

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Veteran's Name: Warren Kenney
Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)
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David Meyer: This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th, 95th Infantry. It is August 1, 2009. We are in the atrium room in the Biltmore Oklahoma City. I'm sitting with Kay Grosinske. And I have the great privilege today of talking to—can you say your name and spell it?

Warren Kenney: Warren Kenney. Kenney with an “e.” E-Y.

Meyer: K-E-N-N-E-Y?

Kenney: Right. Without the E, it's shanty Irish. With the E, it's lace curtain Irish.

Kay Grosinske: You're of the upper crust.

Kenney: My grandmother taught me that.

Meyer: My grandmother said, “The old shanty Irish, they don't amount to much, but they're a damn sight better than the sauerkraut Dutch.” They said that to my grandfather Meyer.

Kenney: And in between are the bicycle Irish.

Grosinske: I'm not going to ask. I'm not going to ask.

Kenney: Don't.

Meyer: And we're here to talk about Mr. Kenney's experiences with the 95th Infantry in the Second World War, before and after. First, a few, part of this is funded, I've gotten some help from the American Legion Hollywood Post No. 43; Jimmy Stewart's post. So every once in a while, I'll remember to mention it. And if Mr. Kenney signs and wishes to send this on, this will also go to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Grosinske: You will do this.

Meyer: Will do this. Kay Grosinske is my strong arm. First, where were you born and what's your birthday?

Kenney: July 7, 1927.

Meyer and Grosinske: Happy birthday.

Kenney: In Brooklyn, New York.

Meyer: Brooklyn, New York. Where in Brooklyn?

Kenney: Garrison Beach, which very few people have ever heard of.

Meyer: What streets or avenues?

Kenney: Garrison Avenue is the main street. And my dad had an ice cream parlor and candy store. He had been a truck driver all his life and was severely injured. And with the little compensation he got back in 1934 or so, they bought this little store. It was very successful. They made a living, and it was fine.

Meyer: What was your father's name?

Kenney: James Gilmore Kenney.

Meyer: And your mother?

Kenney: Mother's name was Anna Powers [phonetic].

Meyer: Did you have sisters or brothers?

Kenney: I have one brother, considerably older than I. Bob was nine years older than I. That's the only two in the family. And he sort of was the motivation for me going into the service. Bob had gone in prior to the war, in early '41 he joined up. He had been in the CCs, and he came back to New York and he got a job as an ambulance driver at St. Vincent's Hospital. And when the war clouds were gathering, he joined up. Went in the medics. And ended up in the field artillery unit with the 28th infantry. Division. Did Normandy. Got severely wounded at Saint Lo. Very severely. Got hit across the back with a 20 millimeter if you can picture that. It broke no bones, just took all the meat off. The opportunity for infection with a wound like that is terrible. Well, they dragged him back to the beach to evacuate him on a litter. He's waiting for evacuation and German artillery comes in and riddles him again while he's laying there on the stretcher. And he spent half his life in and out of hospitals, but never lost his sense of humor. Amazing. Got married. His wife was from Ireland.

Meyer: Wife was from Ireland.

Kenney: Yeah. I worshipped him. He was tremendous, my older brother.

Meyer: Again, his name was Bob?

Kenney: Bob.

Meyer: Bob. And you were born—[unclear]

Kenney: She's [Kay?] from the same neighborhood my wife is in Brooklyn.

Meyer: Where was your wife from?

Kenney: Bay Ridge in Brooklyn, Swedish neighborhood.

Meyer: I know. I know Bay Ridge.

Kenney: Oh, you do?

Meyer: Sure, I drove a taxi there for seven and a half years.

Kenney: Oh my goodness.

Meyer: If I got a Brooklyn fare, I would try to work 86th Street.

Kenney: Well, she taught high school at Fort Hamilton High.

Meyer: I knew it at night. So I only drove taxis at night, from 3 AM until 5 AM.

[Time: 5:00]

Kenney: It's not like Atlanta where addresses mean nothing. In Brooklyn 4th Street and 4800 Avenue was a 4800 address. You couldn't get lost.

Meyer: No, you couldn't. There was a nice grid. Till you got somewhere in the village, or when, Lower East Side, when you'd have streets—

Kenney: Or Red Hook.

Meyer: Or Red Hook. Which is now a popular neighborhood. Now it's coming up.

Kenney: [?] and Bed-Stuy. Was there, I took my two twin granddaughters—I had rented a car and I took them out for a day when their mom had to work on a Saturday. I drove them all through Brooklyn. Where Grandma taught school, where we went to school, and Grandpa's house. Her dad was from Sweden and her mother from Austria. And they could only speak to each other in English. [laughs]

Meyer: You know what they call Bed-Stuy now?

Kenney: Oh, yeah. Bed-Stuy. Well, it wasn't then. It was Bedford Stuyvesant.

Meyer: Now they're trying to sell it as Stuyvesant Heights.

Kenney: Oh, that's nice.

Meyer: And the South Bronx, they're trying to sell it in real estate, and they're calling it SoBro. Like NoHo, SoHo. SoBro. Even the police, first time I was robbed was--

Kenney: Everything is getting better. I went, the house that my wife came out of, on 48th and 6th Avenue, 4814 6th Avenue. Nearby, two or three blocks, is Sunset Park. Nice park. That park went down the tube and became maybe the worst drug hotspot in all of Brooklyn. Terrible. Nobody would go near it. You wouldn't believe it today. They came in and built a new park, policed it, and it's a beautiful park. The whole neighborhood is coming up.

Meyer: The first place I was robbed is still pretty bad. It's Quincy Street between Bedford and Nostrand.

Kenney: I was born and raised on Madison Street between Marcy and Nostrand. And we moved out of there when my dad bought the ice cream parlor and had gotten out of the hospital. In those days, my dad—this is terrible. He had joined the union and you know the Irish cops, he has his union button and they don't see it. And they beat him over the head with a lead pipe. He was in the hospital for well over a year. Broke his arms—it was terrible. We had no money. And there was this thing in those days called home relief. Welfare—they didn't call it welfare.

Meyer: Did that come from the government?

Kenney: Yeah. Well, the city and government both. And this would have been around 1933, '34, when all the union action was going on. Well my mom—well, go back a step. Home relief, or welfare, my father would say, NO, I will not take a handout from anyone. But he's in the hospital. And my mother goes to work, I remember she worked for a company called the [High Low?] Varnish Company. Horrible fumes in the factory! And she worked eight or ten hours a day. And I'm at that point in time six years old, seven. And my grandmother, Mamie Powers, lived about four blocks north of us there on Madison Street and Reid Avenue. And I went to live with her.

My mother would come on Friday night and take me home. We'd walk home. And she'd bring me back Sunday night. And then she would get home early Saturday, maybe four or five o'clock. Normally it was eight or nine. It was terrible. Probably minimum wage then, which was like twenty cents an hour or something. I've never forgotten that.

Living with my grandmother was an experience. An old Irish lady. I think all the European ladies—Irish or Polish or Jews—they're all the same. They're all schmoozers and huggers, wonderful to live with. The stories, I'm telling this, the place I live in, we have a culinary director who's in charge of all the food, and kitchens, and dining room. And one night he has liver and onions on the menu. And I said, "I don't want any liver."

He said, "Why?"

[Time 10:00]

I said, "I'll tell you a story." When I lived with my grandmother, she'd take me shopping. I was five or six years old. And she'd go to the butcher shop, and the butcher was a big, heavy,

German guy with a blood-stained apron and a straw hat, a skimmer. And she'd say, "Three pounds of ground chuck, please." And then she'd watch his fingers with the scale. And then when we're all through she'd say, "Could you throw in a little piece of liver for the cat?" People wouldn't buy liver, as bad as things were then.

Meyer: That's interesting.

Kenney: So, a piece of liver for the cat. Well, I'm only six years old, but I knew we didn't have a cat. [laughs] I knew I was going to get the damn liver. And to this day I stay away from liver.

Meyer: So you grew up in Brooklyn.

Kenney: Grew up in Brooklyn.

Meyer: I think we were talking about where were you when you heard about the Pearl Harbor attack?

Kenney: Let's see. I was in high school then. That would be 1941. I graduated. Well, I got ahead of myself. Apparently I was a reasonably good student. In New York in those days you didn't have years in school, you had terms. Six-month terms. So there were two classes to a year; you'd get promoted or not. Well, I got skipped twice. I went from I think 5A to 6A, then when I got to the 7B I went right to 8B. You went eight years in grade school. In our area there were no junior highs, although some places did have them, my wife went to one. So skipping twice is a rather interesting thing. You keep up with the grades but you miss something when you skip. For example, the basic formulation of grammar. I never learned one thing about grammar. I don't think to this day I know a verb from a pronoun. But I know what sounds right or looks right through experience. [laughs] But you miss that, because you skipped. Strangely, my bride skipped twice, too. She's a very bright lady.

Meyer: So you're born in 19—.

Kenney: Twenty-seven.

Meyer: Twenty-seiven. So when Pearl Harbor happens you're—.

Kenney: Thirteenish.

Meyer: Well '27 from '41, so that means you're--

Grosinske: Thirteen, fourteen. He was a boy.

Meyer: You're fourteen years old. And I know that the Giants were playing. Because everyone I've talked to in New York so far, when I said where were you when Pearl Harbor happened, a lot of people were listening to the Giants play.

Kenney: Well, it was more than that. People were not aware. You've got to question them further. That was in December.

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: Now, the Giants were the football team. But the Brooklyn Dodgers also had a football team. And they were playing the Dodgers.

Meyer: The Brooklyn Dodgers were the football--

Grosinske: I did not know that.

Kenney: I could tell you. Ace Parker was the quarterback. I've got a good memory. I'm fighting Alzheimer's right now.

Grosinske: So the Dodgers and the—

Kenney: Giants were playing. There were at the polo grounds. At the polo grounds.

Meyer: At the polo grounds.

Kenney: And that's when the thing was announced, they announced, "All military report back to your base" and all that kind of stuff. I was sitting at the dining room table, which they call them family rooms. We lived in this flat over the store that my dad had. And I don't know how we all squeezed in there. I slept with my brother. I didn't know how to sleep when I went in the army, alone. [laughs]. When he left to go in service I kept [laughs]—oh dear.

Meyer: When Bob left?

Kenney: Yeah.

Meyer: So you heard about it.

Kenney: I was doing homework and I heard it. And I knew where Pearl Harbor was. I was always an eager beaver kid on geography and what have you. I don't think I was tuned to what was going on over there prior to that. Things were anti-Japanese. Only because—it was like China, the junk they were shipping over here that we're buying. And then the forecast was that when they tore the 3rd Avenue El down in Manhattan, and Japan bought all of the steel from the El, and the marines say they returned it on Iwo Jima [laughs].

Grosinske: I've never heard that story.

Meyer: Yeah, that's great.

Grosinske: That's very cool. I love that.

[Time 15:14]

Meyer: What were the circumstances around you joining?

Kenney: Well, my brother's gone. When the war hit, he had just finished jump school in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and broke a leg. Which he repaired pretty quickly but that was the end of his jumping. He was a medic there, too, and he ended up at the field office unit of the 28th infantry. And they went in at Normandy.

A sidelight, if you want to hear sidelights. I was originally assigned—I went overseas before the 95th, maybe a month earlier or so as a replacement. And was temporarily assigned to the 28th infantry. And I got very ill. I got pneumonia. Who the hell gets pneumonia in May? But I did. And I went back to the hospital. It cleared up in a couple of weeks. Just about then, D-Day comes. And the 28th is in there, first landing. And I'm not. And I'm annoyed! [laughs] So at any rate, I was assigned to the 95th and I caught up with them about—I forget the dates, about two weeks before Metz. And I got an assignment. They sent me to battalion aid station for assignment in the 3rd battalion. And he asked me, "Can you drive an ambulance?" I didn't want to tell him I'm too young to get a license. [laughter] It's true! You've got to remember, fraudulent enlistment was a capital offense.

Meyer: Okay. Well, let's go back.

Grosinske: Yeah, we have to go back.

Meyer: We have to go back now.

Grosinske: This is one of the best stories.

Meyer: Okay. So, when did you join?

Kenney: You'd asked the question of why I wanted to join. My friends—a big Irish neighborhood. It was like Tennessee, a volunteer neighborhood. And a lot in the marines, navy. A few paratroopers. But mostly marines and navy. And I was younger than they were. Probably two or three years, four years younger. And remember the marines you could go in at 17. They didn't send you out until you were 18, but you could join at 17. In fact, I think in the navy you could, too. I'm not sure. I didn't want the navy. The marines demanded a birth certificate. [brief side conversation]

So at any rate, at school I had graduated grammar school in '40 or '41. Went to Brooklyn Technical High School, which was a very premium school in New York City. Very stringent exams to get in; a four-hour exam to get in there, taken in a massive auditorium. So I ended up—I don't know why I went there. I'm not mechanically oriented, and it's an engineering school. And I failed shop. [laughs] I couldn't make the lamp, or whatever the thing was. It's not my thing. But I did well in the other subjects. So my plan was at the end of the second year to switch to college prep. And I can't say why. Nobody in my family ever went to college. And we would pay for it. New York was reasonable, but not free. And they were still making a living at the ice cream parlor. So anyway, when my friends went in and were all gone, one of them, a close

friend, Freddy Pitcher [phonetic], was killed. A marine. He was a runner in a platoon. He was killed, I forget where. Tarawa? And that really hit me.

[Time 20:00]

I said, I've got to get in this. I'm staying home, going to school. Now I have a big juvenile ego. How can they fight a war without me? So I just said, I'll go in. I went down and tried the marine corps. And I had a—sort of a fluke baptism certificate I got from the church. And the woman there, she didn't realize she was putting the wrong date on it. But they wouldn't accept it. They wanted birth certificates. And I didn't want to go in the navy, because sure as hell I'd get seasick. So I said, Well, go in the army. And now I'm reading about the airborne, you did get all this stuff. I said, that's great. So I go in, and how do you go in the army at 15? Very simple. I'm a genius 15-year-old. I go down to the draft board and tell them I'm 18.

Meyer: Where is the draft board? In Brooklyn?

Kenney: Yeah, Avenue U, a short bus ride. And one of my neighbors is the head of the draft board there. He says, "Oh, I didn't know you were 18." I go, Yeah. (laughter) They didn't ask for proof.

Grosinske: Oh my goodness.

Kenney: He said, "Where've you been, Warren? You were supposed to be here early." This is February of '43. So I volunteer for immediate conscription, they called it. Which didn't happen—I waited a few months. I finally went in, well, before I was 16. Now I go in the army and you really can't ask for anything, you're a brand new draftee, you know?

Meyer: What did your parents think?

Kenney: Oh, okay. They caught up with me, my dad, about three weeks. Where the hell is he? (laughs) I was never in trouble as a kid, but I was rambunctious. (laughs) And he said, where the hell did he go this time? There was no concern in those days of a kid disappearing and foul play. No. So at any rate, what happened, the New York City Board of Education says, so where is he? (laughs)

Meyer: So, how did they find you?

Kenney: Yeah, and I'm out at Camp Grant, Illinois. Just started basic training. I'm in it about a week or two. And you can't go home. And my father calls me on the phone. And it's very expensive in those days.

Meyer: Long distance phone call.

Kenney: Long distance phone call, you're spending by the minute. A lot of money. But he did it. He said, "What the hell did you do? Do you realize what you've done to your mother?"

(Meyer laughs) He said, “You know, the board of education’s looking for you.” He said, “One word from me and you come home. You understand that.”

I said, “Yes, sir.”

He said, “But I know you. You’d do it again.” (Meyer laughs) He said, “I’ll tell you what. As much as I’m pissed off,” he said, “I’m sort of proud of what you’ve done. And I know your brother’s the same way. You’re both of the same mold. I’ll make a deal with you. If you ever come home,” that’s what he said, “you’re going to promise me you go back to school.”

I said, “Yes, sir. Absolutely.” So therefore I now owe him two years of high school. (laughs)

So I went through basic—

Grosinske: Can I ask a question? How did you—I mean, you weren’t sleeping in your bed at night. So how did it take that long for your parents to figure out that you’d left?

Kenney: Well, I had disappeared before. When my brother was in the three Cs—

Meyer: Yes, the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Kenney: I had joined him once and disappeared.

Meyer: So you talked to your father. Did you ever talk to your mother?

Kenney: No. She didn’t want to talk on the phone. But then in the middle of basic, you got one weekend. And I took the train home. And I went through it then, boy. But they didn’t back off. She said, “It’s good for him. Maybe that will straighten him out.” (Meyer laughs)

Grosinske: It’s good in case he doesn’t get to what happened when he came back. Because he might miss that? So do you want to tell him, because that’s a good story?

Kenney: I’ll let him go on this pace, though.

Meyer: You can loop, if you want.

[Time: 24:44]

Kenney: Well, okay. At the end of basic, about two weeks before basic training ends, which would have been early May, let’s say, I forget the date, I get called in to company headquarters for the captain in charge of the training company. Another and my close friend, Bob Kelly, we get called in. And he said, “You guys, the two of you, are the biggest fuck-ups I’ve ever seen.”

I’m really offended! I thought I was a damn good soldier. (laughs)

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: I remember going through the first one through the obstacle course. With the machine guns going. And I’m saying oh, God, we’re in trouble. He said, “So what we’re going to do with you, we’re sending the two of you to troop leadership school.”

Grosinske: Wow!

Kenney: I'm 15 years old. What the hell am I going to—(laughs) Well Bob and I, we told this captain, “No, sir. I want to go overseas. We joined up,” he doesn't know my age. “We joined up” [unclear] back of my mind, they can't win the war without me.

He said, “I can't believe what you're saying. You realize what can happen. You could—”
“Yeah. That's fine, sir.”

So I go over there as a replacement in England [28?], finally get to the 95th before Metz. And they send me to the 3rd Battalion, 378th. And Captain [Heiselman?], his name was. A total drug addicted doctor. [unclear] And that's when he asked me, no, he has the lieutenant, another physician, [Jeanette?], guy from New York. And he said, “Can you drive an ambulance?” I don't want to drive an ambulance. I want to go—I didn't tell him that. When I hear “drive an ambulance,” I didn't want to tell him I'm too young to get a license! I didn't want to say no, sir, I can't drive. (laughs) And I couldn't! I'd never driven a car.

So I said, “Sir, really we've trained at Camp [Grant?] and it was good training and I want to get into a platoon if possible.”

He said, “You what?! Are you off your rocker?” (laughs) He said, “You want it, you got it.” Now he's annoyed with me.

Meyer: Now, were you a medic at this time?

Kenney: No! I've been through nothing but medical training.

Meyer: Nothing but medical training.

Kenney: Yeah. I have no rifle training. You never get any.

Meyer: How did they make the choice to make you a medic? Or how did you become a medic?

Kenney: Because I couldn't go in the airborne with the eyeglasses.

Meyer: With your eyeglasses.

Kenney: Couldn't go in the infantry with my eyesight. Which is ridiculous! We have corrective lenses. But that's the way it was then. So I said, how do I get into action? I don't want to end up in the quartermaster in Syracuse, New York. So I think if I go into medics and I've read all the stuff. And they were touting the aide men and the Navy corpsmen, they call them.

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: For the Marines.

Meyer: Yeah, the pharmacy mates and things.

Kenney: Yeah, the pharmacist mate and they'd call them corpsmen.

Meyer: Corpsmen, sure.

Kenney: Get assigned to a Marine infantry platoon. So, that's what I wanted to do. And he said, "You've got it." So they sent me to the original—well, originally I went to I Company of the 378th and relieved a guy. And this guy was so glad to be relieved. (laughs) He wanted to go back to battalion aid station and be an orderly instead. That's not my thing.

So, we get on this massive attack when I was with I Company. My first combat. God almighty, I was terrified. (laughs) Absolutely terrified.

Meyer: Where were you?

Kenney: It's an area called Tank Trap Hill. Don't ask me where it was. It's still in France, of course, near Metz. And Tank Trap Hill had this unbelievable [unclear] about 20 feet deep and maybe 25 feet wide. There's no way a tank could—even the Germans were [unclear] enough that the engineers could put those planks down. But they made them just wide enough where you couldn't, if you made a plank, you'd have to bolt them together and they're going to [get you?], you know.

So at any rate, and I went up Tank Trap Hill and the guys are dropping all around me. And I remember I was so scared, and the mud was so bad. I had [unclear] the [unclear] galoshes, what do you call them? Storm boots or something over my GI shoes. And they were so caked with mud I couldn't pick my legs up. So I took them off and threw them away. And I began to get the first wounded guys. But let me go back a step.

[Time: 30:04]

Meyer: Sure.

Kenney: I took my medical training, I decided that's what I was going to do, very seriously. And they were very good. They, not as good as today, I'm sure. You know, they use pigs today. Are you aware of that? You're assigned a pig.

Meyer: You're assigned—are you?

Kenney: Yeah. Navy does the same thing. You're assigned a live pig. And they shoot it and they knife it and they blow them up. And it's your job to keep the pig alive.

Meyer: So they torture the pig and then you keep it—

Kenney: Yeah, well they didn't have this. What we had is simulated wounds. They had these horrible plastic wounds with the arm off and your head off. (laughs) But the training was good. Half my fear—[unclear] combat getting shot. It's just the atmosphere is frightening. Bullets going, zing!

Meyer: So this is the first time—

Kenney: Yeah, really the first—

Meyer: --you're going into combat.

Kenney: Well, I'd been in before. But not like this. This is a massive Patton attack marching fire. Which was his thing. And I'm unarmed. (laughs) I can't fire while I march.

Meyer: Are you wearing the Red Cross—

Kenney: Oh, yeah. Well, I would never do the helmet. And we were never asked to do it. I guess the head of the [unclear] of 378th medic, he looked at it like I do. One big target on your helmet. Big white target. I wore an armband on each arm. But I lost one of them. So at any rate, as I'm going overseas, I went overseas on the Queen Elizabeth. That's living, boy. Well, they must have had well over ten thousand troops on that ship. and they're five or six layers deep into the closets. And the guys are having a ball. They're shooting crap all night and poker. And big money. And I'm not a card player. I never learned how to play cards. (laughs) My mother played pinochle, I remember that. All I did on that ship, I'd lay in the bunk and I had taken every manual I had. And I had a horrible fear. I've asked for the job, damn it, can I do this job? Are we going to get [unclear] out? And I read everything on every wound. What the first thing to do and the second thing, you know. And the things would stick in your mind. No morphine with a head wound. No water with a stomach wound. Those little things stay with you, you know. And I'm reading and studying and making notes. What the hell's this guy doing? (laughs)

And that day was the first time I did it. And fortunately the couple of guys I got to that were hit they were not superficial wounds, but I could get the bleeding stopped. Number one, stop the bleeding. Number two, prevent [unclear] Number three, stop the infection. [unclear]

Meyer: You what?

Kenney: I usually steal raincoats. [unclear] carry an extra one with me. I'm serious.

Grosinske: Cool!

Kenney: So at any rate, with I Company I went up that hill. And then the next day, they came and got me and said, "You're permanently assigned as a second lieutenant of [L?] Company." This is an amazing story.

Meyer: Hold on just a second. I'm just changing this right here.

Kenney: I don't know the names of town. Now Paul--

Grosinske: Wait, wait, wait.

Kenney: You said you've met Paul Schlitz.

Grosinske: Wait, wait. We've got to get all this. Hold on. Technology has to catch up with you. Just a minute.

Kenney: Ah ha.

Meyer: Ah, there we go.

Grosinske: We don't want him to lose—

Meyer: You're doing very well.

Grosinske: I'm better than you. I'm done. It's good. Oh, come on, that's a German way.

Meyer: So.

Grosinske: Paul Schaefer.

Meyer: Paul Schaefer.

Kenney: Where are we? Tank Trap Hill.

Meyer: Tank Trap Hill.

Kenney: Yeah, they come and get me and I'm assigned to the 2nd platoon. And they [dry dross?] me off. I don't know anybody in the 2nd, they never told me who to see or what the names are. You know, it's chaos! It's a war going on.

Meyer: It's a war going on. And people just screaming, "Medic! Medic!" Or what?

Kenney: No, not then.

Grosinske: To be assigned.

Meyer: Oh, to be assigned.

Kenney: Yeah. Now I'm just reporting to the Second Platoon of L Company. Where the hell are they? I asked it, there's an MP, I asked, "Yeah, they're down there." And then I stopped yet another guy. "Oh, yeah, they went by here." So I go down this road. And I keep going down the road. I don't see anybody! And I'm getting nervous. What the hell am I doing out here on this lonesome road? I'm right in the German territory on this road. So I said, well, maybe they cut in and stayed off the highway. So I cut into the field like an idiot. I could be walking on landmines. I never even thought of it. And I start heading back toward this little French village. And suddenly I'm hearing, "Halt!" And I meet my first guy from the Second. And I'm coming from German territory! (laughs) There's a big-ass kid coming in. And I'm trying to remember the password. (laughter)

Meyer: No! No!

Kenney: And the first one who became two of them, my closest friends, Bill O'Connor from Ozone Park, New York. He was one of the earlier ASTP [people guy?] that went. And I had an affinity I guess as a kid for intelligent people. They were more fun. I learned, I learned, I learned. God, when I married my bride, she had her master's degree. I think I read every textbook she ever had. (laughs) So at any rate, I find the Second Platoon and I'm assigned there permanently. And I think I've told you this once before a couple of years ago. It's difficult to say. I found that the getting there as a replacement now, the basic ingredient of the 95th, Camp Swift and they've been training for 17 years.

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: And climbing mountains and deserts, and they put them in the snow. (laughs) So, I found them extremely unfriendly to new people. Terrible! And I'm, you know, I'm easy to get along with.

Meyer: Sure.

Kenney: But I say hey, that's my job. And after a couple of skirmishes where I'm taking a few, they began to warm up a bit. And then we got more ASTP, we were annihilated at Ennsdorf. And that's where I really got in with them. In fact, if I was pissed off at them, I'd let them know it. And I was there.

Grosinske: When was that?

Kenney: Some of them might still be here.

Grosinske: When was that?

Kenney: We were mouseholing in Ennsdorf. If you know.

Grosinske: House to house.

Kenney: Through basements. Well, the secret of taking a building—and I learned all these things hanging out with the guys in the infantry, top down. You don't go up. You try to go in on the roof and come down. So in Ennsdorf, we go mouseholing in the basement, because you can't get up on the roof. And there's a pillbox they don't know is there. And Bob [Hambly?], who's the platoon sergeant, the bravest man I've ever known in my life. I mean, I think of—what's the Hollywood guy? More awards than any soldier?

Grosinske: Audie Murphy?

Kenney: Audie Murphy. This is what he reminded, little skinny guy with a cigarette always hanging out of his mouth. And he's got his eyes closed from the smoke, is what I remember. He was so fearless. And he'd always be first. "Damn it, let's go!" Well, I followed Bob and I learned an awful lot from him. He began to teach me about map reading, which we never had in the medics, things like that. Well Bob, we got so decimated at Ennsdorf that they took three

platoons, or no, they took two platoons there and put them in one and still didn't have a full platoon.

Meyer: Oh. Were you there when they were going down to the river?

Kenney: Well, that was earlier.

Meyer: That was earlier in Ennsdorf.

Kenney: We went across on little barges or boats.

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: The engineers had put in a [Bailey?]

Meyer: Yeah.

Kenney: Double [Bailey?] signal.

Meyer: Right. Yeah.

Kenney: Like a double [hacking knife?].

Meyer: So you put up the bridge and they cross over in Ennsdorf—

Kenney: When you cross over to Ennsdorf, it was, today you'd be shooed if you stepped on wetlands.

Meyer: Sure. I've seen Ennsdorf. I've been there.

Kenney: Well, oh my God. I wanted to drive there. I couldn't find it on the map. They had changed the names for a while, the Germans. Now it's Ennsdorf again.

Meyer: Now it's Ennsdorf.

Kenney: Because I did it on the Google map thing. There it was. In fact, my railroad station is there. Well, we mouseholed through. And [Hambly?] took one squad. And he took that pillbox. The guy's absolutely fearless. Jesus Christ! He said, "Cover me." And he goes running and diving and rolling. He's a tech sergeant then, I guess. And he gets on top of that thing and he drops a white phosphorus grenade down their pipe. So that was over in a hurry. And they come out coughing and screaming. And I hate to say. They killed them. That bothers me.

[Time: 40:14]

Meyer: Yes, of course.

Kenney: Of course, you're going to say, they'll do the same thing to you. The word's going to get out. And then we went down and it was successful. We're now taking Ennsdorf. And we get to across the tracks. A railroad runs through the center of town. There's a big railroad station. And by this time, it's not happening in three hours. This is over a period of a few weeks. And I'm getting to know the guys and they're getting to know me. And I mean, I'm a kid. They could care less about me. But until they need something. But not only did I patch wounds, I became the pharmacist. I remember arriving at Metz. Right after Metz, they had a big Thanksgiving dinner. They brought the turkeys up and all that crap. And I'm going to tell you something. There was never that much diarrhea in the world, as there was after that Thanksgiving dinner. If you want to put an outfit out of commission—

Grosinske: Real food. Real food.

Kenney: It was probably, I don't think the bad food, I think dirty—

Grosinske: No, I said real food.

Kenney: And they were sick.

Meyer: And what did you do when everyone had diarrhea?

Kenney: There's a guy standing here taking pictures of [pharmacists?]. I was talking to him about it this morning. And he asked what you—I said, well, I got a big bottle of paregoric from headquarters, from the aid station. But I said Christ, I got 40 guys in that platoon that are all pooping all over the place. I mean, you're not going to be too effective in the attack when that happens.

Meyer: No.

Kenney: So, I went to, every house they'd go in, they'd liberate the, in the basement there were always, when you got near Germany there were always preserves and applesauce. So I got some of those jars, emptied them out, scald them with hot water. And I took three of those jars. Put one in my pocket of my jacket and the other two squeezed them into the aid kit loaded with paregoric. Then it dawned on me, the other treatment in the manuals I read, they also give bismuth tablets. Well, bismuth tablets today are called—the pink bottle.

Meyer: Oh, Pepto-Bismol.

Kenney: Pepto-Bismol. It's exactly what it is. So I took the bismuth tablets. And I didn't have a mortar and pestle. So I took my bayonet. First I cut them up with scissors. And I ground up these bismuth tablets—

Meyer: Bismuth tablets, as in Pepto-Bismol.

Kenney: I've got a pile of bismuth this high. And now I put it in the paregoric and shake it. And boy, that worked!

Meyer: Oh!

Kenney: I don't think they pooped for three months after that. (laughter) Now I had a constipation problem.

Meyer: Now you had a constipation. Were the bismuth tablets, were they pink—

Kenney: With the paregoric.

Meyer: Did they have a color like—

Grosinske: Today, Pepto-Bismol is pink.

Meyer: Is very pink.

Grosinske: Were they pink then?

Kenney: No, no, no. These were just big white pills.

Meyer: Big white pills. So you mixed it with—

Kenney: I mean, the Army gave you pills that no one could swallow.

Grosinske: Yeah, they were like horse pills, right?

Kenney: That's right.

Grosinske: Yeah, yeah. Really big ones.

Kenney: I notice I still take the senior pill once a day, whatever it's called. Centrum?

Grosinske: Centrum, yeah.

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: And finally on the jar it says, "New, reduced size." I said, thank God! (laughter) So, at any rate, that helped. If you can relieve diarrhea, they get close to you. (laughs)

Meyer: They do. You're the miracle worker.

Kenney: Well, that was tough duty. A lot of guys got killed. We were living in cellars and trying to mousehole through. And finally we came to the sense that we're out of supplies and we're a bridge head sticking out across the river, the Saar. The bridges are gone. They've been bombed out by the Germans. So every night, the quartermaster or whoever, I don't know who the hell does it. They would in these little engineer barges, rowboats that they—looked like Boston

whalers. They'd bring supplies over. And we'd have carrying parties. And I didn't have to do that. I'm a medic. I'd go. In fact, that's how I got to know Bill Alexander so well, my buddy. He wasn't in my platoon. He was in the Third Platoon. But I got to know him quite well. We did carrying parties every night. And you'd get to the swamp—

Meyer: Yes. The wetlands area?

Kenney: Yeah, that you can't step in today. You've got to [unclear] you get arrested. And we had to wade through that. Now the Germans had that zeroed in with 88s. And what they would do is fire a giant flare over the whole area. Swamp. And the thing would light up like Times Square. And we would train--we'd freeze. You wouldn't move a muscle. You'd stand there like this. Because if you move an arm, it's a shadow goes twenty feet long when you're moving. So we learned to do that. And the shells would come in. A few guys were hit. And that's when I glad I went. But it wasn't that bad. We got the [unclear] and they're shooting at food, getting it back with us. And then we'd haul it in the basement.

Then we attacked, we went across the tracks, finally. And we're about three-quarters across and all hell breaks out. We don't even know where the hell the firing's coming from. But there's machine gun bullets all over the place. So we get into the hotel. And the guys clean it from top down. And I remember like it was yesterday morning, the guys, this is a combination of railroad station/hotel/ restaurant/bar. All at once. Big brewery. A German atmosphere, you know. It looks like someplace in [unclear] Well they found wine. That's what it was. And [Hambly?] said, "No! Put it in your packs. Take all you can and we'll have a party." Well, in about ten minutes, the hell with [Handly?], they were drinking the wine. And I remember that Bill [O'Connor?] yelled [unclear]. And I saw Bill bring his M1up. And there's a German trooper up on the top of the balcony on the second floor!

Meyer: Holy cow!

Kenney: About to throw a grenade.

Meyer: No!

Kenney: And I see that. And Bill, the first guy that saw him, I forget who he was. He had a BAR. And he had a flash hider on it.

Meyer: A what?

Kenney: Flash hider. You fire at night, you don't see the flash.

Meyer: Oh, sure.

Kenney: Well he's got it leaning against the banister and he's got the damn wine in his hand. And he goes [a grip?] to pull it out. And the flash hider gets caught between the spokes in the banister. And the guy throws the thing in the interim. Bill riddles him. He's gone. But that thing comes down. I dived under a table. And boom, it goes off! And the ceiling comes down. And it's all through dust and thing. Nobody's hurt! Not a scratch!

Meyer: Holy cow.

Kenney: And then, we thought so. Then outside, one of the guys who had gone out the back door of the kitchen when the grenade thing went off, he comes back in pretty badly shot in the lower back. And I've got him, and it's funny, it's the first wound I remember had a tremendous amount of flesh off it. Gory stories. But it's the first time you realize that that wound has an odor that is so bad you can't—it's like excrement. It's terrible.

Meyer: Really? The wound itself.

Kenney: Yeah. So, at any rate, got him patched as best I could. And then another fellow [Knorr?] was hit. And he's hit pretty bad. We've got to get him back. Well, we go outside to go across the tracks and go back. In the interim, our backup, the rest of the platoon, is in a house across the tracks. And what nobody knew until later was a pillbox right on the corner of this railroad station, the two major crossroads in town. And it's disguised as a newsstand. That's where all the fire was coming from. And it was [Hambly?] that said [obviously?]. Well, we've got to get him back across the tracks and I have no litter and he's pretty bad. I don't want to try to carry him over; you're going to louse up the wounds terribly.

So the guys rip a screen door off the back of a kitchen. Now we've got to take that screen door litter over a picket fence, which is outside to prevent people from going on the tracks.

Meyer: Three or four feet high or so?

Kenney: Oh, yeah, yeah. Like a typical—

Meyer: Typical, sure.

[Time: 50:00]

Kenney: There was an engineer group with us, three or four engineers. And the guy said, "Hold it. I have beehive charges." So we had a beehive charge. And he, with a stick, I don't remember how they do it, I'm watching. He pushes it out under the fence to make [a little?] defense and we've got an opening. Not totally, but only about that high. So we take him out and take him across the tracks. We get in the middle of those tracks and holy shit, the pillbox is there. We don't know it. We're right in front of the damn thing!

Meyer: Holy cow.

Kenney: And [Knorr?] got hit again. And we put him, we drop him on the tracks. I hit the ground. It's all gravel. And I try to get out of the line of fire. And he's stuck out there. And a guy named [Weeseey?] says to me, "Why don't you go out and get him?"

I said, "Cover me."

He doesn't know where the hell to cover. Nobody knows the pillbox is there! (laughs) But in my teenage mind, I'm saying just throw up some of Patton's firepower for Christ's sake. And I got him dragged back in and began to patch him. And suddenly he died on me. I didn't

know it at the time. When they hauled him back, he was already DOA when they got him to battalion.

And now, the worst thing of that, after the hand grenade, another fellow who was very wonderful to me sort of took me under his wing. I saw his name over here at the museum. The fellow's name was [Vito Martini?]. And he was I guess a buck sergeant.

Meyer: [Vito Martini?]

Kenney: At platoon headquarters. And Vito was from Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. Mexican. Very handsome. God, he looked like a handsome matador. And the nicest guy in the world. When everybody else was cold to the newcomer, not him. He made me at home there. It was wonderful. And I never forgot him. He used to, he had an expression. His mentor was a guy named Bill [Weese?], the oldest guy there then. And he called him Papi. Turns around, I said, "Papi, I guess [you're right on?]."

He said, "I'm chickenshit."

"What do you mean?"

He said, "I want to go home. I've had enough of this." And he steps out the kitchen door. And I hear a shot and I see him go down. I run out. Bob [Hambly?] and [O'Connor?] come out in back of me. And there's three or four krauts. And the sniper had hit him. They spray him. I don't know if they hit anybody or not. But they disappeared. And I looked down and he's hit right through the throat. And the mouth is opening and closing like fish gills. And the windpipe has been shot off.

Meyer: Oh, God.

Kenney: And there's not a lot of blood. I remember that. And I'm trying to get a [cot crush?] on him. But the blood is not going to kill him; he can't breathe. So try to wrap everything around it. He was not. And [Hambly?] came out. And it's the first time I ever saw [Hambly?], he broke into tears. That was his buddy. They had gone all through the whole thing together from Camp Swift. And [Hambly?] lately, just after that, got a battlefield commission. And if anyone ever deserved it, he did. And very unusual. They did not transfer. Usually when you get a battlefield commission, they move you to some other unit. But there was no disrespect whatever with Bill. He was the bravest man ever. Little skinny guy. He was from Plymouth, Illinois. And he moved out to California. Died very young.

And I mentioned Paul Schlitz before. Paul was writing his book. And he interviewed [Hambly?] and he didn't want to talk about it. He just absolutely did not want to talk about the war. But I guess he had misgivings about it, that he offended Paul. So Paul sent me a photostat or a copy of the letter, about a four-page letter he had wrote on some of the questions Paul had asked and what happened when. And that's when you see that your version is different than his, you know.

Meyer: Sure.

[Time: 54:45]

Kenney: Yeah, that's the way war is. It's chaos. And you know the other thing that used to bug me. Bugs me recently with all of the legal press coverage of "friendly fire." There's a war on. People make mistakes. What do you do, prosecute them because they make a mistake? It could have been them that got killed. It just tells me an ignorance of the battle mentality.

But we had a number of those. God, about a week prior to what I'm talking about, we went into, that's the day Paul Schlitz got hit. And we were attacking Saarlautern. And we had tank supports with the Shermans. And there was a bunch of them. So we rode the Shermans into Saarlautern. And they're spraying and we're on back of the tanks, about six of us. A guy named [Pierson?] and I jump off the tank because we begin to get fire as the tank goes down the street. And we run into the first doorway that we can find, and it was locked. And I remember [Pierson?] kicking it in with his foot and we ran into the hallway. Just then, all hell broke loose. Bullets are flying. I look and [Pierson?] is hit. He's hit so bad. I'm looking, it's like his arm is hanging off up here. It's hanging off, flesh is—

Meyer: Just left.

Kenney: So I go for my aid kit. I've got to get that blood shot. I have no aid kit! It was shot off me! I'm standing right next to him. The same thing that got his arm got my aid kit and tore my raincoat to ribbons from my belt. (laughs)

So now I'm, here it shows your ignorance in wanting to do the right thing, and things that are not covered in training. What's his name, Joe Januski?

Meyer: Yeah, Joe Januszkiewicz.

Kenney: He had someone from, the French kids that reenact everything?

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: Saying, what does the aid man carry in his kit? Well I did my pharmacy in this kit. And I had my compress as bad as his tourniquet, wood, knives in the other one. What gets shot off? Bandages kit. All I've got is paregoric and aspirin now. And I've got his arm hanging off. Fortunately, I had one in my belt, and he did. And just then, a doctor arrived. Never saw him again. And then I read about this guy who loved to go into combat. (laughs) And he took over immediately. Well, fortunately we were able to evacuate. And I saw him. He was from Wisconsin. He was in Peoria. Had an arm missing. They didn't save the arm; it was gone. But now, what happened to him? When we jumped off the tank, crashed into that doorway, somebody got mixed up inside that tank and swings the 50-caliber around on us and riddles the doorway with the 50-caliber. His arm is off. And my kits are gone. I had a hell of a time. I was carrying—well, they didn't have plastic then. I had pillowcases I had stolen from houses with gear trying to carry stuff. Finally, it took maybe a week or ten days to get a new aid kit. They didn't have them. That's war. It's chaos. The supply thing is almost impossible.

So at any rate, railroad station. We're in Ennsdorf. And then the night before we retreated from Ennsdorf, and we really did. We were driven back. Actually, not driven back. But the Bulge hit. And they don't want this little thing in Saarlautern sticking out in German territory. So they pulled us back in reserve for three or four days. Reserve. And then some idiot wants to do

close order drill. I said, I'm not [unclear] I said, "Lester Wolfe, are you crazy? Fuck them, we're not going to do it."

So then as we pulled back—and that's the first time I blew up at the guys in that platoon, some of the old-timers—

Meyer: Why? What brought it on?

[Time: 59:32]

Kenney: We're down to a very sparse few left. And we're down in a cellar. And Les says to me, "Doc. You're going to pull guard duty tonight." He said, "Now, can you fire an M1?"

I said, "Run through it quickly." I watch him. I said, "Don't ask me to clean it. I don't know how to do that."

So he says, "Good. We need some relief." They're doing two-hour shifts. And you'd go down in the doorway. Leave the door open. Lay in the doorway on your stomach with the rifle and see if anything happens."

And while I'm pulling my guard duty, I see somebody coming down the street, a big-ass bird walking down the center of the street.

Meyer: A bird?

Kenney: I mean, just like a—what is it? And it's an African American guy. And apparently they had brought over a few of the 4.2 mortar battalions. They were Black units that fired, they were supposed to fire gas grenades. Gas shells, which they never [unclear]. So they were using the 4.2 explosives they didn't get in action. But I recognized the American uniform. But you know, who the hell knows?

So I yelled, "Halt!" I'm not going to just fire. Because he's got an American uniform on. And the guy stops dead in his tracks. I said, "What's the password?"

There's dead silence. And in a heavy Black accent—[unclear] you know what I'm talking about. In the States, if you were pulling guard duty, Camp Grant, Illinois, and somebody's coming in half drunk, you challenge them. And you didn't have passwords there. You'd say, "Halt, who goes there?" And he would respond, "Soldier of the post."

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: So I've got this Black guy in the middle of the street in Ennsdorf. And I said, "Halt."

"Man, soldier of the post!" (laughter) So, I'm breaking up.

Well, I'm supposed to be relieved in two hours and it's closer to three. Finally, Les comes upstairs to relieve me. He said, "You didn't kill anybody." And a guy relieves me. His name was Daniels. We had two Daniels, [unclear] his first name. and he relieved me. And as Les Wolfe and I go down the stairs into the cellar, there's this artillery coming in all the time, these damn .88s, we hear a tremendous explosion. Christ, it threw him off down to the bottom of the steps. And we go running up. And the front, the shell has hit right in front of the damn door. And I look and Daniels seems to be okay. And I shake him. Feel his neck [unclear] And I roll him over and he's dead! I open his shirt, I can't find a wound! I said, Christ, concussion wound killed him. And then I look. And a piece of the door frame, a piece of wood about this long—

Meyer: About six inches long.

Kenney: Arrow shape, went right through his temple.

Meyer: No!

Kenney: Killed instantly. This is ten minutes after he relieved me. So, who knows? Is it written?

Meyer: Who knows that? I remember when I lived in New York, when I drove a taxi, one of the things that, there was an attitude that we'd just go, oh, yeah, his number's up. His number's up.

Kenney: Well, there was one guy who used to steal my morphine if he could. (laughs) Total drug addict. His name was Small. Great big tall guy. Small and Smalley, we had two of them. And I was furious. because I didn't know he had taken some of the morphine.

Meyer: You just knew it wasn't there.

Kenney: And I'd go to use it and I don't have it. So I really got on him. I said, "Right now, we'll go down and see the company commander. You want to discuss that."

Meyer: So was he an addict? Or was he just using it to get—

Kenney: Yeah. He had always been. He was a musician and in the whole drug scene. Which wasn't prevalent in those days. But apparently from what they tell me, it was prevalent in musicians.

Meyer: Yeah.

Kenney: Is that true?

Meyer: I had a friend who owned a bandstand in Middletown, Ohio. And she would talk about Gene Krupa coming around and playing—

Kenney: Oh, he went to jail finally.

Meyer: Yeah. And Krupa, he said, thing was he thought he played better when he was high. She thought he didn't. He was sharper when he was straight, but he was more relaxed when he was high. So a lot of people used it just to feel like they could feel the groove more. And plus, I think it's the whole rogue mentality. I don't know. That whole generation gets lost.

Kenney: At any rate—

Meyer: So anyway, so now you're—

Kenney: Continuing, before I lose the train of thought, we take Daniels downstairs. Bury him down. I cover him up. I double check everything again. I poked him with a bayonet. You know, this thing with the neck is, I don't know how good you're at it. I wasn't very good.

Meyer: No, no.

Kenney: To feel the pulse. It's very difficult.

Meyer: What did you say, you poked him with a bayonet?

Kenney: I poked him with a bayonet. Did everything. He's gone. So I covered him up and we put him over in a little alcove there. Then we get the orders. We're pulling back across the river. And the day before, I had pulled a guy in from the backyard who got hit with shrapnel and was dead instantly. And you're [not?] going to bury them. There's nobody there. So we were told to pull out immediately. We're going back across the river. And I go to look for help. I want to get Daniels. I said, "Come on, let's—" And they're annoyed! I said, "For Christ's sake, we're not going to leave them here!" And a couple of guys could care less. And I was pissed. I'm a snotty 16-year-old kid, but I'm ready to fight over this point. (laughs)

Meyer: What did you say to them?

Kenney: Well at any rate, we brought them back.

[Time: 1:05:42]

Meyer: Did you have to stand and be firm? They were ashamed, or—

Kenney: I think just doing it in front of people who were helping, it was shame within. They pitched in then.

Meyer: Okay.

Kenney: Actually, I was so glad to get out. We pulled back into Saarlautern and there's a whole convoy of trucks waiting for us with the lights out. We load the trucks and we barrel out of Saarlautern. We gave that up to them, too. Apparently they never came back across the river, I understand. And about ten miles out of Saarlautern, the trucks, their headlights were painted where they were just little slits.

Meyer: Oh, okay. Sure.

Kenney: And they turned the headlights on with those slits. Everybody cheers. We've got lights on, we must be safe, you know. (laughter) Oh, dear. And then we went north to the Bulge. That was a ride and a half.

Meyer: Was anything still going on at the Bulge?

Kenney: Oh, yeah! Sure.

Meyer: I mean, for you.

Kenney: Like Patton said, “I’ll take care of,” (laughs) you know Patton. In fact there’s a guy here you should talk to. What’s his name? He was showing me his squad that got wiped out. The names are all up there. And I think they’re [unclear] the same place Bill is. And he was told it was Patton’s fault. Patton came and visited. You’ve got to have him tell the story. He’s very bitter about it.

Meyer: Maybe Joe Napier. Is he from the South?

Kenney: I think so.

Meyer: Okay.

Kenney: Tall.

Meyer: Does he have a wife who’s Dutch?

Kenney: His wife was with him. Yeah.

Meyer: His wife was. And fairly thin?

Kenney: Yeah. Yeah.

Meyer: Yeah, that’s Joe Napier. Joseph Napier. Could be. Could be. He’s a tall man.

Kenney: But he told me this thing with Patton. I didn’t fully understand how Patton was involved. But he was, apparently. And his big-ass shiny Jeep comes down. And these guys, they want them off the road. They’ll draw fire or something, he said. And they go out into a minefield.

Meyer: Ay yay yay.

Kenney: Yeah, they got I guess six of his squad were killed there.

Meyer: There were 14 of them and three hours later there were, I think five of them left. One of, he was one of the first people I talked to in Baton Rouge in two thousand—

Kenney: Well, the things that happen. It’s war. It’s terrible. The guy I mentioned earlier, Bill Alexander. Big, tall, good-looking guy. He’s from Jackson, Tennessee. Different platoon. But we worked together every night. We got to know each other. The platoons, the squads, or platoons, I’m sorry, are seldom together. But I’d see him and we’d chat and have a beer. In fact, Phil [O’Connor?] used to say, “Christ, that’s the oddest couple. A kid from Brooklyn and a goddamned hillbilly.” Hillbilly, hell, he was a very bright young man. He got married two weeks

before he shipped out. And I knew he was married. I never got into his personal life. But that day we move on and we're now in Germany. It's near the end of the war. And we have to take a bridge, a railroad bridge, across the Lippe Canal. Which is near Hamm, Germany. And down the road we heard some artillery, some other, I don't even know if it was the 95th had taken another bridge. So we had this commanding officer, Sondheim, his name was. He was a very questionable officer.

Meyer: Yes. I may have heard of him. From other sources.

Kenney: Well, he's drunk. Whenever we had [unclear] he'd get drunk and he'd get sick and throw up and go back. He sends a squad up which Bill is in on the bridge. Full squad from the Third Platoon. So he's got twelve guys. And I think he'd sent an extra BAR guy or two with them. There's about fourteen. They go right across. It's a railroad track. They go center of the bridge. And oh, the shit hit the fan. Machine gun bullets. Panzerfaust. And a lot of guys got wounded. And they dragged them off. It's hard to explain.

Meyer: Yeah, go ahead.

Kenney: Here's the [road to?] the bridge. And coming up to the bridge is a berm with the tracks on it. The Second Platoon is down behind this berm cover. And they come off the bridge this way. And somebody yells, "We've got two men down up there! Where's a medic?" And I hear "medic" and I say oh, shit, here we go.

And I remember as I go up there, Les Wolfe says, "Doc, for Christ sakes, be careful! Crawl!"

Well, I ran first, and nothing happened. And then I get on the bridge. And I guess they could see me then. So I get on the tracks and I'm crawling along. And I'm getting these two guys down. Bill Alexander and the other guy's name was Fontaine. I don't remember his first name. And I crawl up and I realize as I'm crawling, I'm crawling through gore, for God's sake! I'm covered with blood. And I get up to Bill and his eyes are closed and he looks peaceful. And I look down, he's riddled below the waist. He's dead as—both of them are. And it was Panzerfaust went off right next to them.

Meyer: What's Panzer?

Kenney: German bazooka. A disposable, you fired a bazooka and throw it away. Yeah, they had fabulous weapons, as you know.

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: Their hand grenades were so, the hand grenade I told you about at the railroad station was an eggshell grenade. They have the famous potato masher. You hold with that, you could throw that son of a gun. Ours was very difficult. It's heavy. You can't throw it like a baseball, it's too heavy. So you got to do it with a straight [unclear] like a softball pitcher. And it was very difficult to throw. And then the Germans had an eggshell, we call them. A little black steel grenade that was a concussion grenade. And anything within ten feet, you'd knock them out. You'd break their eardrums, you know.

Meyer: Yeah.

Kenney: They had amazing weapons.

Meyer: So Mr. Alexander's now dead on the bridge.

Kenney: Yeah. He's dead! So I filled out an EMT, an emergency medical, or KIA. I said Panzerfaust and gunshot. I didn't know which. I put both of them down. And that was it. We finally, I'm going to stop in the men's room for a second.

Meyer: Okay. Sure.

Kenney: Oh, yeah. You're working with a cancer guy, you know.

Meyer: Okay.

Kenney: I don't need an MD. I need a plumber. [pause] —on I guess a four-day pass. And I went home.

1:14:40

[Second CD]

Kenney: Everything was fine. They drove me to the check-in point at the pier for the Queen Elizabeth.

Meyer: Your parents did?

Kenney: Yeah. On the dock there they had a whole reception thing set up. Things were so screwed up. I mean, let's face it. You've got to realize, that monumental project of waging a four-year war around the world. The logistics, the supplies, the this—with no computers, pencil and paper, and a telephone. That's about it. Very difficult. Today they'd have everything cut and dried, you know. But you heard them today—the difference in weapons.

Meyer: And yet today, I wonder if it just would be, because everybody has the same—whether everything would just be more brutal.

Kenney: Quite frankly, the kids, like the young people here, they're phenomenal. They're patriots, they're intelligent. I think the volunteer army has been super. But my concerns with the troops there today—and God, you talk about support, I give all my money to the USO. The VFW, American Legion I could care less. But the USO, I give a lot of bucks to. And these kids go over and they're living in a luxury barrack, and TV, and can call home. But they go out and get killed every day; blown up by some nut.

But the point is, then they do, we weren't, you realize the entire war in Europe from D-Day on was only 11 months. It was over! These guys go back for the second and third tours. The law of averages is going to get them. Now the marines work that way. They do an island then give them a 30-day furlough and they know, hey, one of these islands I'm going to get it in. I don't know why the hell I wanted to go with them; I didn't like their uniforms. [laughs]

Meyer: You didn't like the uniform.

Kenney: No!

Meyer: See, everyone I know—not everybody. But a lot of people I'll talk to who were pretty young who joined the marines, I'll say, "Why did you join the marine?" And I've heard three or four times, "Oh, I liked the tie. Oh, I liked the uniform."

Kenney: The navy thing is kind of absurd.

Meyer: Yes, I don't think anyone liked the navy uniform. I haven't heard that.

Kenney: I'll tell you an interesting thing. I had—I'm trying to remember the incident. I got thrown up in the air in an explosion and landed face first on my knees. I hobbled away; it was fine. I ached for a while. But later that thing came back and murdered me. Then I was discharged. I was still limping. In fact, home on a furlough I went to the Brooklyn army base, Fort Hamilton, and checked in the sickbay there. I said, goddamned knee. They said, "It's fine, don't worry about it, stay off it for a while." Well, I'd been off it already for a year. So at any rate finally I needed surgery. It got so bad it was like a balloon with water on it, the left knee. So they said definitely surgery as soon as we can. Well, the VA Hospital and the army hospital—and I'm out now, I'm a civilian—they had no beds. Because all these guys are coming home. So apparently the army and the VA made a deal with the U.S. Navy. And I ended up in St. Alban's Hospital, St. Albans, Long Island, New York, in the navy hospital. Had my surgery on the leg there. And they put me in a ward full of marines. And it was crazy. These guys were sort of wild. Much younger, the marines than the group [unclear] And they're wild. I had no problem getting accepted. Every time I'd walk in the ward—well, I was in a wheelchair a long while with this thing; I'd come wheeling in and they'd all bark! "Here comes the doggy, arf, arf!" [laughs]

Meyer: Here comes the doggy?

Kenney: Yeah! Well, the dog face. Here comes the dog face. [laughs]

[Time 1:19:31]

Meyer: Well let me ask you, so now we're, now you talked about—

Kenney: Well, we were getting out of the trucks to go to the Bulge. That's where I think we left off.

Meyer: I wanted to ask you about something, when Mr. Alexander was killed on the bridge.

Kenney: Oh, okay. That was much later.

Meyer: That was later. But when you have something and you don't have time enough to move their bodies, do you take their dog tags? What do you do? I remember you said--

Kenney: Just go on. The litter bearers will pick him up. He's exposed on the bridge; I'm not worried. And if they don't find them, if they're a little late, so what?

Meyer: But do you take identification? Or you leave it for grave register.

Kenney: I take and EMT, emergency medical tag. And you tie one on to his pocket or shirt. And I take the other one and file it with the battalion.

Meyer: [unclear] you file it, okay.

Kenney: Now, getting back to that story. I don't like to tell it. But, Captain Sonberg. Sondheim, Sonberg, I forget his name. Some prick. He sends his squad up on the bridge. We have our own mortar battalion supporting us. We can call back and get 105s into it. He doesn't do anything! He sends the squad on the bridge and they get annihilated.

Finally—and this leads off to another avenue of stories. Not the battalion command, but I guess the executive, John B. Kelly [phonetic]. And he was the only West Pointer I knew in the whole outfit there. Big, tall, ramrod with a great mustache, you know. And he came up and said, “What the hell is going on with this bridge?” And he relieved him of command on the spot. Immediately called in mortars and they pulverized the other side of the bridge. And within 10 minutes the Germans surrendered. Which could have happened before they went over. It should have happened. So, Colonel Kelly—later on in life I got to know him. He lived nearby me. By accident, long story. But it could have happened. And that was the last until the famous email from Holland. From Monika [glitch] Van Russon [phonetic]. And you've got, her picture's on the current issue of the—

Meyer: Of the 95th?

Kenney: Yeah. But she tells me she's going to go to Metz. So I talk to Francois and Phillippe. And I said, “You're going to be her chaperone while she's there.” Beautiful girl. And she's so Dutch-looking I tell her she should have her finger in a dike. [laughs]

Meyer: How did she become a sponsor for Mr. Alexander?

Kenney: Okay. Her family with seven children live right near Margraten Cemetery. Very close. And every day going on the bus they'd notice—well, the Dutch are rather flower-oriented. Let me put it that way. They love their flowers. And what happens, I didn't realize there were that many 95th guys buried there until I went to the museum. And the ones who were buried there are those that were hit at that bridge, or going into Hamm. Because Margraten—here's Holland, sort of an odd shape, that's the ocean, which is still half (laughs) And down in the southwest corner of Holland, where Germany, Belgium, and Holland all come together, that's where Margraten is.

And they live there, with seven children. She's in the middle somewhere. Well, she and her sister noticed—they'd wait for the bus to go to work—she was working; she had her law degree but she worked in some small law firm downtown Margraten. And I looked it up on the internet and I found her with pictures and everything else from this little company she worked for.

[Time 1:23:55]

Well, people who had children, or whatever, or relatives buried there would go over and visit the grave. They'd make an arrangement with the local florist to keep flowers there. And the cemetery, don't misunderstand me, it's pristine. It's manicured. Beautiful. And you have flowers on American holidays, Christmas. But the rest of the year it doesn't. Well, she can't stand that. All of the other graves had flowers. He doesn't have any flowers.

So she and her sister adopted the grave. That's the words they used. And they refer to him as "our American soldier." And they put flowers on his grave all the time. They do this for about eight or nine months. And now [Lonika?], her attorney, learning, she says, "Who is it? Who is W.B. Alexander?" They thought his name was Wilbur for some strange reason. So she wrote Washington, using her legal experience. She wrote Washington. Now, if you look at the marker—there's no more crosses or anything, or stars, they don't have that anymore. They just have wrong markers now. But he still has the cross. And on the cross it says W.B. Alexander, U.S. Army, or USA, 95th Infantry, whatever, corporal, I forget what he was. KIA. Oh, Tennessee. Place of birth, Tennessee. And then it says KIA. I think it's April 24th, 19—. This is two weeks before the war ended.

Meyer: Two weeks before the end.

Kenney: And he shouldn't be dead! Because of that prick who used the artillery. Well, but—it happens. You can't be bitter.

Now, how she found me, she wrote Washington and they didn't have much more in the record other than what's on his marker. So-- [Commenting on something happening in room: Ah, I'll give you an hour and a half to stop that. You didn't tell me you were bringing the boyfriend. Yeah. Don't put our romance on the tape.]

Meyer: No, no. That's okay. If he has a choice of a kiss from you or talking to me—

Kenney: You guys are still a great looking couple. ... [Laughs at something a woman says.] Aha! She's dynamite.

Meyer: She's very sweet.

Kenney: I hear from her every other day. She emails me back and forth. She's gone a little religious nutty on me but...

Meyer: She is, but you know if that's what it takes to keep, when my--

Kenney: She was a sergeant major. There weren't many women that were sergeant majors.

Meyer: What's the significance of a woman being, a sergeant major--

Kenney: It's God!

Meyer: It's God?

Kenney: Yeah. It's the highest rank you can be as an enlisted man. And she looks like, she looked great in her uniform. And her husband, Robert, a real nice guy. I had dinner with him last time. And I hear from them, they send me pictures. They sent me a picture of the both of them standing with the governor of Oklahoma a couple of weeks ago. And then lo and behold, I get a solicitation for political contributions to the governor of Oklahoma. She was shocked! She couldn't believe it. She's running for the Senate, from governor. Now obviously she got my name from someone [laughs].

Meyer: Somehow.

Kenney: Yeah. Somehow. Somewhere.

Meyer: So, how did the women in Holland who adopted Mr. Alexander, how did they find you?

Kenney: Okay. Write Washington, and Washington said we have nothing more. Well, they typed up what they had and sent it to them. But they had a letter in the file. And the letter in the file was from a journalist named Steve Ross [phonetic], who I'm getting to know. I've met him only once but we correspond quite often. Every day on email. I think he's in charge of all anti-Obama email chains. Very bright guy. Well, he wrote a book about the attack on this bridge where his uncle was severely wounded. He told me he was killed on the bridge. Well, I know he wasn't, because I was on the bridge.

[Time 15:03]

Anyway, he's writing this book. I get a phone call from him. Ten years ago. And he drove over from Birmingham and spent the day with Edith and I. She made lunch, we sat out on the porch, and he was doing this. And he wrote his book. But I sensed immediately that his book is an attack on Sondheim [phonetic]. I said, the guy screwed up. So 50 years later you're going to write a book about what a prick he was for his family to see? He's long dead! Why bother? Leave it alone. I told him that when I saw him.

Meyer: Yeah, good.

Kenney: Well, he sent me the first draft. And I wrote back and said, this is terrible Steve. Really. Nobody cares, number one. But number two, I guess it's well written, I was just very annoyed that—suppose his widow is still alive. Who wants to read that he killed these people?

Meyer: Yeah, who wants to do that? Sure. Did he take your advice?

Kenney: It was never published, so I don't know. I have a copy of it. But today if you're going to publish your own book you get real professional stuff and you have a trunk full in the car, you try to sell them. [laughs]. His was just paper, a draft on paper, like Paul Schlitz' [phonetic], pretty much that way. His book was much better; called *Marching Fire*. You ever see that one? You've met Paul?

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: Oh, okay. A Quaker.

Meyer: So the girls found you through--

Kenney: OK. They sent a copy of the letter. So she dug out Steve Ross' [phonetic] email address and emailed him. He wrote her back and said, "You know, I know very little about the bridge. I wrote a book about it, but I don't know Alexander or anything about him." But he said, "I interviewed a guy about 10 years ago who was with him on the bridge." Actually not, I went up there after he got hit. How the hell I didn't get hit I'll never know. But you're terrified when you do that. Until you get going. You've got to do it. That's your job. Once you get running and the bullets start flying—

Meyer: You're just doing it.

Kenney: You've got to do it, that's all. You don't think about it. Les Wolfe [phonetic] was sort of a fatalist. If it's going to get you, it's going to get you. If it's not, it's not. So, let's go! [laughs]

Meyer: Was he like that?

Kenney: Oh yeah, very brave man. Good noncom. Really good. Tough guy, too. I have great respect for him. But when I saw him at 300 pounds! He was a little skinny guy [laughs]. His brother was in the navy, and he was a great storyteller. When Edith and I were at the Peoria reunion, that's the only one I ever went to, in 50-some odd years, and we were driving to Chicago to see a new grandchild. Two of our kids were born in Peoria. So we detoured there. We checked into the Pere Marquette Hotel there where the reunion was. And that's the hotel my wife lived in with our little toddler when we were transferred there. So it was very old-home week. Went out to see the old house. But Les had a nice suite and he had Edith and I up for cocktails. I had met his wife once before. She's from Texas. He married her when he was down at Camp Swift. But a very brave man.

He was telling me stories. He and his brother, in the navy, and a neighbor who, marine or something, they're all home on furlough. The war's still on, and they go out and really hang one on. And they're driving a car and it's all over the road. The Chicago police stop them. [laughs] And there's three kids in the service home on furlough from the war. There's two cops in the car. What the cop does, chews their ass out, pushes them over. He drives the car home and the other one follows. [laughs]

Meyer: Ah, different time.

Kenney: Different times. Yeah, different times. So at any rate, she gets my name from him and she finds my email. Also, she had contacted another name she got from the 95th. Cy Schnoor [phonetic]?

Meyer: Yeah, [Cy Schnoor?]

[Time: 1:33:48]

Kenney: Yeah. And she sent him an email. And when I got her email, coming through the Dutch, what's the word, ISP, I don't really have her address. I've got an email without an address; you don't get that. So I didn't know Cy, I had never met him. But I sent him an email, I said, "I got this thing."

He said, "Yes, so did I."

I said, "What do you know about this?"

He said, "I don't know, she takes care of this grave or something." So he gave me her email address. I answered her back and told her, yes, I knew Bill. Big, tall, handsome guy and he was killed on a bridge near the end of the war in Germany.

Well, she said they just wonder, it's our soldier, who was he?

I said, "I think I have a picture of him." And I did. Got into the archives, and thank God for copying. I was able to copy that picture and get it into—what's that free photo thing? They're the best I've found; it's run by Google, I think.

Meyer: Yeah.

Kenney: And I sent her a picture of Bill. He was in Class-A uniform. So I think it was probably a picture about the time he was married, before he went overseas. He had on a marksman's medal and that's all, no ribbons. And she was overjoyed to get the picture. Well, she sent me a thank you letter, thanking us for what we did. Then she sent me the picture of the grave—the picture you saw.

Meyer: Yeah, sure.

Kenney: But a bunch of pictures. She sent me, all of the views of Margraten, 18,000. It's twice the size of Normandy and nobody ever heard of it. A lot of the Brits are buried there from the famous miscalculated parachute jump.

Meyer: *A Bridge Too Far?*

Kenney: Yeah. Oh, I took her letter and I forwarded it to Schlitz, Jerry Boxman in Philadelphia, and George Smith up in Michigan [all phonetic], who doesn't have a computer, I had to send it to them in the mail. And they sent emails back to her, thanking her for what she's doing is wonderful. Well, we all get a note back from her mother then. She's saying, "Hold it, I know what my girls are doing and it's wonderful, but this is all flowing in the wrong direction. Our thanks should be going in your direction. I don't think my daughters had any conception of how many young American men died so we'd be free of the Nazis."

Now their occupation of Holland was horrible. You don't hear about that. Other than Anne Frank. They were starving the nation, literally.

Meyer: Joe Napier's [phonetic] wife was twelve and living in Holland when they occupied.

Kenney: Who's that?

Meyer: Joe Napier.

Kenney: Oh! Is that right? The one who was here.

Meyer: Yeah. She was there.

Kenney: Then she knows.

Meyer: She knows. She talked a little—

Kenney: They were starving to death. And the Brits, through Switzerland—I read this, somebody sent me the article when all this was going on about a year ago. The British, through Switzerland, made some contact with the Red Cross in Germany that they would parachute the loads of food in for them. Naturally, with an honorable commitment. Absolutely refused [it, the German?.] There was a big resistance movement there[unclear] Number 2, they protected Jews, and that really got them riled up. So they said, Screw 'em, let them starve. And I have friends in Atlanta who were over there. Now, her father, his name is Graham Von Russon [phonetic], her mother is Bea Von Russon [phonetic]. Well, her dad is VP for research for Solvay Pharmaceuticals. You know Solvay?

Meyer: Yeah.

Kenney: They make the Creon I take. I had a tumor in the pancreas which they wiped out on me, and occasionally the pancreas gets sluggish. They have this Creon medication which helps replace pancreatic digestive juices. They have laboratories in Atlanta. [pause] Never made a mistake in his life. Nice man.

Meyer: So—

Kenney: Well, then she expanded on this thing. Other people were doing the same thing. So they formed an association and I'm sure Jim has it, and certainly I have it at home. Judy has it. They actually have an adoption certificate that you adopted this grave, all in Dutch. Very, very interesting. And a lot of people are doing it. Thousands of them, taking care of graves. These are the Europeans that hate us. [laughs]

Meyer: These are the, yes. That was why--

Kenney: Oh, the French. That's the ones you hear the worst about.

Meyer: Yeah, the French are bad.

Kenney: I said, they've never heard of this thing that goes on in Metz, where they—it reminds me of the civil—

Meyer: They don't even know. When I tried to get NPR when I was over there, I'd been in touch with them, Weekend Edition. Walter Wasserman, Tina Tennyson, his assistant, emailing them.

Kenney: But they reenact things, and they have the jeeps and—

Meyer: First thing I said was, I'm going over to Metz. And they said, it was sort of, "Where is Metz?"

And I said, "Well, Metz is—" That's why I think now—Art Silverman, who's in charge of All Things Considered—I called him up. I found his number last week from when I tried to get coverage five years ago. I said, "Here I am. If you remember me, now it's five years later and I'm still interviewing WWII veterans. I've done 190 interviews and they're having this thing in Oklahoma City. I think you should send someone from Oklahoma National Radio just to cover it."

And he called me back and said, or National Public Radio. He said, "It's too soon right now because we already have everything planned for next week." Of course. But he said--

Kenney: I've done it on Steve Ross' [phonetic] recommendations, who's a journalist. He said, "I'll take care of the Jackson, Tennessee paper to get this in there." I don't know if he ever did or not. And I contacted, I figured, I'll call the *Journal-Constitution*. But then I said, naw, I'm going to call the *Marietta Daily Journal* because if I can get the story of the Dutch girl who went to school in Marietta, Georgia, and her father lived here. And everything they've done for this kid from Tennessee, and I had all the pictures and everything. And I called. Wonderful! I sent him all the substantiating pictures. I even sent them, I said, "If you want to plagiarize it, I'll get permission from the 95th Division Journal. You don't have to write anything." So he calls me. He said, "Could you send me another batch of that stuff? I can't find it." Now I'm annoyed.

So he makes a luncheon date with me. And I drive down to the paper in downtown Marietta and I meet this guy. He's 87 years old. He doesn't know what the hell day it is, this guy. So nothing ever happened. His name is Kinney, K-I-N-N-E-Y. Bill Kinney. I said, "Bill, let me suggest something. You've got all these 4th of July, Armistice Day, Veterans Day, here is the meat for your stories."

"Oh yeah, we'll do that." Never a word. My contact at the *Journal-Constitution*, they hadn't the faintest interest whatsoever. I thought, I'm saying to myself, if we get that in the paper, the neighbors they lived with in Marietta, the kids she went to school with, would be localized. I guess too much floats in. I don't know.

[Time: 1:42:52]

Meyer: You know what I've found is, I got good response when I hand-delivered it. When it was electronically delivered or anything, it got lost in the shuffle. And I put together a little package with a press release. A press release form saying this is it, this is what it is, this is what

it's about. A backup thing. And I remember I dropped off something about what I do at the library to maybe five or six places. And someone called me up. Also, what I've found is the local, every community now has a local neighborhood paper. Every neighborhood. And they're hungry for filler. They're hungry for anything that's local interest. So the big paper is going to be controlled by some corporate interest who doesn't give a damn. But if you--

Kenney: Well, the big papers, they're in deep trouble.

Meyer: They're in deep trouble because—

Kenney: All of the neighborhood papers, like the *Journal* publishes a Marietta section. That's all stopped. Now they have a half a page.

Meyer: Yeah but sometimes I know, at least in Los Angeles, neighborhoods will have their little, their papers.

Kenney: Oh, yeah, independent of them.

Meyer: The independent papers. And those are the things where I've gotten great response. Because you give it to them.

Kenney: They're looking for it. You make their life easy.

Meyer: You make their life easy. You give them a story. And if you go into the neighborhood where she used to live, it's even more. Maybe go find some neighbors. Then you have something else that you can go and you can give to another paper. Just say, "Listen, it's already been given some coverage. And you can see the story. Maybe you want to expand on it." Because then you've already done, you've done all their work for them. And then they're—I don't know. But let me ask you about, before we went back to Bill Alexander, you were talking about—gosh, what was it, going back earlier. It was earlier. I don't know whether it was Metz. Let me ask you, as you said, the first response is fear. Do you just dive in? Or what do you do, you just don't think?

[Time: 1:45:16]

Kenney: Yeah, you do. But on the other hand it's so important to be with people like Les Wolfe Bob Hambley [both phonetic]. They're motivators. "Dammit, let's go!" And he leaps out of that hole with [a bullet?] And you've got to go then.

But you know what's funny is, I tell you, the first few engagements where I had been wounded, my fear more than—I'm not fear of being dead, I don't know. You're just afraid.

Meyer: Sure you are.

Kenney: Of the combat. I was more afraid of screwing up my job. This is what I tell you. I read those manuals on the Queen Elizabeth for five days over there. I studied so I won't do something wrong. It reminds me of that old story about the admiral with that chest that he opened. Finally,

when he dies he leaves the chest to the first mate. And he opens it. And there's a little card that says, "Port is left, starboard is right." [laughs] And that's the way I felt. I've got to make sure I do the right thing. I've come this far fighting for what I wanted, and I've got it now. And damn it, I don't want to screw it up. It's almost a fear I had.

Meyer: Did you ever come up to anybody and something was wrong, and you had no idea what was wrong?

Kenney: Oh, yeah, all the time. The first one—well, no, that was the second one. I had a guy I could not find a wound on. He was in terrible pain and said he could not move his legs. I got him in the nude for God's sake. And I found a damn bullet hole just below his spine. No blood, just a little hole. Must have been a small-caliber weapon and it obviously hit him in the spine. And he couldn't move. I got him evacuated but it was a couple of hours trying to find out what the hell was wrong with him.

And then of course with the splinter in the temple, was more common. And then you'd get the ones that are—well that day when Alexander was killed and Fontaine [phonetic] I'm crawling up and I've got blood all over me from crawling. Not from them. They had blood, of course. Maybe some of the other people, too. And I'm covered in blood. Now we go on, we cross the bridge, the Germans surrender, and I'm covered with blood. So in the canal I went right into the canal. I know that cold water will take out blood. I get in, I'm scrubbing in the cold water with my boots on. This is in April. So it's still pretty cold in Europe, you know.

Meyer: April. It's cold!

Kenney: It was the coldest winter they'd ever had. And I'm soaking wet but I got the blood off or it's going to smell to high heaven. And that night I froze my butt off in those wet clothes. [laughs] We went into a house and I stole some blankets and some bedding upstairs and wrapped myself in it.

I said it's like socks. I was a fanatic on the guys changing their socks.

Meyer: For trench foot.

Kenney: Trench foot or whatever they hell they called it in World War I. But you lose circulation. The socks are drying on their feet. What I've learned to do, two pair of socks—well, another sidelight: we did a lot of marching, you know. We walked across Europe. [laughs] We weren't driving the—what do they call them today, the people carriers or something like that? You'd ride on a tank on rare occasions, or if you'd transfer you'd have a six by six. But most of it you were hiking. I learned in in basic, on long marches, the 25-mile things, to wear two pair of socks, cotton socks, inside-out on first. The smooth side on the inside, the rough side on the outside. And then wool over that. It really helped on the feet.

Well overseas when they're wet all the time, and cold, and no chance, I'd tell them, keep a pair of socks under your green undershirt, wrapped around you. And then you change at night, the other smelly socks you put in there; you put the dry ones on. Nobody cares if you smell. We didn't have a shower for four months, you know. [laughs] But they finally took us to, I bet the guys remember it here, took us to this big German steel mill or something. And they had these massive showers. They didn't have lockers; they had little locks on a rope. And you'd unlock the

thing and lower the rope and it had a hook on it. You'd put your clothes on it and raise them up to the ceiling, so nobody could steal them.

Meyer: Really?

[Time: 1:50:39]

Kenney: Yes. Apparently those factory workers in Germany weren't too trustworthy. [laughs] Speaking of Germans, I had these nuts who wanted to shoot prisoners. Just abhorrent to me! I had one guy, I'll leave him unnamed, [unclear] He's dead today, I saw his name in the memoriam section. I said, "You're going to do what? You're going to go home and tell your mother you killed some guy unarmed? What's the matter with you? He's a kid, for God's sake. And you don't even know if he fired at us or not." Everybody wants to be a hero, you know?

I had another one as a medic—boy, the things you get involved in. We had one guy in the platoon—big, muscular guy. God he was big, about six-four, well up in the two hundreds. Had arms like hams. And he was a total bully. He would get a couple of drinks in him and he wants to fight everybody. And one day he went after Bill O'Connor and he's belting him. And I leaped on his back [laughs]. And then Bill, so the two of us sort of got him down and then Hambley [phonetic] broke it up. But it's about time. Somebody had to do something.

About a month later, we're in an attack on this farmhouse. We take this big, big, farmhouse area. And we're in the kitchen. And suddenly he goes bonkers. He goes crazy! He shoots the rifle in the ceiling and he's putting the rifle on everybody and screaming and threatening you—totally lost it. And I'm saying, oh boy. Medic? I still don't know, that's not my job. [laughs] Did I do it again?

Meyer: Yeah, that's okay. that's okay. I'll just fold it over here.

Kenney: So Hambley and I finally got him calmed down.

Meyer: How'd you—

Kenney: All I want to do is get the rifle out of his hands. Sent him back and never saw him again.

Meyer: How did you get him calmed down? I mean, someone's shooting a round. What do you say to them? Just calm the fuck down?

Kenney: I don't even remember. But I know we got him calmed down. I remember his name, yeah, what was his—yeah. Name is not important.

Meyer: No, no, it's not important. You had talked earlier about Sulfa drugs. How you found out, and penicillin.

Kenney: Well, I didn't find out. The notice came down from headquarters, stop using sulfanilamide powder and dispose of any you have. They don't say why. Was it a bad batch or something? It wasn't. The field hospitals who get these patients back—I'm thinking of [Julian

Lee?— I mean, I had six packs of this powder. His legs are so bad I'm covering them and I'm bandaging them. What happened, the carrier for the anti-infection material ended up as a foreign body in the wound. And made it very difficult for the wound to heal. So they stopped using it. In fact I had a couple of German prisoners they brought in one day and two of them were shot up. And I took care of them. One fellow had an arm wound; the other had a pretty bad leg wound in his butt. A lot of open flesh wound. And I'm putting sulfanilamide in, and the other guy, the German, "Nix salt! Nix salt!" He thought I was pouring salt in the wound. I couldn't believe it! I said, "No, no, it's good, it's good." [laughs] We only had one German speaker in the whole platoon.

Meyer: Were you around when the Germans started surrendering en masse?

Kenney: Oh yeah. You couldn't know what to do with them.

Meyer: What did you do with them?

Kenney: Send them back. [laughs] The early ones, I remember in training, even in Camp Grant, Illinois, most of the German prisoners that came here, the POWs, were the cream, the Afrika Korps. The German Army. They were captured early and they were sent to the States and they put them in the middle of the desert, or Illinois, where it was very hard to escape. Where are you going to go, you know? They had a very good life, they really did. My wife has told me that in Brooklyn they had them there and the girls would go riding by on bicycles and they're whistling and waving.

[Time 1:55:46]

Meyer: You talked about wounds sometimes, wounds sometimes would have a bad smell?

Kenney: On the wounds?

Meyer: Yeah.

Kenney: Oh, well, if there's a lot of flesh open. I can't imagine my brother's whole back was gone. Meat, blood vessels exposed, it's just horrible.

Meyer: Part of it is the charring? Or as soon as you expose the meat--

Kenney: I think so. What I'm saying is, they must have this in hospitals, in surgery certainly.

Meyer: Yeah, you don't have that.

Kenney: You know, I read that in Iraq, particularly, there was a big hullabaloo. One of the anti-GOP- administration things. That the money they're spending—they were spending \$500 for a bandage compress. Well, I read an article by a navy corpsman assigned to the marines in Iraq. They had a whole pictorial spread on him. It wasn't *Time*, because I don't read it. Maybe it was *Newsweek*. And then the kid got hit very badly. They mentioned that a few weeks later in another

article. But at any rate, he was talking about what his job was as a medical. Much more trained than we were. They had the pig. The famous pig. And they're all given a pig. And the pig is shot and stabbed and burned. Horrible. Imagine the animal rights people get into this one. And the thing was to keep that pig alive. And it's outstanding training. He was saying in this article, this navy corpsman, "Dammit I had my pig alive for 18 days!" It's a contest. But it is good training. And he got hit later. But he was talking about the bandages. And they did cost 500 bucks. They have a bandage now, it's like a compress, with self-adhesive edges. They slap it on, it stops bleeding instantly! And they're not inexpensive. They cost a fortune. They're not making millions of them. I don't know if they use them in civilian life; they're probably too expensive.

Meyer: I've heard about those bandages, too.

Kenney: But the big thing today, the medics, the difference: think of the helicopter. Evacuate them. We had litters—stretchers; the army calls them litters—they had two 3-inch poles of oak and heavy canvas. They weighed a ton! Now you put a 200 guy on it, and four guys handling it, it was not easy. Over rough terrain to get them back. And that was the secret, get them back. You can't cure them. You can do just all you can do.

Meyer: Keep them alive.

Kenney: Stop the bleeding, keep them warm, prevent shock and stop the pain. That's all you can do.

Meyer: What would you do for shock?

Kenney: You had nothing. Once the sulfanilamide was gone, we could do nothing about infection other than a clean bandage.

Meyer: So you would put on tourniquets, you'd do--

Kenney: Oh yeah. A tourniquet is always dangerous, somebody's got to loosen it. But usually, I remember George Smith [phonetic], my friend, who never comes to these. Super guy. His wife, just lives up, he's a retired forest ranger up in Rose City, Michigan. Real nice man. I took care of him when he got hit in his arm. He got bad in the arm. And I had a tourniquet on him. And I said, "George, you're going to loosen that damn thing up." And they do. Most of the guys, they can handle it themselves. Unless they're out.

Meyer: You had told me a story about getting a letter from someone who said you saved my father's life?

[Time 2:00:06]

Kenney: That's my favorite war story, really. Les Wolfe, no it was Hambley [phonetic]. He had gotten his battlefield commission. And we were in attack in Germany. I think this was in March, April, somewhere in there. And Hambley splits, we're going down this town we're after is on the autobahn. The kind of roads we didn't have in the States. The throughway. And there were either

four or six lanes depending on the traffic. So he splits the platoon, two on one side, one squad on the other. And I go with the largest group. Because if we're going to have casualties there's more there.

Well, again it happened. The other side of the road there was an explosion. And I hear machine gun fire. The next thing I can faintly hear, "medic" over the road and the noise. So I've got to go across. Les said, "How fast can you run?" And I ran about halfway across and now you're hearing zing, zing! And I hit the ground, hoping I'm fooling that I'm hit. Then rolled and ran again. And Les Wolfe said, "Those Krauts just don't know that kid is bullet proof."

Well, I get over there and Julian Lee [phonetic] has stepped on a landmine. And he is in bad shape. The legs are torn to pieces. One foot looks like it has to come off, and I'm saying good luck on both legs. And he had pieces of the leather shoes embedded in him. I covered that with sulfanilamide. Because the ban on it didn't happen until near the end of the war. I got the bleeding stopped. I had tourniquets on both of the legs. And now, I can't leave the tourniquets on. He's in terrible pain. He's writhing in agony. And I don't want to give him, he asked for morphine. A very nice, quiet man. We called him Pappy. He was married, had a couple of kids. He was probably in his early thirties, because he died six months ago at 92. If I leave him there, with morphine, forget it. Nobody will ever find him. He's laying in a wet ditch with his legs blown open. Just then another guy got hit in the arm, bad enough where he couldn't go on. And he could walk back.

I said, "No, you stay with him. You've got to stay with Julian." Well apparently he did. And you go on. There's a lot of men to be tagging, with a stub pencil. And I never heard another word of what happened. You know, there's no communication, no email, no phone calls. The general mentioned that tonight. You might get a letter, maybe you wouldn't.

Well, it would be just after I left the last reunion here, which was in '07.

Meyer: Two years ago.

Kenney: July or August. And it was that September I get this email. I said to the wife—it said something like, "I think you're the one who helped my dad." It sounded like spam coming in from left field. So I ran it through Norton just in case. And I opened it up and it's Helen Lee [phonetic], didn't mean a thing to me. And she said, "I was reading the 95th newspaper to my dad, he's losing sight rapidly, he's 90. And I read your name, you had changed your address." And I remember we were about to move into the new thing, the elderly place, St. George Village. And she said, "That's the man, that's the man who saved my life!"

I said that's not quite true. And then I see it's Julian Lee. I said, oh my god. I said, "You've got to tell me, what happened? I left him laying in a ditch as best I can with a guy who was going to direct the litter bearers to pick him up. And I never knew another thing."

She said, well, she's the oldest of the children, probably in her late sixties at that time. She said he didn't come home for a long time. They kept him in a hospital in England until September or October after the war. Then brought him home. I never asked if they flew him home or shipped him, I don't know. They weren't big on flying then. They did a bit of it. Those [unclear] were phenomenal. She said he finally came home. They sent him to an army hospital near Chicago. And they visited him there. Then he finally got discharged and came home in a wheelchair. And then she said he was going nuts in the wheelchair, so the hospital gave him two crutches. And he was on two crutches for quite a few months. And then he practiced and practiced, and he went on two canes, and he used those canes the rest of his life. But he worked.

You know, we have six kids in our family. So I knew that shrapnel didn't go everywhere. [laughs] He had had two, so he had four more children. And he ended up as, the title of maintenance supervisor at a John Deere plant in Dubuque, Iowa. They lived on a farm near Dubuque apparently. And she said, "You know, he's not good on the phone, he doesn't read. Could I call you some day and put my dad on the phone to talk to you? He hears okay." I said that would be wonderful.

So we arranged for a Sunday morning so we'd be back from church about eleven o'clock. So she calls early on a Sunday afternoon and talks a bit. She says, "Okay, I'm going to put my dad on." And I hear a noise and a voice, I couldn't distinguish it.

I said, "Is that you?"

He said, "Doc, you son of a bitch!" He said, "Is that really you?"

I said, yeah. I said, "God, you've got to tell me about those legs. Your daughter said they saved the legs!" I said, "Are you sure they saved them? Or was it my medical miracle in the field that did it?"

He said, "Never mind that stuff, there's one question I've got to ask you."

I said, "What's that?" This is my favorite story. He said, "Doc, level with me now. Do you still only shave once a week?" [laughter] I was the kid. Oh, God.

Meyer: Did you ever see him?

Kenney: No, no. And it was about two issues about maybe the next, or two issues later I saw him in the memorial section.

Meyer: Who was the most important person to you during your time?

Kenney: In service?

Meyer: In service.

Kenney: Well, I think the best officer I had was Bob Hambley [phonetic], and then we had this captain who was sort of a fink. He had an executive officer assigned, First Lieutenant Shur, S-H-U-R, his name was. And he was everything that the captain was not. And I'm sure the captain resented it, but it kept the people happy, so he let him alone. I remember Christmastime in the chow line—the officers got a liquor ration, you know, every month, got three or four bottles of booze. And Shur would stand out pouring everybody a shot as they went through the chow line. And then we were up in Holland. We were pulled out of the Third Army for a very short period of time and were assigned to the British Second Army in Holland. And with the British you get British rations—yuck.

Meyer: You said something about tea. Did you tell me--

Kenney: Oh yeah, they'd stop for the tea!

Meyer: They'd stop for tea?

Kenney: Absolutely! Absolutely. Sorry Germans, wait, we're having tea. [laughs] And I'm not exaggerating, boy. They had the cups going at 4 o'clock every day. Uh, I'm losing my train of thought here, you had asked another question. Oh, we went on attack. We relieved the British and we attacked the next morning. It was a cold, wet morning. And pitch black. You couldn't see a thing. It's stupid to attack when it's that dark. But we did. And I hear, "Medic!" The lead scout, I recognized his voice, Sullivan. and Shur is hit. I get to him and his whole side, a stomach wound, and he's in pain. And there's a lot of people around. The litter bearers are close by, they're picking up someone else. I said, "I've got one here." I was able to get compresses. I took his canteen and poured water into the wound and the stomach. And I said, God knows what the internal damage is; he's gone. Apparently, he got over it and was fine. I never saw him again. But I found out when we got to Shelby that he was discharged with the wound, but he was fine. Yeah. And I was so pleased to hear that. So apparently getting him back to the aid station where you can get a doctor who knows what he's doing, not some kid who took 16 weeks training. [laughs]

But that was 10 wars ago. And these kids today are phenomenal, the job they're doing. They have to go back two and three times, and it's going to be worse in Afghanistan.

[Time: 2:11:20]

Meyer: Some of the ones who I've talked to were in Iraq, oh, a couple of years ago, they said they weren't trained to do what they were doing. Which was basically guarding convoys for Halliburton. They said they were trained to do one thing but instead were sent to, that's what they were doing. So they felt like they were sitting ducks.

Kenney: They were. You go out helping--Those charges they had waiting. If they set them off with cell phones, apparently?

Meyer: Yeah, all very technical. Were you ever wounded?

Kenney: Not really, no. Not really a scratch with blood. I got banged up a number of times. Leg, my back. One grenade threw me up in the air. That's when I landed on the railroad tracks. Not a wound, no. You hobble away. In fact, that one I didn't hear for, God, three or four days. I had ringing in my ears. And when I went to the VA with the hearing problem, it's not service connected. And frankly, it wasn't. I heard fine for 50 years. [laughs] It's old age. But they gave me hearing aids. And I lost them. You know what they cost? Twenty-four hundred dollars per ear. I'm sure the VA gets a deal.

Meyer: Did you get any special medals, or any medals--

Kenney: I got a Bronze Star. I think he wrote in his book. Somebody, maybe it was Paul's book. We were attacking this town and we had tank support. Sherman support. Way over on the right. And suddenly I see the big flash, and an 88 got the tank. And a burst of flame. So I head for the tank, not realizing that goddamn, here comes the bullets again. I'm saying, I don't even have the target on my hat. [laughs] But here they come anyway. And I get to the tank. One guy's trying to get out of the turret. It's beginning to burn. I drag him out behind a haystack and I go back for the second guy and I drag him halfway back. And he was dead. And then there's a third in there.

Three in the crew. I think there was three in the crew. Maybe four. And the thing, it blew. And the guy behind was pretty badly wounded. I took care of him. And that ended up with my getting separated from the outfit, that story. And I ended up in German territory coming back. Finally found them. That was scary. But as Les said, “You’re better off, get rid of that Luger, don’t keep it. Send it home.”

So I decided I’d better carry a gun. I got too nervous. And Les said, “What are you going to do, shoot up the German Army with a pistol?” He said, “That Luger—” No, it wasn’t a Luger, it was called a P-38, it was the modern version of the German Luger. And he said, “You get captured with that, Doc, and you don’t want that. [laughs]. So send it home.” Which I did. I had a bunch of stuff I want to donate to the museum. But General [inaudible] ... I spent a wonderful hour with him last night.

Meyer: He’s a wonderful man. Wonderful man. The contrast is shocking contrast.

Kenney: He’s got that odd Virginia drawl, West Virginia drawl.

Meyer: Yes. Well, he knows how to talk and he knows how to, he always—

[Time 2:15:24]

Kenney: He’s a schmoozer.

Meyer: He also would never, you see the people around him come to attention. But whenever I talk to him he would never, you never felt like—he always wore his authority lightly. While this man seems to be tight and somewhat, because what he was saying about, even my exposure just talking to people, you know, I mean, the guy from, who was talking in the government last night, who was the guy who gave the thing from state of Oklahoma, who didn’t take the time to read it first, decided to, didn’t go through his lines, decided to do it there. And he goes on gung-ho at the first, saying, “You guys, did you ever see *Saving Private Ryan*?” And I thought fuck, man, they lived *Saving Private Ryan*. What do you mean, see it? I remember when that came out, that was one of the, maybe the second reunion. And anytime I asked someone a question, they said, “Oh, it wasn’t like that *Saving Private Ryan*. It was mortar. It wasn’t machine guns. It wasn’t all that.” And everyone was sort of—and so this guy, their reference points, even this general’s reference point--

Kenney: It just to me he looked like—remember the Lil Abner strips? Senator Claghorn [laughs]? That’s what he reminded me of.

Meyer: Oh, that guy. Oh, yes. He was.

Kenney: “Now see there, son.” [imitating voice].

Meyer: “Now see there.” How did—now you started in and you’re 15 years old. And by the time you were done, you have dealt with hundreds of wounded men and seen death on a regular basis. How did that change you?

Kenney: Not really much. You become immune to that. You become impersonal. You have to. Well, Bill Alexander shook me up because I was closer to him than to other people. And I remember Bill O'Connor, who was my closest friend in service in the 2nd Platoon, they told me he had gotten it, he was dead. That really broke me up. And he comes walking in half an hour later. [laughs] I was so glad to see him. And Bill and I got together quite often in civilian life later on. He was an ASTP guy who got betrayed. And he went back to Manhattan, got his degree in electrical engineering.

You had asked the question, How did that affect me? Really, I just forgot about the war. I never discussed it. I didn't join anything. No American Legion. No VFW. I didn't want to be one of those silly guys with a funny hat on standing around the bar. It's not my thing.

Meyer: No, no. You have a level of sophistication.

Kenney: That's why I never went to reunions. When we went to Peoria with my gorgeous bride, amazing lady. We had three kids born there. And the Pere Marquette, where they had it, is where Edith lived with our oldest child when she was about 14 months old. And she became Eloise of the Waldorf there. She was the hit of every employee they had, having a little girl there.

But then when we got there, she didn't go to any of the meetings, but she went to the dinner and the dance thing. I found Les and a few other people I knew. And one of the guys that had had a commission. I don't know if he's here this time, I didn't see his name. Billy Olive?

Meyer: Yes, he hasn't been here for the last two years. I've talked to him and his wife, Eve. Maybe I'll call them up.

Kenney: He's got a battlefield commission. Had been in the 2nd platoon, but they sent him somewhere else. Apparently he got that at the early part of Metz, because I didn't know him then. But they transferred him.

Meyer: He was wounded in Ennsdorf, in that area.

Kenney: He was wounded in Ennsdorf?

Meyer: Yes. Because that's how I knew Ennsdorf. We were there in Metz. And they took the side trip to Saarlautern and something. And I'm on the bus--

Kenney: Well, that's what I want to do. That's the only reason I'd go to Metz. I'd want to see Ennsdorf.

Meyer: Yes. And the thing is, make that clear. Because the bus driver is like any other bus driver. And I don't know why--

Kenney: It's not that far, is it? A hundred miles?

Meyer: No. But what happened is that since Ennsdorf was off to the side of the highway. We were coming up to the river, and there it is. And there's where Billy's life changed. Because he was bringing the supplies up from the river and he kept coming down and up and down and up.

And one of the times they came down, I think he was hit by machine gun fire. And that's what took him out of the war. Or took him out for a while. And the bus driver, they were going, "Ennsdorf's coming up on the left, take a good look."

I was up near the front. I said, "You need to pull over."

They said, "We can't pull over. We're on a schedule."

I said, "Listen, these fuckers," you know, because I was a cab driver, so if I don't watch myself, I get strong. I said, "Listen, these fuckers, they gave their lives. This man right here, it changed his life right down here at the river. So you're going to pull over." And I think they thought, they realized—because most of them will cave. Because most people don't want to cause any trouble.

[Time 2:21:09]

Kenney: My daughter lived in Paris for about seven years. And she and her husband, her ex, he is now, he died, we took a train down to Cannes, to Normandy. And we did the beach and the whole thing. And then Greg, a very, very wealthy son-in-law I had, unbelievably wealthy, billions. He is the grandson of John D. MacArthur. The MacArthur Foundation. He made zillions in insurance, out of a coffee shop in Miami, collecting a quarter a week. [laughs] And then his dad was disowned by the grandfather. So his father was a challenge. He said to hell with him and his billions. And he went off on his own and really hid it. But he did weird things. He opened up and made millions and million on the Bradford Exchange, commemorative plates. You see the magazine ads of Norman Rockwell and Grandma Moses or something. [laughs] Well, so this kid had money. And he was a reporter for Associated Press. My daughter's a journalist. It was a sideline. She did it in high school, ran the paper. And then when she went to UVA, she was executive editor of the Cavalier Daily, a 20,000-circulation college newspaper. And from there, then she vacationed through a connection I had. I got her a job, the Greenville, South Carolina News in the summer as an intern or something. And from there, she interned at Associated Press. And that's where she met Greg, who was—and she finally got a fulltime job there was a reporter. She covered—do you remember the horrible string of mass murders of the Black children in Atlanta?

Meyer: Yeah.

Kenney: That was her story. She covered that thing like crazy. I got called for jury duty a number of years later. She was long gone then. And then name rang a bell. So I sent Nancy an email. She said oh, God, yes, she was the judge. And to the right of Attila the Hun. But not a [high rank?] on that.

Meyer: Somebody said that Rumsfeld said that we are going to win this war on the cheap. And that's why he should be horsewhipped. Because rather than going in, someone was talking to me, I forget who it was. Saying if you're going to go into something, if you go in with a huge show of force, then someone says, "Okay, I'm not going to fight because I'm going to die." But if you go in with technology on your side but the numbers are sort of even, people say, "You know what, I've got a shot. I'll try it." So rather than doing that—they also said, and I don't know if this is true, they said what's interesting in Japan, I did an interview with someone who was attached to the Chinese army. And the Chinese army, he said they would run. As soon as the

Japanese vacated a village, they would come in. Soon as they heard the Japanese was going to come in, they would run. And he says that was back in [unclear] he said, when the war was over, he was in Shanghai. He was a photographer attached to the army. And attached to the Chinese army. And he said, "Look at this picture." It was Mr. Halperin. He showed me a picture of the victory march in Shanghai, the victory parade from Shanghai. He says, "Look at the guards." And the guards are all Japanese soldiers. He said, "You know," he said, "we didn't have guards, the Chinese soldiers you couldn't trust." He said, "The Japanese soldiers, they are soldiers. So as soon as they're told what to do by their leaders, they say 'Okay, now you have to obey the Americans,' they would obey us."

And someone said, so it was a shocking picture. Because these Japanese soldiers, they were sort of, they had that look on their face. They weren't going to let anyone cross the line. And the Americans are there in a car waving hats behind them in front of the Shanghai Hilton. So he said, it was an odd thing. And somebody said, and I don't know if it's true, that the Bathists or whatever the Iraqi soldiers, if they had been left in place and then--

Kenney: What's it, Colin Powell and Bush, Senior? They said, "You've got them on the run! Go to Bagdad? You'll be there for a hundred years. Guerilla warfare? Our job was to free Kuwait. And we've done it." He, Colin Powell stopped the slaughter. I mean, the Revolutionary Guards or whatever they were called. Did you see those pictures of that? They called the turkey shoot. Oh, my God.

Meyer: No.

Kenney: They, thousands and thousands of vehicles of the Iraqi Army strewn across this whole area. Just kept [unclear] with the aircraft. And they were running. And finally says, "Stop, for Christ's sake! All you're doing is killing people. What are we getting out of it?" And they let them go. But the second time around, when you defeated them, it was fast. It was, you know, a brilliant campaign. The first one was a hundred hours or something. But the second time, they defeated them. But at that point in time, you didn't need unconditional surrender. They got rid of Saddam. You better have some order. And that's the problem. They have no order. Those people are used to being told what to do. And with it, I think of Mussolini. The trains ran on time. You know? And water doesn't run too well with us.

Meyer: Well, everybody knew, who knew anything about Islamic history, and I didn't know that much. But everybody knew the Sunni and Shiite that went from the second generation after Mohammed. That's where the split comes. The British ran into the same problem. How do you think you're going to take away your leader and not have the Sunni/Shiite split come up and bite you? How? You just don't know your history. I mean, I don't, if they're going to—

Kenney: Yeah. Now, Germany was different. There are people of discipline without Hitler. Efficiency and discipline. I had a customer, very good one, Peter Graber his name was. He and his brother were—[pause]

Meyer: Ken Burns. I got from Ken Burns and his producer.

Kenney: Oh, the Civil War.

Meyer: The Civil War.

Kenney: And baseball guy.

Meyer: And baseball guy. I was there and I said to him, I said, “What’s your favorite question?” Because this is when I was going to Oklahoma City two years ago. And his producer said, “Tell someone to take a deep breath, relax, and then blank their mind. And just say to them, ‘Tell me a story that you’ve never told anyone before.’” And I said, “Have them have a deep breath?” He said, “Yeah. Just whatever happens.” So sometimes people go (breathes in) or something just float up, like a picture of a building in Saarlautern. Sometimes it’s survivor guilt. Sometimes it’s just a little girl.

Kenney: Well, you’re getting into mental processes with that. And I’m a fair, an excitable person, but fairly stable. When my bride died, I was destroyed. Totally. [pause] Where the L Company was back there. We were there twice in reserve and R&R. And we would take the trolley car from [Bhutan to Saint Semion?] into Liege. And we were billeted with, we got a new lieutenant who—oh, God, what a creep he was, [McLahan?]. And he was, the minute we had to go in combat, he found his liquor supply, you know? So much of that went on. I didn’t drink. Hell, I didn’t drink beer in those days. I was too young to drink! Show my ID.

Meyer: [pause] That’s okay. New one. So, where’s the pie lady? You meet her.

Kenney: Oh, she used to make pies for the troops. A woman, her name was Louise Croquette. (laughs)

Meyer: And what did she look like, Louise Croquette?

Kenney: Not very good looking. (laughs) Built like a brick pagoda, but not that good looking.

Meyer: How old was she?

Kenney: Oh, probably early mid-forties, I guess. She had a little girl. We were billeted in her house. The command post for the Second Platoon. A lieutenant and I and Hambley was platooned, Sergeant [unclear] and a runner. And whatever the staff was there. We were billeted there. And we left there and went back a second time in reserve in the same place. Same house. And they were glad to see us. They were very wonderful people. There was a bar right next door to her place the whole gang hung out in. And Hambley fell in love with the barmaid there, wanted to marry her. We said no, no, you can’t marry her! (laughs) Oh, they had some wild times.

Meyer: But the pie lady, did she just—

Kenney: Well, no, she made pies for everybody. I got back, we had been there twice. And then we went off for some heavy combat. And I had, I got an R&R pass for a weekend. Finally. And we did that, they’d take turns. But I didn’t get it from the platoon. Because I didn’t belong to the

platoon. I belonged to the 320th Medical Detachment. And I'm attached unassigned, I always forget, or assigned unattached. I don't know which it is. And so I can't just leave unless I got a pass from 320th. And I hardly knew them, the commanding officer. I didn't bother with them. I just went back for supplies and did my thing with my platoon. And I think some of the guys resented that. So they're going off on passes and I don't get any. And finally, I had mentioned it to Captain Shur, the guy that got hit in the stomach, the exec officer. "That's bullshit!" And he apparently went over and talked to the commanding doctor there, and I got a pass.

So I went back to Liege and I got a shopping list from everybody. "I need a pipe. I need this. I need—" That's what you do there, you know. And I wasn't, those guys would go back and head for the brothels. That wasn't my bag.

But coming back, the trolley, you took a streetcar. Goes out in the country. And it goes right through Saint-Simeon. I get off there and visit the bar. And I ran into the pie lady. Then I found out that while we were there, that she had this big affair going with the lieutenant while she was there! (laughs) Oh, God. So she enticed me and corrupted me. Those are things you try to forget.

Meyer: Did you, one person said oh, he carried a coin, his mother made him a ring out of a coin. And he always wore the ring. She said it would keep you safe. And other people said, I carried a handkerchief. I carried things to help me stay lucky. You may have been too young to—did you have any lucky charm, any sort of superstition you'd do?

[Time: 2:34:46]

Kenney: Not really, no. Bill O'Connor, who drank himself to death—shame, he had five kids. Very bright guy. Big Irish kid. He became Mr. Monk. What do they call it, compulsive-obsessive?

Meyer: Yes.

Kenney: I mean, we visited him. We were in from St. Louis. We drove out to their house to go to dinner with them, with he and his wife. And she's telling us what she goes through. Every night he goes to bed. He gets in bed. Then he gets up out of bed and he goes and checks every faucet in the house three times. It's got to be three times. And then he does this. [unclear] monk came along later.

My wife died watching *Monk*. I put it on. She loved that show. And I put it on for her. She said, "I can't sleep. I'm going to get up and watch TV." She hated the DVR recorder. So I put it on for her, kissed her goodnight, went to bed. And I'd usually come out an hour later and wake her up to go to bed. And I did. I said, "Come on, hon. Time." And no answer. And I walked over and I grabbed her arm. I couldn't believe it. It was like a deep-freeze unit. Dead. Totally dead. And I did CPR for 15 minutes. The emergency crew, I called 911 instantly. Actually, I just called the desk. I said 911 in a hurry. And they're wonderful there. And he's outside to guide them into the right elevator. So they were up there in probably 15 minutes. And I'm still—I did know CPR from my medical training. But in those days, you did the breathing and the pumps. Today they don't give a shit about the breathing.

Meyer: They don't give a shit?

Kenney: You just pound, pound, pound. And I remember, before I started, I did as long and a hard a breath as I could into her. Then I started pounding her chest. And about five minutes into it, suddenly she, there's a big sigh. And all the air comes out. And you have a feeling—how could I describe it? Her soul's leaving the body type of thing, you know?

Meyer: Yeah, sure.

Kenney: I deeply loved that woman. You know I did.

Meyer: Did she just have a heart attack?

Kenney: Well, she had a severe asthmatic, and the heart just couldn't take it anymore. Lack of breathing. She had a stent put in. And she was on high blood pressure medication. She had what they called labile, where it goes from 100 over 60 to 250. Imagine the blood. And you're waiting for the stroke. Thank God it never happened. The way to go is the way she went. Asleep in the chair.

Meyer: Watching *Monk*.

Kenney: Watching *Monk*. Well, it was off when I went out, because it goes off by itself. And then I timed it that she had been dead about an hour. And I was numb. My daughter, I called my son. The worst call was my daughter in town. Oh, God. She was the closest one to her mother. And I woke her up at about three in the morning. And I said, "Now you're wide awake. Get ready for a shock." I said, "Mama's gone. She died in her sleep." And there was dead silence.

She said, "I knew when you called. I thought you were going to tell me she's in the hospital again." Which she was in a number of times with severe asthma. She'd had it since she was an infant.

And when the kids came down immediately. And we had an arrangement that you might find interesting. My dearest friend, non-service friend, Frank's son died. Young boy. And he and his wife are our closest friends. They lived in Philadelphia. We'd see them all the time. The son dies unexpectedly. Thirty years of age with an embolism. And they have a mass—he died on a Sunday night. They found a body in his apartment. They're burying him Wednesday. We hear about it Monday. They call us. You've got to go to Philadelphia for a funeral. Do you know what it cost? It cost me 1400 dollars to go to that kid's funeral. Which I could ill afford with kids in college. And Edith said, "Never, I don't want that to happen. So many people we know are dead now, or they're out of town. I'm not going to do that." So we made an agreement in our will that whoever dies first, nothing will happen for 30 days. We'll be cremated immediately. And the ashes will be held by the survivor. And then 30 days from now, I want a mass, full-scale regalia and I want a cocktail party through the roof with nothing but name brands. Loads of Manhattans and everybody from out of town or our best friends were invited. And we did it. It was not easy. I had her ashes there for 30 days. And I was numb for two weeks after. Then it began to hit me. God, she's gone, you know?

Well, had 167 people at the mass. Couldn't believe it! And then 62 came in from out of town. And we had a party. And this is one of my amazing stories. She had a cassette recording that she said, "I want this played at my funeral. Don't forget that."

I said, “Well, let’s write it in the,” we had all these special things in the will. Well, when she died, about four days before the mass, 30 days later, died on February 17th. The mass is March 17th, Saint Patrick’s Day. I took the cassette out and I put it in play. It doesn’t play. Well I figured I’d miswired this thing. We moved and never use it. But I said hey, I can do it in the car. Took it down to the car, it wouldn’t play. So now I’m desperate. In the car I could see in the sunlight, what they made the tape from, cellophane or something 35 years ago, is falling apart.

So I get on Google. I Google it and I finally found the magic words “cassette restoration.” And I look and I’ll be damned, there’s an address in Smyrna, Georgia, suburb of Atlanta. And this kid who’s a student at Kennesaw College does it in his apartment.

So I call him. He says, “Yeah, bring it over.” So I drive way over about 40 miles over there. And he calls me that night. He said, “This thing is bad. The tape has disintegrated.” He said, “It’s pretty bad. I’ve got hisses and noise.” He said, “Let me keep it for the night. I’ll talk to you in the morning. I cleaned it up a bit, but it’s very unsatisfactory and I apologize.”

I said, “Well, do you understand it?”

He said, “I’ll tell you what. I’ll make four CDs for you at half price.” So twenty bucks for four CDs. And I go to pick them up. You can never meet this guy in the apartment. He’s in a gated community and meets you outside the gate. I think he has a whole apartment full of Hooter girls or something. (laughter)

[Time: 2:42:47]

Meyer: Or full of strange, strange, techy shit.

Kenney: So now I have the CDs. And I’m driving home and I put the CD—I shouldn’t have done this—I put it, how I didn’t hit a bridge stanchion, I’ll never know. [pause]

Meyer: No, other than in the bar.

Kenney: He had a—what did she want?

Meyer: Change.

Kenney: Oh, oh.

Meyer: I said go to the bar and that seemed to be too much for her.

Kenney: So, at any rate, she went to Brooklyn College. Got her master’s at NYU in New York.

Meyer: Who?

Kenney: My wife.

Meyer: What about the cassette guy?

Kenney: Oh, Okay. One of her girls she knew from Brooklyn College or NYU, I forget, became quite a big star. You’ll know who I’m talking about. It’s Eileen Farrell. New York Met. And

Edith loved everything she did. She had met her a couple times. I think they were in the same sorority or something. And she was an Irish gal from Brooklyn who married a cop, New York cop. They lived in Staten Island. Never moved, with all that money she made. But she fell into disfavor in the opera field because she loved pop music. Today that's accepted. In those days it wasn't. And she had a recording of Eileen Farrell. And I pop it on to play that night at the funeral cocktail party. And it's Eileen Farrell singing "The Party's Over." I said, "That's my bride." Those lyrics—"The party's over, it's time to call it a day, they've burst your pretty balloon, they've even taken the moon away." But there's one line when she hits that high note—"We danced and dreamed through the night, and it seemed so right just being with him." And I collapsed. I played it at a cocktail party; I got 64 people crying on the floor when they played that. [laughs] That's my bride. She knew how to ruin a party, boy.

Meyer: She did. She did. She knew—well, what do you think, now—

[Time: 2:45:15]

Kenney: But there's nothing in service. What do I do? The question people ask me all the time, would you do it again? Absolutely. Absolutely I'd do it again. The same circumstances. The age thing, whatever. That had nothing to do with it. It was a tremendous experience for your life. I think I did get discipline. I think I was a damn good soldier. I remember Paul Schlitz [phonetic] in his book, he put a paragraph in there, he said, "If it was humanly possible to get to a wounded soldier, Kenney did it." And I was very proud of that. That day I went to the tank I got a Bronze Star; there was some different platoon. I forget the lieutenant's name. And in his book, he's got something in there, I forget the wording, was it his or Schlitz' book. Oh, he said he's doing what he did every day, but this day somebody saw him do it so he got a Bronze Star. [laughs] Oh, dear. Still, my pride and joy is that combat medic's badge. You earn that son of a bitch.

Meyer: Did you know, or every talk to, Dick Shawn [phonetic]?

Kenney: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. The family is phenomenal. Absolutely phenomenal.

Meyer: Dick was one of the first people, he told me a story about walking with someone. And the medics.

Kenney: He was a medic.

Meyer: Yeah, he was a medic. He got his Bronze Star. I remember him telling me, "They screwed it up." He said, "I don't even show it." Disgusted. I said, why? "Well, it said for meritorious action when being attacked by"—I'm paraphrasing—"machine gun. And being wounded by machine gun fire." He said, "It wasn't machine gun fire. It was mortar fire. The hell with them." And I thought, and I puzzled over that for a long time. Then it became clear to me about a year ago, two years ago, when I was listening back to another interview. He had to take people off the slag pile, which was a big thing on the way down from Maizière's-les-Metz around Woippy. The Germans were on top, the 95th took it, and then they got pushed back. And there were bodies there. So Dick had been on top of it so someone wanted him to lead the Americans up to get the bodies. Because he knew, he knew something about how to get, and he

said, we started up, and a German machine gunner put a line of fire down right in front of them. Then they start to go again, and he put another line of fire right in front of them. Then Dick said, “He could have killed us, but he was just warning us.” He says, “Because he knew we were soldiers just like he did.” And then it came to me. He was pissed off about the Bronze Star because by saying they insulted, by saying he was wounded by machine gun fire, it insulted German machine gunners who he thought were honorable.

Kenney: (laughs) Listen, George Smith—.

Grosinske: I can’t believe I’m saying this but I’m going to bed.

Meyer: Don’t go to bed. You have to stay here for five minutes.

Grosinske: No, I will see you in the morning.

Meyer: No you have to stay for five minutes. You started it. Okay. Ask one question.

Grosinske: What? Ask me a question.

Kenney: That you got from—

Meyer: Okay, I’ll ask you the question. Well, it’s your interview, but I’ll ask the question. Okay. and here it is. Tell us a story you’ve never told anyone before.

Grosinske: Oh, but that’s what I want to hear from him.(l

Meyer: Then you have to ask him. You have to sit down and ask him.

Grosinske: Okay, let me hang up the phone and I’ll be back.

Kenney: No don’t bother. It’s all finished [laughs].

Meyer: Almost finished.

Kenney: I’m not going to tell her about Louise Croquette [phonetic] [laughs].

Meyer: No, don’t tell her about Ms. Croquette. What’s your phone number? And let me give you this to sign, if you want to pass on. It will get edited down. But this is for the Veterans History Project.

Kenney: This is my new one. I put a new geometric on. I like that one.

Meyer: That’s nice. If you want to, and I’ll give you a copy to read, too.

Kenney: Oh, dear. There she is again. I can’t get rid of that lady.

Grosinske: I want to hear you answer this and then I've got to go to bed. Boys.

Kenney: He was asking me, and I said is this an X-rated CD? [laughs]

Meyer: He told me a story.

Kenney: I can't tell her that story.

Meyer: Sign this if you wish. This is a license agreement with the Library of Congress.

Kenney: Is that what that is?

Grosinske: Yeah.

Meyer: Yeah. It's not a copyright. It's license. It just says—

Kenney: You're releasing a veteran from—

Grosinske: It's your story, they won't own it. You own it.

Meyer: You own it. They just keep it in an archive under your name in the Veterans History Project.

Kenney: Okay. That watch is in our pocket.

Grosinske: Did he tell you something that he never told anybody before? He did?

Meyer: Mm hmm.

Grosinske: Okay, so my other question is, did he tell you how he met his wife?

Kenney: That's got nothing to do with military, though.

Grosinske: It's got everything to do with your family knowing it, because it's a great story. So that's what I'd choose.

Meyer: That's what you choose. Okay. Do you want to tell that story?

[Time 2:51:15]

Grosinske: Again? Your short [unclear]

Kenney: Okay. I'm going to CCNY at night.

Meyer: And how long after you left the service is this?

Kenney: Oh, this would be 1949—

Grosinske: Oh, a while!

Kenney: Fifty.

Grosinske: I didn't know that.

Kenney: And I had a job at the paper company in sales. Stationery, envelopes, whatever. Greeting cards. And I was on the road up in New England, and I got back, I lived at the YMCA for seven dollars and 50 cents a week. I'm serious! And I roomed with a guy who paid, we had a two-bedroom deal with a very dear friend. He was studying for the New York police exam. He retired a captain, New York Police Department. I saw him in, he just went into a nursing home in San Diego at 92.

I didn't feel like the fall wars [?] that night; I'd been on the road. I'm edgy. So I get down to the local hotel. Maybe you remember the name, the Hotel Granada, downtown Brooklyn. And every Friday night they had a dance there, Knights of Columbus sponsored the dance, which I had no interest in. I'm at the bar, and I remember having a boilermaker. They didn't invent Crown Royal yet then. So they had a boilermaker in front of me. And a little guy who lived down the store, his name was Bill Gilhooley [phonetic], little Irish guy. He comes in and he's pissed. "What's the matter?"

He said, "I'm at the dance next door, and I asked this babe to dance. She refused to dance! What the hell is she going to a dance for?"

I said, "Gilhooley, I really don't give a damn, but why did she refuse to dance with you?" And he sheepishly said, "She said I'm too short."

I said, "Well, Gilhooley, the Notre Dame leprechaun is about two inches taller than you. But why the hell do you ask tall girls to dance?" I said, "Don't answer me, I know you want your nose in her boobs, that's why."

He says, "You're tall enough to dance with her."

I said, "Don't get me involved."

Well, he kept at me. I had my second boilermaker. So he pays my way into the dance. Two-and-a-half bucks; that's a lot of money in 1949. [laughs] And he goes looking for her, couldn't find her. Finally he found her, and that's who he found. And I said, I am in deep trouble. She was so gorgeous. They had hair in those days. Boy, did they have hair.

Meyer: What was she wearing at the dance?

Kenney: A cotton, print dress. Small print, I remember that. That was a college shop there. She was still going to NYU at night and she had just been accepted full time for teaching high school. She taught English, social studies and history. I didn't know that at the moment. But I'm having a beer with her and her girlfriend, and some guy she was with. And I'm looking and I said, goddamn it, she's beautiful. Then I remembered when I lived in Rhode Island for a while, I dated a girl who was a model in an outlet department store. Cosmetics and all that. Oh, she was a gorgeous girl. Italian girl. She was breathtaking. And like Edith, she was, as they say in Japan, built like a brick pagoda. But the only problem I used to say about her, Louise, her name was I think her bust measurement's higher than her IQ. That is the problem. And I said, I hope I have

another one of those. Then I find out she's got her master's in education and she's teaching. I said, wow! [laughs] Now I'd better try to act smart. She's going to think I'm that way.

Meyer: What did you say, when you do remember walking up to her—

[Time: 2:55:41]

Kenney: No, he walked up to her and said, "Hey, is he tall enough?" I mean, this is a great way to meet a girl, you know?

Grosinske: And what did she say?

Kenney: I said, "Hey he just dragged me in."

Meyer: And she said?

Kenney: I said, "Would you dance with me? Am I tall enough?" My son did her eulogy at the mass and he said, "Apparently he was tall enough. They got married four months later." [laughs]

And my roommate at that time, Paul Herbert [phonetic], he said, "You're crazy! You don't even know her for god's sake. It will never last." And he's right. Fifty-eight years, it was all over. Beautiful lady. That's the week we were married.

Meyer: The week you were married.

Kenney: [Looking at photos.] Look at that hair!

Grosinske: But it's not all over. It will never be over. How could you even think that?

Kenney: What's that?

Grosinske: You love this woman so much that it will never be over.

Kenney: Beautiful girl. But not only that, she never—I don't know if I told you this. It's—this is a story you tell a woman. Men don't appreciate it. I take a girl who has a career she's studied for, teaching in New York. And I move her to Fargo, North Dakota. Forty below zero. We get a crummy apartment. They're not big on apartments; they sell houses out there and we couldn't afford that. And she's given up her career. She's a New Yorker and doesn't drive a car. You know, what would you do with it if you had a car in New York?

So I go on the road then four nights a week, maybe, for three weeks in a row, and oh, it's terrible. And we miss each other. So I can see it's getting to her. So I begin to take her on the road with me. On good trips, like the Black Hills of South Dakota, the Badlands, the racetracks in South Dakota. And the wonderful thing out there, the customers were phenomenal. We'd go out, they'd insist you stay at their house. You'd come out for dinner and they welcomed her—they got to know her.

Well, finally it couldn't go on forever and I said, "You say the word and I'll quit if you want to go home."

She said, “No, no. How’s it going?”

I said, “Very well.” I was making some money. It was a great territory.

Then I get transferred to Chicago. And I said, she’ll like Chicago but my god I’m going to be on the road four nights a week again. So instead I moved to Peoria, Illinois, and I didn’t have to travel as much. It was in the middle of the territory. The company raised hell. I said, “Why do you care where I live?”

Meyer: Sure, as long as you—

Kenney: As long as I make my calls. They made me go to Chicago every Friday, I remember that. I’d take the train up.

Well, we had one child then. She took care of everything—the movers, and the banks, and all that stuff. Then we went from there back to Minneapolis. And we’d bought a house, built a house in Peoria. So she sells the house by herself, no real estate agent. And she gets the kids out of school, changes the bank accounts, hires the movers. I go off to the new job with no problems. Go to work. And she did this there.

Then we went to Providence, Rhode Island, the same thing. Then St. Louis, I became manager and she went through it again. Then from St. Louis, they move me to Atlanta and I said, she’s going to blow up one of these days. She never complained about it. She’d say, is it good for your career? I said, I think so.

Well, it turned out in most cases it was. In St. Louis I’m now a manager, and she loved St. Louis. Had great neighbors, and I didn’t travel that much. I didn’t have to, I had people doing it for me. Then I get transferred to Atlanta, and I call her for lunch. We had this magnificent restaurant on top of the building. And we’re having lunch and I said, “We’re being moved.” And she looks at me. I said, “We have to move to Atlanta.” And the tears start coming down her face [laughs]. And to this day—to this day, not anymore—she used to say that I swear everybody in that restaurant thought we just broke up [laughs]. I was embarrassed.

Well, I go up the chain and I end up, finally, in Greenville, South Carolina, and then I’m made executive VP of Bigelow-Sanford, the company I spent 39 years with. And the top job. I don’t want to be president, I’m not a finance person, I’m marketing. Well, I got fired. [laughs] So, we reached the pinnacle for the career and now I go home and tell her I’ve been fired. Well, she knew it was coming before I did. She’s very observant. In socializing with some of the other executives she could sense there was something going on. And she was right.

So what are we going to do? I said, well, we can’t stay here. I’ve got to go to work. Severance was—I went to court with an attorney, we never got to court—fantastic. I got three years’ pay and bonuses. Move me anyplace I want to go in the country. Until I found a job, they set me up in an office with a secretary. I had a good attorney.

Meyer: You had a great attorney.

Kenney: Now the reason I had that, I had one of these. [a tape recorder] I was the only non-owner on the board of directors. They screwed me out of the ownership when they did the LBO. They took a company over without investing a penny. Paying it off with company income and revenue. And whenever there was no revenue the cheapest thing, the cheapest thing—I shouldn’t say the cheapest—the best thing to cut is personnel. So cut 20 here, cut 30 there, it’s getting bad. Then they had a terrible six-month season.

In the interim I keep going to these meetings and I'm listening to this stuff. And I had my tape recorder with me. Now, if you call on the telephone in South Carolina—it might be true everywhere—you have to tell them this call might be recorded. You don't say it is, you say it might be recorded. In a group sitting like this you don't have to do that. So I come into the meeting with books, and manuals, and papers. [laughs] And Kelly [phonetic] will say [Irish accent], "What are you doing with all those?"

I said, "Well, you might have a question I couldn't answer without them." [laughs].

Then we have a big cut in personnel and I'm burning. Twenty-one people in—I said, "Are you crazy? These are the people that pay your bills." And so he has a list of them. These are the territories the statisticians said you could cut and give it to one guy, rather than two.

And one of the names on it was a fellow named Jack Hire [phonetic] in Dayton, Ohio, who I had worked with years ago. Had about 30 years with the company. Outstanding salesman. They had good years and bad, but he always had good. I don't care if the product line was lousy that year, he'd always make the numbers. And he had a heart attack and a four-way bypass, and he wasn't doing well after the surgery. And he's in intensive care. And I said, "Leave Hire alone. His wife's got enough problems now, we'll worry about that later."

And with that the president, who's from Canada, he's laying on the bed in the hotel room and he said, "What's the matter, you can't handle that, Kenney?"

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "You don't know how to handle that? Here's what you do. You go in the intensive care unit. And you pick up the flap of the oxygen tank, and you shove in the pink slip. What's the big fucking deal?"

I've got this on the tape! [laughs] That was a joke with him. He's being cute. How do you think a jury would like that? When my attorney heard that he said, "Oh boy." He said, "I don't want to go through all these meetings, these tapes. Do you have any goodies like that?"

I said, "There are a few that are pretty good." Number one where they change the pension program where it would favor them. You can't do that! Once you have a pension program, it's there.

Meyer: Yeah, sure it is.

Kenney: They juggle it, and it said "for selected officers only." And he said to me, "You don't need it, you're vested anyway, you've been with the company all these years."

I said, "Yeah but this is different."

"Well you're covered, don't worry about it."

Well, I go home and tell my Swedish bride, and she said—in fact, I showed her the bulletin, they typed up the rough draft—she said, "Where's your name? I don't see your name on it."

Meyer: That's right. That's right.

[Time: 3:05:27]

Kenney: So I go to the corporate council, Jerry [phonetic], the next day, who I'm pretty friendly with. He said, "You're included, I was there as a witness."

I said, "Jerry, you might get hit by a bus. Where's my name?"

So he had the name put on there. And then when they did the number on me, they changed the pension program. You could retire at 65 after x number of years. If you went any earlier than that, with the pension program you would lose 6% a year for every year below 65. They changed it to losing 2% a year if you went before 60. Which means they could leave at 55 and only lose 10%. Okay.

So they fire me. And boy, I had that thing. It paid off. It petered out, though. After they sold the company and walked out with 24 million bucks between the four of them. You can live on that, you know. And then Bigelow got bought out but the people who bought them out did not buy the pension program. So it was bought out by Karastan Carpet Mills. And I knew all the people at Karastan, they're good friends. No problem, the checks continued.

And then they were bought out by Canon. Sheets and pillowcases. And a year later Cannon was bought out by Pillowtex in Texas. Well, to tell you what happened to that business, domestics, in textiles. It gets to China. Forget it, It's gone. There's not a factory—but there's one, Fruit of the Loom still has a plant in Georgia, doing something. So they went bankrupt and closed the door, and with that 30% of my pension disappeared. The pot that I had gotten with their deal. Of course you can't fund that—if you understand the laws of pensions. That has no more claim to it than a stockholder at the most. So I blew about 30% of the pension there, but the investments were good; I survived.

Grosinske: I have to go to bed, guys.

Kenney: Why?

Meyer: Let me ask you this. Service dates. When did you join?

Kenney: February '43.

Meyer: And when did you leave?

Kenney: First time, June 14th, '45. And then I went back in on July 15th, approximately. And then I was discharged on December 21st, '45. The second time. The points caught up with me. Do you know the points system?

Meyer: Yeah. They discharged you and then they brought you back?

Grosinske: This is a really good story.

Kenney: Well, I had to register for the draft when I turned 18.

Grosinske: You have to, you have to do the story. Are you still recording?

Meyer: Yeah.

Grosinske: You have to do the story.

Kenney: I registered for the draft.

Meyer: Well, tell me this.

Kenney: So I registered for the draft and I said, I want to go back in.

Grosinske: I will see you in the morning.

Kenney: Thatta girl.

Grosinske: Okay. Don't keep him up all night, he's tired.

Kenney: You did very well, by the way. We have to do that again.

Grosinske: Thank you.

Meyer: Now the final time was December what?

Grosinske: This is an amazing story.

Kenney: December, I think it was the 21st, of '45. December '45, and I got home for Christmas.

Meyer: And what was your highest rank before I forget?

Kenney: PFC. That's all it called for in that job. There were some corporals around who might have been there earlier who had corporal ranks, and they didn't demote them.

Meyer: Was it the 320th Medical, the three what?

Kenney: Well, yeah, I believe that was the number. But I'm attached unassigned. To me, I'm 2nd platoon, L Company, 378th. That's where I spent the entire war and would do it all over again.

Meyer: Tell me, 378. So you, tell me about you having to get discharged and then join again. Because you were 18.

[Time: 3:10:03]

Kenney: Well, the war's still on. It's over in Europe; it's still on in Japan. And I think what the hell. I'll go back in, the thing's still going on. And then I found out later the 95th had come back to the States. My mother wrote me a letter. It said Bill O'Connor had called and—.

Meyer: How do you not go back to the States with them?

Kenney: I was sent home to be discharged for being underage.

Meyer: How did they find that out?

Kenney: Well, my old man had conned the board of education—he's lucky he didn't go to jail—had conned the board of education that I moved to live with my aunts in Detroit. I mean [laughs]. So they contacted the Detroit school system. New York state is—truancy, boy, they're into it. [laughs] In fact I was in the hospital when I was questioned about it and I lied through my teeth.

Meyer: What were you in the hospital for?

Kenney: I had pneumonia. Second time I had it. This would be January of '45. Christ, that was a winter over there. [shuddering sound] Oh, god. Eight degrees, 10 degrees, living outside. And it caught up with me. In fact, again I asked for my platoon back. The guy that had replaced me, was he glad to see me come back! Nobody wants that job. [laughs] And you don't get any rank, you get a PFC. What the hell's the difference? You're making 50 bucks a month and you've got combat pay; I think it was ten dollars. Then you got five bucks, finally, for the combat medic or infantry badge. The infantry badge was first. There was no combat medic badge, and somebody raised hell about it in Congress. These guys are doing the same thing and they're not even armed and they don't get anything? So they—it's an ugly-looking badge. [laughs] It's got a litter and caduceus. You know caduceus, with snakes.

Meyer: Yeah. Sure. So, you're somewhere in Germany or something and then do you get--

Kenney: They come over, yeah. Somebody came over from battalion in a jeep. And he said, "You've got to get back right away to battalion." And I went. Left my—my stuff is still there. Whatever I had, personal stuff, the little musette bag I carried in back of me. He said, "You've been ZI'ed. You're going back to the States to be discharged. On a minority section." And the chaplain told me about it. We had a Protestant chaplain there, Chappy they called him. I forget his name. Nice man. He said, "Hey, you're going back to the States but I've looked at the orders," he said, "and there's no transportation, so I don't know what you plan on doing, how you're going to get there."

I said, "Well, I don't think I can swim that well." So I hitchhiked a truck back to regimental headquarters. Then I got somebody leaving in a jeep and I got to division. And here's something that I've never told anybody. Well, I covered it a little bit this morning for the first time ever with Jim Anderson. He was in division headquarters. All of the company clerks that kept the records, the vital records for the companies, lived at headquarters. They didn't go out in the field and get killed and screw up the records. So, when I got back to division, how am I going to get from there to England? [laughs] That's the first place. Or to the coast in Paris. So while we're figuring that out, see if they could get something, I meet the guy I had never met before, our clerk from L Company, 378th. And I stayed with that group that night. And I'm going to tell you something. Let's see. How many companies in a division? Quick—three times three, nine, twenty? Flaming bunch of gays. The whole goddamn bunch of them. Nobody could be and act that feminine if they weren't gay.

[Time: 3:14:40]

Meyer: Sure. I knew a man, Alan Watson [phonetic], the first person I talked to, In Baton Rouge. He was so interesting because there he was, he became an English teacher in Lexington, Kentucky or something like this. And he was there, and he was just straight from a Tennessee Williams play. He was Southern, he was very much open, and yet one thing, and I didn't know about this, I got—

Kenney: Well there's a certain Southern man who acts very feminine who is not gay; it's an affectation.

Meyer: Well, he then showed me the pictures he took all the way through Camp Coxcomb, and there's a picture of everyone bathing nude somewhere out in the desert and with a little caption that say, "Woo-wee, look at me." I thought this-- And yet he's on the couch, I remember this, he's talking to me. And he said something that has stayed with me. He was talking about dancing. He said, "I'm a good dancer. I love to dance. I danced through the whole damn war." And then he was there but other people would come in just like anyone here who were like rough and tumble guys. And he'd go, "Hello, Harrison!"

And they'd go, "Oh, Watson, ha ha." (Kenney laughs) And I thought in my mind, especially—

Kenney: You do it well.

Meyer: And in my mind--

Kenney: But this group, the whole group, I was saying holy shit I gotta get out of here. Does General Twaddle know this is going on? (laughs)

Meyer: So you're there, so the whole group was like that.

Kenney: Oh, God. It was terrible. And I was there about two nights with them. [laughs] So I finally got a jeep going back to Metz. Out of Germany into France. And at Metz I was able to pick up a freight car, forty-and-eight, in a freight car, headed for Le Havre. And I get in the car and there were three or four Scotch paratroopers with me. They were coming back the same way. These guys were so Scotch I couldn't understand a word they said. And that took quite a while. We were probably on that train three or four days to get to Le Havre. We had gone on those trains when I joined the 95th, the 40-and-8s. Are you familiar with them?

Meyer: Yeah, sure.

Kenney: Yeah. Forty men or eight horses.

Meyer: Yet on the way back they still had you in the boxcars?

Kenney: Yeah. Yeah. Well, until I got to Paris. In Paris I ran into—nobody's telling me when I have to be anywhere, so I went into Paris. I wasn't dressed for it. Here I am. I'm still pretty dirty of the line. But I have a helmet. Helmets were declass  in Paris, you know [?] shoes.[laughs]. ... Well, I asked the MP, I said, "Christ, I want to get something to eat."

He said, "Okay, go here and there. Do you have orders?"

I said, "I don't have—all I have is this. It says, 'Report to the 10th Replacement Depot at Village Field, England. Transportation, none supplied.'" So I said, "I'm sort of hitchhiking there."

He said, "Okay, you can get some food there. They'll feed you."

And I go in there, and as I come out of it I meet a guy who was my neighbor in Brooklyn who was stationed in the air force in Paris. And I stayed with him. Well, the first thing with him, he went down and conned the supply sergeant into clean ODs for me.

Meyer: What's OD?

Kenney: Olive drab. The khakis. Not khakis then, they were a heavy wool olive. And a cap. I got a pisscutter cap so I could get rid of the helmet. So I went out with him that night. God almighty, the life this guy lived in Paris! The broads and parties every night! Paris is unbelievable. I said, and I got to leave this!

So then I was able to get a regular train line. I went down to the MPs and they helped me. And they got me on a train compartment with British officers in it as a matter of fact. So I was able to get to Le Havre sitting up in a comfortable passenger thing. And then on to a very fast little ship that got us over there. When I went to Normandy, we were put on a—what the hell, LSTs, I get them mixed up. Big ship.

Meyer: Liberty ship?

[Time: 3:19:59]

Kenney: No, no. It's not that big. But it's a big enough landing ship where we slept in hammocks hanging from the ceiling. And we slept in them for three nights as that storm raged at Normandy. You talk about seasick. We're in port and we're getting sick as hell shaking back and forth. (laughs) Oh dear. And it's funny. I remember getting on the gangway to go on the ship getting back to England. And a bunch of guys--It's a ferry they're running back and forth. And these four or five guys get off in Class-A uniforms, with all the medals and ribbons and insignias. And they were back to the States on a furlough. And they were Big Red One guys who had been through North Africa, Normandy, this—and they sent them home for 30 days before the war ended. They had to come back. And they guy said, "I can't believe that I came back." Well, the war was over then. No, it wasn't over then. It was still on.

And I got to Lichfield, spent a few days there. And I got assigned to work in a dispensary, which was no problem. And then I got weekend liberty all the time. So I went to Birmingham on the weekend. And I was in the square in Birmingham when V-E Day was announced. And I'm telling you, the Brits went bonkers. Oh my God! Unbelievable. And they're cheering and dancing in the squares, and I end up getting hugged by some gorgeous redhead British girl. And we get chatting. And she says, as it quieted down—it's getting about 10 or 11 o'clock at night. And she says, "Come on, the party's not over. Come with me." And she takes me with a couple of British paratroopers and we go to her parents' house and the party's in full swing. God almighty, I remember sleeping on the sofa in her house that night [laughs]. Oh dear.

And then back to Lichfield. You know, Lichfield had quite a reputation. It was commanded by Colonel Kilian. Ever hear of him?

Meyer: Yes, somehow.

Kenney: He was like Captain Bligh.

Meyer: Captain Bligh.

Kenney: He was prosecuted. He ended up a Trappist monk. He got prison time. That's how bad it was. He was stealing money, and punishing people, and beating people. It was terrible! And I was there, but I never knew what was going on. I was working in the dispensary. Which was easy duty—swab a throat, give them an aspirin type of thing.

When I told you—or did I tell you?

Meyer: What?

Kenney: On the bus. I'm trying to recall. When I had my aid kit shot off—

Meyer: Yeah, you told me just here.

Kenney: Then I got a new one. I learned to pack them different. I packed the same thing in each bag where it couldn't happen that I'd be out of anything. I'd have less of it, but I wouldn't be out. Nothing is going to get shot off every day.

Meyer: So now you're in Lichfield and do they tell you what's going on? That you're just too young, that you have to go back?

Kenney: Oh yeah. They say, "You're going to be discharged on a minority section."

I said, "What does that mean?" The chaplain, I had talked to about it at division. He said "This used to be, it could be a criminal offense. They used to call it fraudulent enlistment." But he said, "Don't worry about that. It's now called minority section, and I'm sure you are not the only one." And it was just a conventional discharge. Honorable discharge. Didn't even say why.

Meyer: And then, but then a few days later—

Kenney: Go to the draft board. (laughs)

Meyer: You went to the draft board to sign up?

Kenney: My neighbor, a friend of my dad's, was the guy who ran the draft board in the neighborhood. He said, "I didn't know you were 18." I said, oh [laughs]. That was the first time around.

Meyer: That was the first time. But now you're—

Kenney: He was still there. When I went back the second time I said. "You still have mandatory conscription, I do want to go back in now that we got this over with."

He said, “We have a big group; I can get the papers through immediately.” So I report for duty in uniform. So I’m only out for two weeks. I don’t even own civilian clothes.

Meyer: And who do they assign you to?

Kenney: So he gave me a job, the draft board gave me the job, of taking about 20 guys over to some place in Manhattan. And I’m trying to remember. Oh, this would be—when was V-J Day, about August second?

Meyer: The bombs dropped in August but they didn’t surrender formally until September, like September second.

Kenney: That would be right because that’s when I ended up in Camp Crowder. The war’s over and I’m climbing telephone poles, geez [laughs]. I went partying. A bunch of girls in the neighborhood. When I took this gang with me on the bus and subway, some of the girls in the neighborhood want to party. It’s eight o’clock in the morning and they’re all celebrating—

Meyer: The end?

Kenney: --the victory. And I have this giant duffel bag I’m hauling. And I went into one of the—in the subway, the coin places.

Meyer: Yeah, tokens.

Kenney: Little lady behind the counter. And I said, “Would you mind this duffel bag for me?”
“Sure, bring it in.” [laughs] You remember the scene in Times Square, my God. And you know it was shortly thereafter, I’m trying to remember now, these things all run together. I was back—oh, in those two or three weeks.

[Time: 3:26:14]

Meyer: You have to go? We have to do the tab.

Kenney: Oh, quitting time. [side conversation with waitress]

Meyer: So you’re—

Kenney: I’m trying to recall. I went to see my uncle who had a shipping business in Manhattan, on Broad Street or someplace. And I come out of the building. I’m still in uniform. I’m talking about what I’m going to do and asking his recommendation. He was really the only educated one in the family—had his own business. What would he recommend I do if I go back to college, etc.

[To waitress]: Thank you—boy, this is service, kid!

But I come out of his office and the street is packed with people. Crowds. And it was a victory parade for Eisenhower. And I’m standing on the curb as Eisenhower goes by in an open car. It’s the only time I ever saw him. I had to go to New York to do it.

Meyer: Did you ever see Patton when you were over there?

Kenney: Once he came up to Saarlautern. I remember Lester Wolfe. Somebody had said, you know he's up there, a big-ass bird with the stars and what have you. Someone said, "A sniper's going to get him." [laughs]

Les said, "They wouldn't dare." [laughs] He was a showman.

Meyer: He was a showman. I forget who said—

Kenney: If he would have had gasoline, there never would have been a Bulge, I'll tell you that. He would have been in Berlin weeks before the—there was no slowing down with him. Well, you know the Metz thing, the ideal thing with Metz was just bypass it. Not with Patton. ...

[Waiter comes for signature to close out tab.]

Kenney: Boy what service!

Waiter: We try, sir.

Meyer: Well, this has been wonderful--

Kenney: So I sign it off. You give it to somebody in an archive.

Meyer: And I give you a copy.

Kenney: And someday when the people from Pluto come here they'll find these records in the year 28000.

Meyer: And now it is, this is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer. It is now August second, 2009. Still in the atrium.

Kenney: Well that's what happens when I don't have a watch on. Dammit.

Meyer: And...

Kenney: It sure is. [Checking watch] 2:22.

Meyer: It is. It is now August—

Kenney: 2:22.

Meyer: 2:22. I've had the great honor of talking with, sir, could you say your name?

Kenney: Will, you'll keep Kay happy now.

Meyer: Yes. Kay's very happy. OK, Mr. Kenney. Thanks a lot. Are you still—

Kenney: So, you know, not coming out of service, I had a reasonably good career. Did well.

Meyer: You did well.

Kenney: And my kid. I'm so proud of him. I'm proud of all my kids. Mama raised them. She said, "I feel like I've raised misfits."

Meyer: Why?

Kenney: And that's one of my neighbors said, "What do you mean, Edith?"

She said, "Their integrity. their honesty. Their charity. Their work ethic. They don't fit in today's world." Brian did Notre Dame, then Michigan grad. And he went, he was a job hopper. And I got pissed at him. Said, "You've been out of grad school for two years. You're talking about a fourth job? Come on."

He said, "Dad, you're not with it. That's not called, it's called career path now." So he went from, first job was with McKinsey Consulting. That burned him out in six months, night and day work. He turned down a job with General Motors coming out of Michigan grad school. [unclear] a kid, this is nineteen eighty what? Eighty-one? Nineteen eighty-three, General Motors offered six [glitch] and he's opening one in Norway now. And they run tank cars over there and freighters and what have you. They used to build them. They've been in business 110 years. But they stopped that. Build them, Christ! You've got these guys begging for business; let them build them. So they just lease, they have them built, lease them. To the railroads, the carriers. And he went there as—and he's opening one in Norway now. And they run tank cars over there and freighters and what have you. They used to build them. [a few lines repeat] They've been in business 110 years. But they stopped that. Build them, Christ! You've got these guys begging for business; let them build them. So they just lease, they have them built, lease them. To the railroads, the carriers. And he went there as—[pause] your finance. And then a year later—

3:32:28

[End Interview.]