. The landing craft was coming so that was landing – they were landing at 6:00 and they had—We were about five kilometers off the beach so they passed us well before 6:00 o'clock and we could see them going and all day long.

Cohen: Could you see the fighting from [the island]?

Sussman: It was too far to see and we could see explosions. We could hear all the naval guns and the airplanes and we could hear something. We could hear explosions and some rifle fire, machine gun fire but we didn't see anything. You see flashes, that's all but by the time that we got to Utah Beach that was much later. Utah Beach was clear.

Cohen: When was that – a few days later or--?

Sussman: Oh, it was maybe almost twenty-four hours later, yeah. Because they had to bring up ships and take us in and we didn't have – all we had were our rifles and hand grenades. We weren't really prepared, we didn't have our vehicles, we weren't... We weren't prepared for any combat and if those naval guns had been manned, it wouldn't be us who would do the job. There was a combat team, ready to take out the naval guns but

not...we were there to find out if they were needed. That's all. We were a scouting party.

Sussman, Marc [son]: You asked a question about morale and I think you missed one small part of your story. When you first landed on Marcouf and within moments, John Onkin, was killed, your morale changed.

Sussman: Oh well, that –yeah. Well, that was a serious loss for us. One of best sergeants and the other – C Troop on the other side of the island also lost one man and we had some wounded men, also. So, taking care of the wounded was a big problem. That was not what we were planning on doing. We knew that the war, our war, was not beginning yet at that point. Once we knew that there were no Germans on the island, the excitement was over, except for taking care of the wounded, yeah.

Cohen: Was your sergeant killed as a result of a landmine?

Sussman: Landmine, yeah. Now, John Onkin was a very interesting guy. He came to the United States as, maybe a ten year old or maybe even younger than that. His parents were Germans and this is following World War I. His parents immigrated after World War I and he joined the Cavalry and was a very, very good soldier and he and I had a dozen maybe two dozen conversations of various lengths in German and I was interested in that for testing my --- for picking up vocabulary and learning and he was interested because he had no opportunity to speak German and he...both of us thought that we might need it. Yeah, he would need it. He was more needed than I was. He would have been the interpreter for A Troop and it turns out, I was the interpreter for A Troop because of his death on the first day, the first minute, the first hour, anyway.

Cohen: Yeah. How were transported from the island to Utah Beach?

Sussman: It was by landing craft, yeah.

Cohen: How did you guys get the vehicles? Like you said that you had, didn't—

Sussman: Well, that was days later. They eventually, was maybe a good week later, they brought the vehicles from England and by that time, between that day...before we got our vehicles, we were assigned to protect the VII Army Corps headquarters, General [J. Lawton] Collins [who commanded the VII Corps] in the invasion of Normandy and on the Western Front] was landing very early and we formed a body guard for him and did a lot of KP Duty and guard duty and messenger duty and whatever they had for us. And we set a...sort of a camp around --- fortification around his headquarters.

Cohen: Okay. Could you describe what you saw or heard or smelt when you came ashore on Utah Beach?

Sussman: Well, by that time the fighting was far inland. There was – it had moved inland. Utah Beach was not like Omaha Beach. There was very little fighting at Utah Beach. Apparently, I wasn't there but I was told that it was over rather quickly.

Cohen: So, after your protecting the headquarters of the—I think, Collins, um, what is your next assignment? Or your unit's next assignment?

Sussman: The first assignment we had, well, that was interesting. I was told that it was Rocheville - think it was the name of the town. Somebody that the idea that we would go into the town by getting on top of tanks. Maybe you've seen that--d you're not old enough to know? The Russians would use the tanks for carrying Infantry. The Infantry would get on the tanks and somehow, they got the idea that that's the way, they went into combat. And some lieutenant or maybe it was a captain decided that we would do the same thing. So a bunch of us were told to get on top of a tank and we went into this town, Rocheville, It was in Normandy and that was when I first day of combat and it was a bad idea. We lost men. We did the job and cleaned out the town but we never did that again. [laughter]. Anyway, it's a funny story. I guess it's a funny story, now, but—

Cohen: Not at the time.

Sussman: That was our first that was our first job but, generally, what we did — I think they decided early that we were not useful for attacking German infantry. What the assignment they would give us as the VII Corps crossed the peninsula to the other side of the peninsula, we stayed to the left flank of the 4<sup>th</sup> while we...I think, in effect, we were between two infantry divisions and served as a kind of a liaison between them and were just making sure that there was no Germans in front of us. So we did dismounted scouting, just walking with them and running into trouble and getting out of the trouble as we crossed the peninsula.

Cohen: So when you say dismounted, these were like foot patrols or—

Sussman: A lot of foot patrols because we were going – we weren't running down a road. The Infantry was on the roads. We were between roads, walking on grass for the most part.

Cohen: I would imagine that you would have been in a lot of the bocage country, the hedgerows country? The bocage, the hedgerows?

Sussman: Well, at a certain point there were hedgerows but there was also bare land, too, and there were roads between the hedgerows. So, we did a lot of dismounted work, crossing the peninsula, a lot of it was dismounted.

Cohen: So how would you spot a German? How would you identify Germans? Like you're doing, you're doing a patrol, how could you tell if there were some Germans in the area? [laughter]

Sussman: If they see you, they shoot at you.

Cohen: It's a good clue

Sussman: Yeah. Well, we, generally, the Germans we were shooting at were trying to get away. We would shoot back and they would run. That – because I think, I'm not sure, exactly but the Germans were protecting the roads and our infantry was on the roads and

between the roads, it was fields and the Cavalry was going over these fields. We had our jeeps but were also doing foot patrols and on the roads, and we would run into trouble and then get out of it and we got some prisoners. Well, between, let me see if I can get this right. By the first month, we lost let's see by – here's D plus 37, it would be after about thirty days of combat, we lost seven men during those thirty days and maybe twenty wounded. Something like that, if I remember. That's about right. So we didn't have any big pitched battles – it was just running into trouble, lose a man, here, lose a man, there, and lose a man here and a couple of wounded and it was day-by-day, there was something happening. Not every day but almost every day.

Cohen: Were you in constant radio communication with your superiors? Like would you report that, "Oh, we saw Germans at this point, here."

Sussman: We used our radios to communicate. We had Morse code or sometimes, by voice, both ways, depending. We used the radios to communicate. We were – far apart, that is we worked in groups like squads, a squad being ten men, three vehicles and not much more. Seldom, sometimes, the platoon on certain days there were platoon actions, that's thirty men – three squads. That happened, too.

Cohen: So, how would extricate yourself from trouble, so to speak? Especially when there's such small] groups?

Sussman: If we ran into something that we couldn't handle, we would get an artillery observer, what they called a forward observer. He'd come in and call in artillery. We weren't going to charge but if we found something strong enough that we couldn't handle it, we would call, we would call in artillery.

Cohen: How would you call them in?

Sussman: Well, we would ask for or not me but some, maybe our captain or a lieutenant would communicate with artillery or somebody and forward observer would come and—he'd communicate with his battery and we'd get some artillery help.

Cohen: Did you ever get help from other units like tanks or—

Sussman: We didn't really --- as I said that one – at the very beginning, we had at that day, with the first baptism of fire when I was riding in on a tank, we had that day and then the following day, if I remember it, that same lieutenant, that tank lieutenant, that was killed on another attack, attempt to attack and that's the last time, I saw an American tank in action. I think they suddenly they decided that they didn't want tanks. We were – the tanks were, these Grant tanks were too light and the Germans had an anti-tank gun that was adequate to take out anything we had. There's nothing we had that could stand against that kind of a gun. It was not a big, it was not a huge anti-tank gun but it was enough. And they knew how to use it, too. So I never saw tanks, I never saw an American tank in use, after those first weeks.

Cohen: Okay. When the Germans launched their counter attack towards Mortain in early August, in their attempt to cut off the US forces in Brittany, what type of missions, did your unit perform?

Sussman: Oh, that was a, that was a shock for us. We were in bivouac at Barenton which was the point of their attack. They attacked through Barenton and I was on guard and I could hear tanks coming but I had no idea that they were German tanks until, until they got so I could see them and there was just time enough to warn, to warn everyone and get out – we had – we lost our jeeps. We had to take our stuff and run and I lost my bedroll and my sister had knitted a scarf for me, a long scarf and I lost that, too. So we just barely got out of there, in time. We were unable to resist that kind of an attack but that didn't really hold up the Infantry very long. That, the attack was blunted and there's always a question of whether the Germans made a mistake at that --- by doing that or not. It's not clear.

Cohen: So here—so, what happens after that? Like where did you run to?

Sussman: Well, we eventually got to get our jeeps back and I guess carried on from there.

Cohen: Did you ever receive intelligence from air reconnaissance or other sources as to where to – where you would expect the enemy? Like, for example, did they warn you to avoid a certain village?

Sussman: Now, I was on the level of a squad. So, if we got intelligence like that it would come to the captain. You know, through a major and I wouldn't know about it. Somebody would tell me to get in the jeep and go from here to there but that's all I would know.

Cohen: You wouldn't know the rationale?

Sussman: Yeah. No, no.

Cohen: N Okay, you mentioned that you did get help from, I believe, the armored division [should be: artillery] but was there um, one moment please, did you ever have to call for fire from your radio? Like request help?

Sussman: Oh yeah. Well, as I say, we would get a forward observer who would communicate with his own battery. That is, if somebody is gonna use artillery, it's gotta be somebody who knows how to direct artillery. You know, they have the ... in the first place, they have the radio channel and everything else that they need and they probably are doing it in some kind of a code, anyway. So, they would – that would be artillery.

Cohen: Hmm, hmm. You know, you wrote in one of your emails, "A three second burst from the squad's seven weapons would deliver a hundred bullets and a cannon-round of white phosphorous. That's how you got out of trouble." Could you elaborate a little bit more? Like what type of German force was it good for---

Sussman: We were armed. We didn't' have any-- I can only think of, maybe, two ambushes that were set up and they were so obvious that we just fired a few shots and they took off.

Cohen: Why were they so obvious?

Sussman: Well, they weren't...they were. Maybe they weren't really, maybe it wasn't really an ambush. It could have been just Germans who were—Well, you see, what happened is once we broke out of Normandy there was a race to get to Germany and in that race, there was not only the American Army, going down roads. The German Army was going down roads and Germans were coming from Nice and the – the Mediterranean coast – They were coming and everybody was racing so it was really, totally disorganized and you could run into Germans anywhere and if we saw... So, whether these guys were setting up an ambush or just resting, we had no idea but there were situations where we had to fire at them.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah. [Draws a breath] So, during this period of time, we know that fuel, getting fuel, was essential for the US Forces. They established the Red Ball Express. Did you ever experience a shortage of fuel in your vehicles in the jeep or armored cars?

Sussman: We always carried a five gallon can. We wouldn't touch that without informing somebody that we were down to, about to do it and get permission to do it. They had to know that – how much mobility we had --- to move around and we were told to go or stop and I had no idea why. [Laughter]. That is, somebody had something in mind and the missions we got were those which they thought we could accomplish, yeah. If we didn't get a mission, they, we didn't move, you know.

Cohen: Yeah. Were you provided with any maps, especially, you're saying during this fluid time with the race across France in both directions?

Sussman: Well, maps – that's a big deal. We had wonderful maps. We had contour maps, we could see a hill on a map and everywhere we went we had a map in front of us, we knew exactly where we were going. That was one of the things, we spent a lot of time in the States and in England, especially in England, learning how to read maps and use maps. So we knew where we were, at all times.

Cohen: At all times.

Sussman: Yeah. And, of course, it was the [US] Air Force who was making these maps or gathering the information for the maps to be made. But that's a whole process but, we had maps. Yeah, we knew exactly where we were going.

Cohen: Hmm. And when you were in the jeeps, were you on roads or did you go through land? Like I know that you mentioned earlier that you did a lot of foot patrols for the first thirty-seven days in Normandy. But when you were on missions using jeeps, was it on roads as it had been in your training? Or did you have to improvise?

Sussman: It depended. It sounds...some of our missions we had to get out of our jeeps and walk. At various places, that is, it's farmland, and there are roads but the roads don't go everywhere so we were frequently off road, very frequently in Normandy. Now once we



got out of Normandy, it was all roads for the most part. Yeah. Except when we got to the, okay, German border, then we were back on land, again. Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. Did your vehicles ever have – ever break down? Or—and were there people on them who could fix them? Did your vehicles ever break down due to mechanical failure or otherwise?

Sussman: We, I don't recall that we ever had a flat tire. Now, maybe I think we had trouble with the armored car. That happened once, I think. Now, I wasn't in the armored car but I think an armored car had some trouble. Could have been motor trouble or something but that was unusual. That was very unusual. I think, generally, our equipment was kept in very good order and we – that would have been unusual to have motor trouble, yeah.

Cohen: That's good, that's good. So, our intern did some reading and she said as the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry group moved through Belgium, there was, at least, one squadron that captured a brewery in Malmedy, Belgium. Were you part of that squadron?

Sussman: Captured a brewery?

Cohen: In Malmedy. In Belgium.

Sussman: I did not pass through a – take part in that – in a brewery. [Cohen laughs]. But that we were in Malmedy. No, Malmedy was very interesting for me because everybody there spoke both French and German and it was – We had a lot of – I had a lot of fun, there, trying both languages and... For a while there, we were resting there. We were told to stop and not go ahead. That is we had been leading to get there and they, I guess, they at a certain point, they decided that they wanted to regroup or bring up more forces or whatever but we were told not to go ahead. So we had, maybe, a whole week – it seems to me now, it was quite some time in Malmedy. So that was – it was a kind of a break for me. But I don't remember liberating a – I remember drinking beer, there. They had beer, yeah.

Cohen: Was this the first break that you had since the day before [i.e. after] D-Day?

Sussman: Well, we had as far as breaks go, once, I think it was, let's say, the end of August, I think or toward the end of August. Well, maybe, no. It was the beginning of July, it must have been. That we broke out of Normandy or mid-July, I forget the dates, now, but there was a point between the break-out from Normandy and, maybe, two weeks before that we had – well, the VII Corps had crossed the peninsula and then gone toward Cherbourg and at a certain point, we reached the end of the peninsula and had no place to go except into the ocean and from that point until the point that we broke out of Normandy and that must have been about, at least a two week period. We had no enemy in front of us and we had, I had my head shaved off and it was completely bald. We were resting and drinking and... rest and rehabilitation, R & R, we called that. Rest and rehabilitation. And we got some new armaments and fixed their vehicles if they needed fixing and had inspections and that kind of thing. But there was a couple of weeks where we had no enemy in front of us.

Cohen: At Cherbourg?

Sussman: Well, we had already moved from Cherbourg to, oh, I can't remember the names, St. something or other. [Laughter]

Cohen: On the coast?

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: So, out of curiosity, when you were at Malmedy, were you given replacements because after all, your unit had lost men?

Sussman: We were getting replacements, periodically. Periodically, we were getting replacements. New guys would step in and how many men did we lose by the time of the breakout from Normandy? Oh, maybe we had lost twenty men. Maybe not that much. No. It would have been about fifteen, I think, at the most. I would have to look and see but we were getting replacements all the time.

Cohen: All the time, hmm. So, we know that in late October, the US Forces captured Aachen in western Germany and I believe your unit was now heading toward the Hurtgen Forest. Was that correct?

Sussman: Well, Aachen would be on the other side of – Hurtgen Forest was on the border and Aachen was well within the border of Germany. So the Hurtgen Forest – we had our time in the Hurtgen Forest, in October, for mostly, a good part of October and before that, September and October. Well, October and November. October and November, yeah.

Cohen: So, we know that it was very muddy and it was very cold. Do you recall—

Sussman: Muddy, muddy, not cold but wet, at times. At times and never very hot but, of course, you're outside and, at night, it was cool – it got cool at night, yeah... but, of course, the thing that bothered us was the mortars, the mortars and machine guns, that's what we were facing. Mortars and machine guns and some artillery. There was also some artillery, not much.

Cohen: So how would you protect yourselves?

Sussman: Well, we dug in. We would get to a point where we couldn't go further and we were told to hold our position or drop back, sometimes. We weren't told to charge the enemy and take over his position. We could call, sometimes, we would call in our artillery fire but it was a lot of patrols, moving when we could move, but the—we were between—again, we were between Infantry outfits that were doing a lot of the fighting and we were doing a sort of liaison between them and moving with them but not but not trying to overcome serious resistance. We were doing scouting, a lot of scouting.

Cohen: How did this scouting and liaison between infantry compare to when you were in Normandy? You mentioned that earlier on, in Normandy, you were doing a lot of scouting and liaison between two infantry units.

Sussman: It was very similar but different kind of territory, different kind of land but, actually, turned out to be pretty much the same, the same kind of thing. That is looking for trouble and trying to stay out of it and find out, finding out where the enemy is and reporting where we see him, and firing at him, if we could and—but we were never in a situation where we were supposed to be attacking them, yeah.

Cohen: Did you or other people get trench foot?

Sussman: Um, we had serious trouble in the Bulge with...frozen toes. There was a real problem, there. Not until then did...well, we were very careful about changing socks and keeping socks dry and all that. We had well-trained for something like that...

Cohen: What do you think was the biggest asset in the training? Like you said that you'd been well-trained for this. So what was something that in retrospect was really useful?

Sussman: Well, this goes back to what we were training in the States, a lot of inspections, you see that we had stuff in good shape and – because we were using things and then they'd get dirty and then we'd have to make sure they were all clean again and that everything was in good repair. So there was just a lot of inspections.

Cohen: Inspections. Like a well-oiled, well-disciplined—

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: Hmm, hmm. So, we know that you [i.e., the whole unit] received a citation that there was a strong German resistance along the Rohr River dams and then the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron was asked to advance southeastward toward the town of Bogheim, where the Squadron's valor was recognized with the unit citation. If you'll bear with me, I'll just read a little bit and then I'd love to hear your recollections:

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: “The 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized) is cited for conspicuously distinguishing itself in battle against the enemy on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 1944. The mission was to attack its zone and secure Bogheim and the high ground to the southeast of the time [i.e., town]. Previous actions in the Hurtgen Forest had reduced the troops to between 55 and 70 each. Nevertheless, two battle groups of the 942<sup>nd</sup> German Infantry Regiment, 353<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division and one company of the 6<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment which then represented one of the finest fighting units of the German Army was completely destroyed...On the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, 1944, in dense fog and under heavy concentrations of enemy artillery, the squadron forced an entry into Bogheim. Resistance was fanatical necessitating tortuous house-to-house fighting. By 14:00 hours, all resistance in the town had ceased but the troop commanders of all troops directly committed had either been killed or seriously

wounded... Again, on the morning of the following day, still under heavy artillery saturation, at times, reaching the density of 1,000 rounds per hour, the remainder of the squadron drove and fought its way to the top of, excuse me, to the top of the ridge, to the southeast held by vastly superior enemy forces. Almost completely exhausted from the heavy fighting of the previous day, the troops nevertheless attacked at a dead run over two hundred yards of open ground uphill to the ridge. Only the gallantry and esprit de corps of the officers and men, above and beyond the call of duty enabled the squadron to reorganize, again, and again after losing many troop commanders, platoon leaders and other key personnel vital to the continued functioning of the tactical unit..." So I just wondered if you want to talk about this.

Sussman: Well, what is there to say?

Cohen: What was your experience? Like what—

Sussman: Well, they—the first day was as it says, house-to-house fighting and...Americans, Americans can do something that a European can't do. He can throw a hand grenade through a window at fifty yards. The Germans are good at kicking but Americans are good at throwing. They do the baseball versus soccer. [Cohen laughs]. See, we never, we never heard of soccer, or we never played soccer. We do kick a football but very seldom in a game...you kick-off and you maybe kick once or twice and that's it but you do a lot of throwing in baseball and you see, we spent our youth throwing a ball and the Germans, the Europeans never throw anything. So we had hand grenades and they were very useful and we were able to make progress...and...but we lost a lot of men and so it's a matter of luck. You were either hit or you weren't hit.

Cohen: Were you part of the group that conquered the high ground outside of town?

Sussman: We were up there and that, too, was... we had machine gun fire that helped us there, too, backing us up and we had hand grenades that we could throw. So, I think the Germans would probably not, maybe not as well-prepared as they should have been but we did what we had to do. Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah. Were you surprised to be part of an offensive action?

Sussman: We knew what our orders were, we knew what our orders were and...Surprised? No, at that point, after the—The big surprise for us was the German counter attack. That was December 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, something like that and before that, we had pulled out of the Hurtgen Forest and had been patrolling that area. Now the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was the one that got the – bore the brunt of the German attack, at that time and we were on their right. No, were I think on their left. We weren't far from them and we had been patrolling and we recognized and reported that there was activity in those woods. I don't know what they did with the information that they had. We had proceeded, we had proceeded to a certain point, we had said, maybe by the first week in December and then they became very aggressive and started pushing us back and we were reporting that we were being pushed back. And it was obvious that something was going on but I guess it was being reported but, at any rate, the attack didn't come in our

area, it came just to the 106<sup>th</sup> Division which was not far from us but we should have been probably more alert than we were to what was going on there.

Cohen: So just to clarify: around December 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>, you were part of the Ardennes, noticing there's action going, reporting it. Then your unit is asked to go to Bogheim and the attacks – the German attacks were affecting the Infantry Division?

Sussman: Well, it was after that, as I say, some time, we had made it to a certain progress up to, maybe, the 7<sup>th</sup> of December and then we were pushed back and then the attack came, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and it didn't come in our area but we were told to go toward Bogheim, which is not far away. It was pretty close.

Cohen: Close, um... So, was the next major mission your involvement of the Battle of the Bulge, like with the German counter attack, trying to reach the Meuse River, there was a battle at Humain, at the crossroads, Humain – H-U-M-A-I-N?

Sussman: I'm sorry.

Cohen: Oh, okay, okay. So, it's my understanding that at some point the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron was ordered to conduct screening operations for the US Forces on the north side of the German bulge in the Battle of the Bulge?

Sussman: Yes, we were – well, at a certain point after – this was after Bogheim, we had, we had ... Following Bogheim, we had a period of rest that was a couple of weeks and then at a certain point, this would have been, in January, maybe January 7<sup>th</sup>, I don't know, sometime around then, it was...we were back in pursuit, moving with the Army and following the Germans who were, at least in our area, were retreating. This was in, maybe, mid-January, something like that, if I can recall.

Cohen: Was your squadron involved in, um, I don't know what to call it, the fighting around the Rohr River dams in February, in March '45? Were you involved with the fighting against the Germans around the Rohr River dams in February or March?

Sussman: Was that in – that was in February, huh?

Cohen: I think so. Or I am just...Or you tell me, really, what happened next. That would probably be better.

Sussman: I wasn't at the dam but we were not far... You know, that's a very small area around there. It's the area where Luxemburg, Belgium, Germany and France are all within a few miles and I spent a lot of time at the dam but now, following January, I was not near—I didn't, I don't think that I remember seeing the dam, in January. We were not far from it but I can't remember the names of the places that is – I would have look through our troop journal. We have a journal of the troop – every day –

Cohen: Wow, wow!

Sussman: See, what happens is: at the end of the day, the captain dictates a log, something for the log and at the end of the war, the entire log of combat was printed up and everybody got a copy of it. So, it's unfortunate, that they didn't do a good job of putting everything in. Well, sometimes, the captain was not in any position [chuckles] to remember everything or maybe he thought that only this is important or that's important and so he missed a lot of stuff. He missed some stuff. Anyway, but he did get most of it, at least one thing he always got in there is where we bivouacked. I can tell you that where Troop headquarters had its bivouac. Now, maybe a certain platoon was not there but that's where the troop headquarters had its bivouac and the other platoons would not be far away but without looking at that, I can't remember, you know, exactly, where we were but I don't recall being at the dam, itself.

Cohen: Okay, look, we're just reading general history and maybe it applied to another squadron so I'm sorry to confuse matters for no reason. Sorry about that. But so, just, in general terms, what were your assignments next? Were you charged to assign the Rhine River? What was going on?

Sussman: Once the Battle of the Bulge was over and I think we can say that it was over by mid-January, they were, the Germans were in retreat and I don't...we were off and running into Germany as fast as we could. As I said, we had a break, maybe our break ended mid-January and we went back into scouting and moving and we kept moving until we got to the Harz Mountains [in Germany] and that was – We got to the Harz Mountains, let's see, that would probably be in late April or sometime around there, maybe even earlier.

Cohen: At this point, did you and your buddies feel that the war in Europe would soon be over, once...?

Sussman: It certainly looked like it. The Germans were surrendering if they could – and they were not putting up – they were not finding a point where they were willing to put up a big resistance. The roads were not completely open but we could move fairly rapidly, you know.

Cohen: Without too much resistance?

Sussman: Yeah, yeah. If we ran into Germans, it was almost by accident, not by – that they had set up something to stop us but, maybe, on a couple of occasions, but we would stop, we would liberate towns. We would call it liberation [laughs] but that it didn't make much difference whether it was French, German or Belgian, we would just enter a town if it was undefended.

Cohen: Well, that's something I wondered about. What were the reactions of people in France and Belgium and Germany when you, so to speak, liberated a town?

Sussman: Well, in France and Belgium, it was pandemonium, just joy. We could have kissing girls [laughter] and champagne, on occasion, and they were very, very happy people. Of course, when we got to Germany, it was a different story. I would interrogate people, I

would ask them, "Where's your army, now?" [laughs]. But they were not happy, no, they were very sad people, yeah.

Cohen: At what point in time, had you been dealing with German prisoners? Like you mention in the biographical survey...

Sussman: Well, in Normandy, it was occasional deserters. You would have that and at a certain point, they would surrender in groups. At one point, they surrendered in a very large group but without officers. The officers were, maybe, planning and going somewhere else to surrender. Maybe back to Cherbourg or whatever. But, in France, on the way to Germany, it was always accidental. We would run into a German and take him prisoner and sometimes, we would leave them there because we had a mission and we had no...if you take his gun away and leave him there, there was not much else to be done. We couldn't take him with us. Now, there was one occasion we, there's a town in Normandy, Milly was the name of it. M-i-double l-y Milly and I was the first, my squad was the first one in to the town and I was interrogating them but would they seen – when was the last time they saw a German? And a young man came out from one of the stores, there was a store, a grocery store, and he spoke a good English, and he's about eighteen, nineteen years old, at the most; short kid, and so he spoke to me in English. And it turns out that he was the son of the mayor of Barenton and he offered to come with us and translate for us. So, he came with us to Barenton and then when we wanted – his father was the mayor of Barenton – and we thought that we'd leave him there but he wanted to go with us. So, we gave him a uniform and a rifle and was served as our interpreter until we got to the German border. His name is Louis Launay, L-a-u-n-a-y, and Louis and – Louis stayed in my jeep and taught me French, corrected my French a lot, so and we spoke a lot of English. I corrected his English if he needed it. He was pretty good. He had graduated from a lycée in France and so he was with us for fifty days until we reached the German border and then lost his usefulness and wanted to get back home, anyway. But that was interesting that he – wherever he went he would run into a tobacco store which exists in every French village and grab a postcard and write a few notes on it and [ask], "Please mail this for me." Put a stamp on it and mail it for me. He'd tell them what he was doing and so his family knew where he was all the time and so he was with us as we liberated all these towns. We would have maybe three liberations in a fairly size good size city every day for a good month or two, almost. So that went on in France and Belgium and I think I had, maybe, a better time in Belgium than I had in France, I think, just things. We were there longer, that is not counting Normandy, we went through France in a few, a couple of weeks, from Chateau Thierry to the Belgian border, maybe it was a week or maybe ten days at the most and then we spent a long time in Belgium. So, I had spent a lot of time in Belgium. I liked it very much. I liked the Belgian people very much.

Cohen: What did you like about it and what was fun about it?

Sussman: Well, I don't know. The Belgians are more like Americans than the French. The French are very conservative people or were at that time, anyway. Maybe, they still are. The Belgians were more like American. I think Americans got along better with the...Or maybe, that's just my experience, I don't know.

Cohen: Aside from Malmedy, was there another place in Belgium where you spent a significant period of time, like a week or—

Sussman: Hui –H-u-i— spent a lot of time in Huy. In fact, we had our rest and rehabilitation not far from Huy and I spent a little time there. Where else? I can't think of it. There were certain towns I liked very much. Lille in France was --- I liked that town. I stayed there just one – I wasn't there very long, no. Oh, I don't know. It's so hard to talk about something that was so long ago.

Cohen: Oh, you seem to remember things really vividly!

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: So, back in Germany in April, you're in the Harz Mountains. Where do you proceed from there?

Sussman: Well, that was a period...we didn't stay in the Harz Mountains very long. We had one little trip to the Elbe River and spoke to some Russians and then went—We went to Leipzig for briefly. It seems to me, we're in Leipzig for a very brief time and, at a certain point, we were assigned to Sprendigen, an airport city for Frankfurt on the Main River, there and we were there as part of the Army of Occupation from oh, maybe, beginning of June or mid-June until let's see, the atomic bomb was in mid-August—so that would be, maybe, the end of August. I think sometime in September, sometime in September we were told to go to north of Nice in France and wait for a boat, a ship to take us back. So that was our trip. So, that ended our occupation in Germany. It was a trip to France.

Cohen: Do you remember where you were on VE-Day? On May 8 or how you heard about the end of the war in Europe?

Sussman: We were somewhere near the Harz Mountains, I believe, so not far. Probably, maybe in it already. Maybe in the Harz Mountains, already, by that time. And oh, we had lost a – we had a member of A Troop, John Klokowski? Was killed May 4 or 5<sup>th</sup>. The war ended on May 8. I think it was like five days before – just it was very – he was our last death and he was from the south side of Chicago and it was a very disheartening loss at that time. I think that was our last loss.

Cohen: Was it a sniper bullet type thing?

Sussman: Well, it was unexpected but it happened, yeah, yeah.

Cohen: So, was your group ever in Austria? Or after Germany, it was straight to Nice and then the boat back to the US?

Sussman: Austria, no, no, we were never in Austria, no. I think we were, we went from the Harz Mountains, to what Leipzig, I think and then – how did we get to – I can't remember where we lost our jeeps. We gave up our jeeps at a certain point and we went to Nice in a convoy, I believe. That's my – my memory is getting faint, at that time. I, probably, lost interest in—



Cohen: Time to go home. [laughs]/

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. Something you mentioned in the form, in the pre-interview questionnaire, that you had sustained an injury either during combat or during service. When...

Sussman: I had a – in the Hurtgen Forest...The Germans used a lot of mortars. Now mortar – it goes up and it goes down again. Very—

Cohen: Like an arc?

Sussman: High trajectory and if it hits the ground, the force of the explosion is upward and so you want get down as flat as you can. Now in Hurtgen Forest, on the other hand, there's a lot of trees so it's very frequent that the mortar will burst in the trees and force of the explosion is downward. So, you don't want to lay down flat on the ground but you want to do is get under the tree and sometimes, it's these Christmas trees are hard to get under but you do it anyway. And, well, there was mortar burst in the tree and I had got a slight wound – my only wound – was – it was bleeding but the bone wasn't hit and I put it in a tourniquet and I went to a First Aid Station and I was told that in the triage there to get on a truck and they'll will take me, they couldn't work on me there because it was overloaded and told me to get on a truck and they'll take me to a field hospital, maybe, somebody will work on me, there. So, I decided to walk back to camp and let the, let our medic stitch it. He could stitch it, too. I mean he was busy but it wasn't bleeding that bad and so he stitched it up and I had my arm in a sling for the week or something or – not even that – And that's it. That was my wound.

Cohen: Was it painful?

Sussman: No, not really. Not during the first half hour or something like that...

Sussman, Marc: You've often told me one of the reasons why you came back was not to be separated.

Sussman: Yeah. I was afraid if I got on the truck and went somewhere, then it's always a possible some officer will say, "You, you and you, get on that bus" and so forth. Who knows what – where I would end up? And I didn't want to end up in any other unit. So, I didn't take a chance.

Cohen: Did the unit become very close, like there's this saying – comrade-in-arms – was it true in your experience? You know the expression, comrade-in-arms, like did the group become very close?

Sussman: You become very close when you're in real trouble you become very close, yeah, yeah. And it's a – you know, somebody gets wounded, everybody tries to help out as much as you can and if somebody needs something, you make sure he gets what he needs, you know.

Sussman, Marc: You've often spoken, at length about how your relationships built over the meals and the years.

Sussman: Well, it was a difficult for me because, again, these guys who were entirely different than me. They were farm boys and I was a city boy and even beyond that, I was a kind of an intellectual. None of these guys had the same interests I had and I didn't have the same interests that they had but we were both, we were all but we were all interested in doing our job and that was what bound us. We had the same thing to do, we stood guard together. We fed each other, you made sure that if somebody needed help, he got it.

Cohen: Hmm. Were the replacements also mostly farm boys?

Sussman: No, well, not as often, not as often. There were some city boys, ya. I would say there were three or four replacements that I remember and um...Maybe a couple of them were rural – I don't know if they were farm or not. I didn't get to know the replacements as well as, maybe, I should have but they were all nice guys, yeah. They were – the trouble with the replacement is that they had a lot to learn in a very short time and you could help them but we would – they would also get hurt...more easily than a veteran would get hurt. It's unfortunate about that but that happened.

Cohen: Yeah, they had less experience, yeah. So, how was ship ride back, back home? You left Nice, France...

Sussman: Well, it was one big gambling hall. [Laughter]. Everybody was gambling, dice games and card games and what else do you do on a ship? I mean in – I think in a sense everybody was lost, feeling lost, that is – it was like something like going into combat in the sense that you don't know what's ahead. You know, you're going home and you're going do something when you get there but you don't know what it's going to be and it's like going into combat, you know you're going to do something but you don't know it's going to be and so there's some similarity in that, yeah.

Cohen: One thing I was wondering about is that whole period from D-Day or in your case, the day before D-Day [i.e., a few hours before] until liberation when you're on the move, were you still able to receive any mail from home?

Sussman: Oh, mail, not just before – no, we got on a ship, a couple of days before D-Day. We were on a ship some period of time being ready to go when the word didn't come. Was it three days, maybe? I don't know. Something, could be. So, we didn't get mail then but maybe we got mail a week before, possibly, something I don't remember. But we didn't get mail again until, maybe a couple of weeks, after D-Day. There was a period without much mail, yeah, around D-Day, before and after that I can remember.

Cohen: Would you get mail, otherwise, like when you were in Belgium or a--?

Sussman: Oh, we would get mail not every day but once a week, we would have mail call, yeah. I think, once a week, probably. It wouldn't go much longer than a week, you know.

Cohen: Wow, wow, wow. So where did you demobilize, demobilize from when you – in the States? Like which camp?

Sussman: In the States? It was Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

Cohen: Oh, right here, in Chicago!

Sussman: Right there, yeah. And then it was a train ride to the Loop and the streetcar ride home on Roosevelt Road.

Cohen: Was your mother or your father or your sister home when you---

Sussman: Ya, everybody was home because they expected me. I had called and they were expecting me. It was a kind of a joyous thing for my mother and my father to see me but my aunt was there, my sister and brother. During the war, I had lost two uncles. One died from cigarettes and, actually, during the war, I had lost two uncles and an aunt had all died during the war. Just, they were people that were not in very good health, you know.

Cohen: Did you know about it while you were away or did you only learn of their passing when you came back home?

Sussman: I had heard of a couple of them, I didn't hear of all of them, no. No, they didn't tell me everything.

Cohen: So, once you're back at home, what did you decide to do? Did you go back to school? Did you use the GI Bill?

Sussman: Well, that was...that was December '45 and I, applied at Northwestern [University] first but they had a quota of Jewish – a Jewish quota, just like all the other colleges and I didn't make the quota. So, I went to Roosevelt College. I didn't want to go – leave the Chicago area – I wanted to stay close to the family, for a while and so, I got – and I was only interested in – I had no interest – I had no idea of what to do as far as career goes. Some of my friends that I met coming back, they wanted to go into law, some of them did, they went into law. Some wanted to go into medicine – we all had GI Bill. I had no idea – I couldn't see myself studying in law or medicine. My only interest was languages at that time. So I ended up at Roosevelt College which was just getting – just beginning, at that time. I studied Italian and Russian and I tested out for French and German. Did I have Spanish? I think I had Spanish, also, and I had Economics. With Abba Lerner. Abba Lerner was my Economics teacher. You can google Abba Lerner. He was a colleague of John Maynard Keynes and why he was teaching at Roosevelt College, I have no idea. But he inspired me a lot. I should have gone into Economics but I couldn't see myself doing that. It seemed like it be—I would be – I'd have to get a PhD and then I'd spend my life teaching and I don't know. I just didn't – I fooled around for a couple of years and, finally, decided, "Gee, I ought to get an engineering education." So, in 1949, I applied at IIT and got my degree in '52, my electrical engineering degree and I got a BS [Bachelor of Science] in Math, also, going to night school. Got married in '54 and got my BS degree in

'59, at night. Night school. That was the end of my education. Formal education and what else?

Cohen: How did you meet your wife?

Sussman: Ah. Well, I had had my first job as an engineer was American Automatic Typewriter Company. I think that was the name of it and they operated a typewriter with a piano roll for like the piano player.

Cohen: Yeah...

Sussman: Playing – they were thinking that they ought to get rid of the air mechanism that operates the player piano in the typewriter. They wanted to put – they wanted to make an input with a tape – the punch tape and operate the solenoids that pull [the valves?] Well, that didn't work out, too well, because of the materials they were using for it – they would have needed more equipment. At any rate, I didn't like that job – it was, they didn't want to get into electronics which would have been my interest. So, I got a job designing transformers with another company in Chicago and didn't like that job, either. So, I was – this is '54 and I quit – I was planning to quit the job and go to Mexico for a time, just to see what was there and so I took a course in Spanish at the downtown YMCA and I met a young lady from France who had the same idea. She was visiting her mother, who had, who was living in Chicago. Her mother had decided to leave France. She had had a terrible time. Growing up as a young girl, she had been under German occupation during World War I because she came from Picardy, the northwest corner of France, near Calais and they were one of the first towns captured by the Germans in World War I. So, she spent four years under German military occupation as a teenager and then during World War II, she spent four years as the mother of a teenager in German military occupation and decided to leave her husband and her home and go to visit a chum, a school chum, who had married an American soldier in World War I, living in Chicago, and doing very well in the steel business. And so, she came here and got a job and she was a brilliant woman, actually. She'd been a journalist and written a couple of books and had very serious interests in etymology, you know, the study of words, Medieval French. She had – I have a ton of work that she did with that -- but she lost her, she lost her ability to write when she left France because she couldn't –her hearing wasn't that good so, at any rate, Miguelle was visiting her mother, and wanted to go to Mexico so we went together and she passed away last September.

Cohen: Oh, I'm sorry.

Sussman: After sixty-four years of marriage.

Cohen: Wow.

Sussman: So, we spent, we spent the summer in Mexico and came back in September and I got another job and started living and so that's my history.

Cohen: Wow. So you have one son and one daughter?

Sussman: I have three sons and no daughters, three daughter-in-laws. But I guess it's a successful life. I'm still here.

Cohen: And it's all good. [laughs]

Sussman: It's all good.

Cohen: Did you join any veteran organizations when you returned?

Sussman: Well, when I came back, I didn't -- I looked at the American Legion. I thought there'd be just the same guys that I was in school with. They were guys that were not like me. I was again, in the same situation I was in the Army. I couldn't find guys like me, but I did find the American Veterans Service Committee, which was a group of guys, more like me, in Evanston, because I was living in Rogers Park. I finally got a home in -- we had our home in Rogers Park, just south of Evanston, so I met all these guys from Evanston and that included Abner Mikvah [American politician & federal judge] was in the group. Also, in the group was Quentin Young [American physician who advocated for universal health care] who was the manager of Cook County Hospital for many years and a couple of other very interesting people, economists and doctors, people in banking and -- it was a wonderful group and we met every month for...Well, the last meeting was, I think that we stopped meeting after -- oh, I must have been eighty, at the time. We finally decided to just have dinner once a year and the last dinner we had was, maybe, five years ago, maybe more in which there were two men and about eight widows and that was it. So, we stopped meeting for dinner and that's what happens but that was the only group of veterans I've ever been with. It was very, very rewarding. Yeah.

Cohen: Was it rewarding because you had a chance to speak about your experiences and listen to others' experiences that were similar?

Sussman: Actually, not so much. We were very much concerned with Vietnam War, Europe--

Cohen: The Cold War?

Sussman: It was -- we were concerned about politics, more than anything else. They, we were a bunch of lefties and we were compatible and sort of lonely and ... but we did what we could.

Cohen: Did you speak about your war experiences to your wife or to your children, in the past?

Sussman: No, never. Marc will tell you that the first time, we talked about it was when I went to, well, at a certain point, Miguella's mother died, and left us a home in France and we -- I was retired about that time and we decided to spend our summers in France and come back here because the house there was a summer home and it had a cottage which was okay for the winter but we didn't want to stay there. So, at a...what was I going to say? I've forgotten my train of thought.

Cohen: You're in France. Like you say that you inherited the cottage in France?

Sussman: No, well.

Sussman, Marc: Talking about your war experiences and how – so, you’re leading up to why you went to the reunion.

Sussman: Yeah. We were living in France at 1994 and that was the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day and we decided to go to, to drive to Normandy from – we were living south of Paris. Unfortunately, all the roads were blocked for security reasons. So, my Citroën had to go the wrong – too small roads and had all kinds of difficulty but I did manage to get there, late enough for to see President Clinton and Mrs. Clinton at the – when he was saying goodbye to the Rangers who had been keeping guard there and the veterans there, these Rangers, saw my badge because I had picked up a badge, in Paris. They saw my badge and they pushed me into the arms of Mrs. Clinton. [laughter]. So, I talked to her about being on the other end of Touhy Avenue from Park Ridge and – my recollection as—I was surprised how small she was. She was thin and shorter than me and at that time, anyway. We had a nice conversation but at any rate, that’s when my kids found out that I was a veteran.

Cohen: Oh, in ‘94, yeah.

Sussman: That was fifty years after the war, yeah, and they were [to Marc]: “How old were you in ‘94?”

Sussman, Marc: I would be thirty-four.

Sussman: He was thirty-four years old – he found out that I had been in Normandy.

Sussman, Marc: Well, yah. I knew you were a veteran but I did not know about D-Day etc.

Sussman: Yeah. He didn’t have any details. Details, yeah. So, no. I didn’t talk about it and it wasn’t until my granddaughter got on my case and insisted that start writing things down because I had said a few things and she said, “You gotta write it down. You gotta write it down!” Then her mother pushed me into this event that at an American Legion story-telling thing and it went on from there. So, now, I talk about it. I mean people are interested and maybe it is interesting, I guess.

Cohen: No, it is very much, interesting and it’s also a gift that you’re able to tell and to describe. You know, it’s like some people have the memory but they may not have the strength, you know, to communicate it. So, that’s really amazing.

Sussman: Well, I guess people tell me the writing is good. What can I say?

Cohen: Like you said you always did well at languages and literature so....

Sussman: Yeah. And well, you can judge – it’s on YouTube. It’s --- I’ve been told the writing is good. I guess the one who writes just thinks he’s doing the best he can. He doesn’t know how to compare it with somebody else – In fact, I just got a book, **Civil War Stories** by Ambrose Bierce. I don’t know if you know that book.

Cohen: I don't know it. I should see whether we have it or not.

Sussman: You probably have that book, Ambrose Bierce and he is a marvelous writer. He describes war, well, I can't describe how he describes it but he's a marvelous writer and I can't do anything that – the way he does it but maybe, he's not...He's a different kind of writer. He's very philosophical and historical and cultural and he's a great writer. Of course, he's long gone and people don't write like that, anymore.

Cohen: Is he an inspiration for your own writing?

Sussman: I just picked up his book, not long ago, so, no. I write the way I think – I write to describe how the event unfolded and what I'm doing is more reporting, that is I'm describing the circumstances and, maybe, what I was thinking at the time, and maybe the meaning of things going on there but Bierce, Ambrose Bierce, he's really getting into the psychology of soldiers, for example, you hear distant fire. And you wake up and – if you're resting and you hear distant fire, then you're not resting anymore. Even if you're miles from combat, it awakens something in you, and he goes into the inner feelings of – he's a marvelous writer. I don't think that I can do that kind of writing but there --- every writer is different, you know.

Cohen: Do you think that, nowadays, you know, we hear a lot about PTSD and even, you mentioned this writer describes what we could commonly think of as PTSD. Do you think you were affected by it after being in combat for so long?

Sussman: Well, I would, I suspect that, if we had been, I'm thinking of. **All Quiet on the Western Front** even with the circumstances of the author, why didn't he get PTSD? Apparently, he didn't but I can understand that. That is trench warfare where you're just undergoing something, the same thing happening every few days, constant pressure. I can understand that very well and, maybe, but we didn't have in our situation, we were moving all the time. That is we seldom had one position that we held for very long so it was a lot of movement and under those circumstances, I don't think that it affected us that way. We didn't feel that.

Sussman, Marc: Contrast with what you just said the other week about when you returned, you felt lost for two or three [years].

Sussman: Ah, that's a different thing, that is – I had no idea what to do with myself. I think, I think that was, for me, there was a shock of peace. That is, I hadn't planned for coming back and I had – I was lost and if the war had something to do with that, it probably did, but maybe that was also built into my character, my experience, because even before I left for the war, I had no serious plans, and maybe I was just growing up, without plans, without ambitions as, maybe, some kids do. Maybe they just decide to go into this or that or the other thing and I had—All I did was read and, maybe, my interest was in writing or something like that and I didn't know how to do it. So, this is a – so this was a personal problem, not necessarily a war problem. I can't say.

Cohen: You were finding your way or you're—

Sussman: I think that, maybe I had more trouble finding my way than most guys did and, maybe I would have had trouble, anyway, but, well, I have to say this: I grew up during the Depression and the Depression had more of an effect on me than, maybe, World War II did.

Cohen: How so?

Sussman: Possibly so, because my father was under stress for, as far as I know, ten years, and I could see him aging and worried every night. Or certainly, every week. Worried about business, worried about this, worried about that, and so I was under that kind of pressure for ten years. I think that that probably bothered me more in a sense more than World War II did. I didn't know what to do with myself. It was a world that I – the world of the Great Depression was a very difficult world for everybody and we've never really faced what happens to people under those circumstances.

Cohen: It's true.

Sussman: I know for a fact that my sister and I – she was a year and a half older than me – always worried about money. That is a dime was a dime or nickel. We didn't throw things away – we don't like to – We just have a different attitude toward clothing or whatever it is. We were impressed by that. We were scared, frightened of whatever it was. We were affected, yeah.

Cohen: Yeah.

Sussman: And that was, maybe, a bigger part of my personality than I would like to admit, yeah. Possibly.

Cohen: Well, it's true – it's like a very protracted thing, you know, ten years or more.

Sussman: It is and so after the war, the idea that it was now, peace and, maybe, prosperity, was, maybe, two entirely different ideas at the same time. Peace and prosperity – what do you do with this? Yeah, I was lost. It was – it was not obvious to me. Of course, I had income from going to school, I got the GI Bill, and all that, so I never really faced, having to work, you know, and I was willing to and I was seriously interested in languages and a few other things but nothing that I could call a, "Will you [be] making a living". So, it was a – I'm not a normal guy – I'm not the typical guy so you can't judge me like you judge other people, you know. It's a little, maybe you can't say, you can't make sense out of me like you can out of other people.

Cohen: No, I mean... but I appreciate what you're saying – it's complex, you know, it's not only combat, it's...you know, where a person is before and after and I never thought before how jarring, how jarring it could be, like – all of a sudden peace and these very optimistic expectations for prosperity, you know etc.

Sussman: Yeah, it is.



Cohen: Yeah. Well, as you know the Pritzker Military Museum & Library is, you know, dedicated to collecting and sharing the stories of the Citizen Soldier. So how would you define the term, Citizen Soldier?

Sussman: Well, I always thought of it as a Citizen Soldier as one that's got a rifle by his bed and when the bugle blows, he just picks up the rifle and he runs out [laughter] and he's ready to take his part. I don't know. What I see is, maybe not a citizen soldier, but a citizen who is very concerned about what trouble his leaders are getting him into and I was – well, maybe that was one of the things that was bothering more than I'd like to say. That is, we haven't talked about the atomic bomb, talk about pressure of peace and prosperity at the same time, there was a third thing, was the atomic bomb, which is – So, you have not only peace and prosperity that's new but the total destruction of the human race, that's pressure number three and it certainly looked at the time of Korea, which I was already in school at that time but even before then, the Cold War, was beginning in, maybe, '46, '47, for sure. It was already beginning before I started my serious work as engineering...It looked again like the end of the world was very possible and so that was another thing to worry about. And then, of course, there was Korea and then...as a matter of fact, Vietnam, for me, started in '54 because or even before '54 because it was obvious that we had a government that was interested in, that was being, what I thought was being very aggressive in China. We had, we had the Chinese problem was already in '45, '46 and up 'til that civil war in China was right after, right, even during and after World War II. And so that was a concern, immediately, and because we were involved in that. And then Korea came and then, I met Mig and France was involved in Vietnam, at that time, and she had had friends in the university that where she got her degree in Paris, the Sorbonne University. She had friends from Vietnam, there, and by '54, that war ended but America got involved in that. So, she had friends in, it turned out, by the '60s, after we were already, we had a child already, we were...getting involved in Vietnam and she had was thinking about her friends killing Americans and being killed by Americans. So we were already involved in war and that was...So, that was the big concern in my life was Americans' – that our politicians weren't managing things right.

Cohen: Right. Hmm. So, in light of your concern about let's call it the lack of peace either in Vietnam or the threat of the atomic bomb and in light of your politics as a leftist and in light of you're being a Jew, what are your feelings about having served the US country, the United States during World War II?

Sussman: Well, that was a good war. That was a necessary war and I think what I feel now is that we don't have guys like Roosevelt, any more. That's my concern – it's a matter of leadership. We, well, we don't have the leadership because, maybe, it's our electorate, there. We have to blame, we have to blame our voters. I can't blame anybody else but voters. Voters pick the leaders and when I look around me at the kind of people who are voting, I'm very discouraged. I mean, the ideas that people have about history and economics and how the world should be run, I'm very discouraged. It's not – it doesn't look good.

Cohen: [sighs] No.

Sussman: Yeah.

Cohen: Are there, is there something that you would like to discuss that I did not ask or Marc, is there a topic, that I – we didn't cover?

Sussman: Do you have any ideas, Marc?

Sussman, Marc: I think that maybe the most poignant thing you've touched on in your stories but didn't really get into, here, is this formation that happened with you and your friends. You know. I mean you touched on a little bit that they were different than you but, you know, as you say in your stories, over the course of 2,000 meals and x battles and watching a friend go, that you felt that you became closer to all of them or many of them than your own brother.

Sussman: Yes, this is true -- that is -- facing the same danger day in, day out and depending on one another, day in, day out, you become very concerned about -- you become protective -- that's what happens. You have to be close to -- especially guys in your squad -- the guys who are in your squad. You're in your vehicle or they're in the next jeep and you see, you eat with them and you do guard duty with them and everything else with them. You become very close in combat. You're very dependent on them. You're dependent on them for your life and they're dependent on you and there's nothing that drives people closer than that. So it isn't a matter of what kind of thinking you do. It's the fact that you're present and dependent that...But the other thing is that as soon as it's over, it's over. That is, yes, we'd like to talk to each other after the war, but we don't have anything to say. That is, they're still, they're still not the same guys I am and there's nothing that will make us similar. They're whatever they are and they don't have my interests and they've got their own interests and they're very personal but we don't share the same interests, yeah, you know, it's...We don't even talk the same language...

Cohen: But, while you're together as a squadron, people become very close.

Sussman: Yeah. Being—when we're talking the same language, that is, guard duty, whatever goes on in combat, yeah, we're all talking the same language but when it's peace time, we have nothing in common. There's nothing at all, in common. I'm an engineer. Bill's a truck driver. We have entirely different concerns. We have different families, we have -- I read different books. He doesn't read books, at all. What do you talk about? Bill wants to talk about the war. I don't want to talk about the war, see? That's the problem. That's why after a while, you lose contact, you know. Well, Bill Gasperovich, would call me and -- he'd get a few beers and he had my telephone number and he's on the south side of Chicago and I'm on the north side and if he gets a few beers, he would call me. But over a period of, maybe, forty years, we never met. He'd just call me up and talk about what happened on such and such an occasion and -- So, we would talk for ten, twenty, thirty minutes, maybe, and then he'd call again, a few months later, and that went on until the telephone stopped calling. And he didn't answer either, you know, but ah, that's the way, it is.

Cohen: Anything else that you'd like to add?

Sussman: Well, again, my concern now with what is happening to this country...I'm disappointed in the quality of leadership we've got and that's all parties, all parties. I don't see anybody, anywhere who knows what I know. [laughs]. And I'm too old to get involved and I'm just sorry, I'm disappointed, that is – We deserve better leaders, we deserve better leaders and I don't know what to do about it, yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. Well, [sighs] let's hope that the pendulum swings in a different direction or that there will be better leaders, if not now, then in the future.

Sussman: Well, we'll see, we'll see.

Cohen: We'll see. And just in the meantime, I'd just like to thank you for your service and for your generous sharing of your experiences during World War II.