CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

ERIC BRUNT ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW CONTROL NUMBER: 20230415-217

INTERVIEWEE: Bill Neely

INTERVIEWER: Eric Brunt

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 8 July, 2018

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Teulon, Manitoba

PLATFORM OF INTERVIEW: Video (MP4)

TRANSCRIBED BY: Colin Garnett

Transcription of Interview Number 20230415-217

Bill Neely

Interviewed 8 July, 2018

Eric Brunt: (00:00) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (00:01) There's only one thing that don't belong. That's oak leaf. They put that on. I don't want to rip it off.

Eric Brunt: (00:07) What does that oak leaf mean?

Bill Neely: (00:08) I don't know. It's a special.

Eric Brunt: (00:11) It symbolizes something, doesn't it?

Bill Neely: (00:13) Yeah. It means something about time.

Eric Brunt: (00:15) Or maybe it meant that you stayed. You stayed there for a certain amount of time. You stayed after. Oh, that's that one.

Bill Neely: (00:23) That's that class. See, this is this is active service.

Eric Brunt: (00:27) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (00:27) And this is this is about 3 or 4 years. You get the class.

Eric Brunt: (00:33) Got it.

Bill Neely: (00:34) So I just had a long enough to get the class. Yeah. Class with the maple leaf.

Eric Brunt: (00:40) Yeah. Easy one is, uh. Where were you born? [inaudible] And what year was that?

Bill Neely: (00:52) 1921.

Eric Brunt: (00:54) In September.

Bill Neely: (00:55) 1st.

Eric Brunt: (00:55) Of September. Yeah. Yeah. What did your dad do for a living?

Bill Neely: (00:01:03) He was a coal miner in the old country. He came out to this country to be foreman in the coal mine in Kenmore. But he checked it out, and he looked at the way that it was. For timber. And he said, that's not fit for men to go in. So he didn't get the job, so he'd come back. He paid $35 I think it was, to homestead, a quarter of Harristown. He went into horses. He was a horse breaker and he had about 40 horses. And this one fever didn't wait and downed all but about three horses. He went back to Winnipeg and worked. He made enough money to go back up and he bought a steamer a big steamer and the 14 foot plow. They would plow deep, which was too bad when you plow too deep, but they just plowed them. They had a big wheel about this height and pushed the partners down and plowed right under it. They ran short of money. So he went back to Winnipeg to work he and his two brothers started playing around with a steamer. The runner tried to pour cold water and blew the boiler. When I was a kid, I was sitting there when the war was on me and my brother in law took it apart. Yeah, well.

Eric Brunt: (00:02:33) So your dad had quite an eventful...

Bill Neely: (00:02:35) Yeah, yeah, yeah. Twice he went belly up. I remember he didn't have any money, but he worked. My brother in law...I was overseas. I had no Model T. He used my Model T for down payment on a three ton truck when I come out. Even my dad running the truck hauling gravel for the municipality in and around. So I got in with him and we used to shovel the five yards on by hand. Spread it. We'd make about 4 or 5 buildings a day. And my dad was the best. He'd shovel like hell stop for a smoke, shovel like hell. My dad took the back half. He just took one shovel thrown up over his shoulder like this. I never looked up, and his side was all piled up, and we can't keep up to him. That went on day after day after day. He was a strong man. I admired him. I remember 2 or 3 times I said he bet he picked up a 100lb of sugar with his

teeth and walked over and told me that if I'd done that much my teeth would have fallen out. My brother and I were picking stones. We got a big one we couldn't pick up. We were rolling. We had a stone bowl and a stone up on it, and we're rolling it off. My dad says come on you guys, he's always pushing me. And my brother said something snorty. So my dad just went up and picked up the stone. Let's go. Yeah. Oh, he was strong on a bet. And then he let the biggest man there put the full Nelson on him on a $20 bet that he could bridge his neck. And the guy did all. He couldn't. He couldn't do a man just lay down. The guy couldn't bend his knee with both hands. You don't put him in your hand, you hear the wind out of your hand, and you've got lots of leverage because that's a wrestling hold.

Eric Brunt: (00:04:41) So your dad was pretty tough.

Bill Neely: (00:04:42) Oh, he was strong. He was known as the strong one. He didn't look it. He wasn't much bigger than me. He was about five foot ten. I guess maybe about 190. Pretty strong as a bull. We had a fire? The cattle were in the barn. Horses were young kids that were behind. So we seen it in time. We made a run for. We got the cattle out. We got the horses out, got the harness out. The bull was tied with half inch rope to him. Long Ranger. And he'd been tied in there for 3 or 4 days, and he had not could not undo it. Dad didn't have a knife or anything. And the next time he just put his in the hand around that rope, then stood on the thing and broke it and let the bull out. So that but that's when something happens to do things like that.

Eric Brunt: (00:05:44) Did you go to school?

Bill Neely: (00:05:47) Yeah.

Eric Brunt: (00:05:48) How how uh...

Bill Neely: (00:05:50) All the way up there. Went halfway through grade nine.

Eric Brunt: (00:05:54) Yeah. And then you stopped to help out your dad on the...

Bill Neely: (00:05:57) One of the thing is, we had to teacher, which none of us liked. She thought she could teach French. And I was taking the grade nine correspondence, but it went to school, and I went there, and she said she could teach French, and that one would qualify me to go on to 12. So I took French. That was a side issue, but I didn't know then. So my dad said

something and I said, well, I'm not going to make it. I can't make French. And she said, if I don't make French I fail the year, I can't waste time. Then I need you at home. So that was the end of my education right there and then. It's just this far. Yeah. Yeah.

Eric Brunt: (00:06:56) You had a brother and a sister?

Bill Neely: (00:06:59) A brother and a sister. Brother seven years older and sister seven years younger.

Eric Brunt: (00:07:03) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (00:07:04) And my brother was he was known as a fighter up there. I was a lover. He was a fighter.

Eric Brunt: (00:07:12) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (00:07:13) If you wanted to fight, just drop your hat. And if you didn't want it, he'd drop it for you and then hit you.

Eric Brunt: (00:07:20) So...

Bill Neely: (00:07:20) Oh, he loved to fight. Yeah. He gave me a [inaudible] too. Last time I got him, though, I was beating him after I wasn't in the beginning. But after years of being bullied by him. In fact, he bullied me into not taking his shit from a bully. Yeah. So you didn't fight him with the bully. So he fought the bully and I won. And then after that, I was...

Eric Brunt: (00:07:48) Do you remember when the war was declared?

Bill Neely: (00:07:56) Just faint. It was 1939. Hitler was moving to Czechoslovakia. And before that. What the hell was the name? He was the premier of Britain at that time.

Eric Brunt: (00:08:13) Well, the guy before Churchill....Before Churchill. Yeah, I know...

Bill Neely: (00:08:18) Churchill displaced him. Churchill saved Britain. Hitler was afraid of Churchill. People don't know that. But I know by what happened that he was. He said he was going to go into Britain and wring her neck like a chicken. And at that time, Britain had nothing. A few infantrymen, no ammunition, nothing. And he could have walked right through. But Chamberlain was the one...

Eric Brunt: (00:08:53) That's his name.

Bill Neely: (00:08:54) He made the agreement with Hitler. He could keep Czechoslovakia if he wouldn't...

Eric Brunt: (00:08:59) Invade.

Bill Neely: (00:09:00) Make any more war. But. He came home and he was telling the people it was a big speech. I heard that peace in our time. And Churchill said...didn't say bullshit, but he meant it. He said it's going to be war. You cannot appease them, guys. They will not be at peace. They're going to make war. Chamberlain said no he's made peace. So that went on for about a year. And Germany moved into some other Poland or something? Yeah. You remember...

Eric Brunt: (00:09:38) You're right.

Bill Neely: (00:09:39) But The election came and they elected Churchill, and Churchill's first speech was. We'll fight them on the beaches. We'll fight them in the streets. We'll fight them where you like. But we'll never, never, never give in. And Hitler was backed away. He left it for another year before he made his try. By that time, we had Canadians there and Americans there. Not many Americans there. Few Americans volunteered.

Eric Brunt: (00:10:14) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (00:10:14) Americans weren't in the war, but quite a few of the boys...

Eric Brunt: (00:10:18) Volunteered.

Bill Neely: (00:10:19) Volunteered and became British soldiers.

Eric Brunt: (00:10:20) Right. And so, would you have heard all about this over the radio or in the newspaper? Or how did you hear about this?

Bill Neely: (00:10:29) Mostly on the radio. And even the radios we had were. You know, pretty crude...crystals that you had to use. Yes. But To the head, newsreels and the movies. The silent. But it showed Hitler making his speeches. And I don't know how they got the sound in the silent movies at that time. I don't have to chase this thing around.

Eric Brunt: (00:11:00) That's okay. Yeah, but be there'd be newsreels of Hitler?

Bill Neely: (00:11:04) Yeah, there was newsreels of what he was doing and. Yeah. And what? And then the whole world was pretty sick of what was happening. The war hadn't really started completely. Yeah, but Stalin was clashing with swords, and Mussolini was strutting around like a turkey gobbler, you know. And that went on for a while. I forget where the Battle of Britain is from...Answered the whole question, but the British had the Spitfire. That was a [audio cuts out] It was way ahead of things and about...They had about a hundred. And they mounted them with Canadians and British and Australian pilots, and most of them were trained in Canada and then went...

Eric Brunt: (00:11:58) Exactly

Bill Neely: (00:11:58) But some of them, they made them eight, ten sorties a day. They go out and do their thing, come back and get gassed up, go and do the thing, come back and get gassed up get a little bit of sleep. Go again. I've seen a battle in France. Four Spitfires come along, seven Messerschmitts meeting them, and Messerschmitts were going to wipe out those four. Knocked down four of those Messerschmitts right away and chased the other three. I don't know what happened to them, but seeing what happened to them when the planes blew up and then one...got one pilot got down in the parachute. I didn't go looking for him. I didn't want him. He probably had a pistol and I didn't know where he was, so I stayed.

Eric Brunt: (00:12:46) So, yeah, the Spitfire was quite a superior aircraft, wasn't it? The Spitfire was a superior aircraft?

Bill Neely: (00:12:53) The Germans had thousands of planes. Yeah, but none of them could stand up to the Spitfire.

Eric Brunt: (00:12:59) Yeah, I heard that Hitler asked one of his high up officers. He said what? What? Tell me one thing I need to win the war. And the officer said, you need a you need Spitfires. That's right. And Hitler hated that answer. Oh, yeah.

Bill Neely: (00:13:16) Yeah. The guy said give me so many Spitfires and I'll take Britain.

Eric Brunt: (00:13:22) When did you decide or how did you decide that you wanted to be a part of this?

Bill Neely: (00:13:33) I was told when we hit 21 we got a call. Then you made up your mind whether you're going to be Active or Reserve. Now I know when I joined up, I got my call. I had to go to a certain date. Winnipeg. I went into the barracks. I had about six desks. A Sergeant at each desk and was lined up some guys coming. We had been [inaudible]. I was in one of those lanes of [inaudible]. When I got down to where the sergeant was, he said, how you gonna sign reserved or. Active? I said, what's the difference? There's grape juice in there. If you want some, help yourself. Anyways, I looked at they said, well, I started a farm. I was about 4 or 5 cows and I got a few head of sheep and I'm trying to build a farm. I said if I signed reserve, can I go work my farm? He said, oh no, you'll be trained just the same as an active soldier. Only you won't go out of Canada. You'll just be here. But if anything attacks Canada, you're going to be prepared to fight. Otherwise, you're out of it.

Bill Neely: (00:14:54) So I said, well, if I can't work my farm. What's the sense of saying that? He's the same here. Same here. You can never forget. Ready to sign here? Sign here. So I sign those two places, picks it up, and he runs to the next look at what I got. Look at what I got. Look at what I got. Look at what I got. Every desk. He comes back and says...He said, you know, I've been here since 9:00 in the morning. It's 3:00 in the afternoon. You're the first guy to sign active at my desk today. So that's a [inaudible] yeah, yeah. We had hundreds of sergeants. We hated the bastard. Not anymore. I think maybe more of us should have done that. They sure didn't. I couldn't. There's one over in Petersfield. He wanted to join the Legion. He wouldn't take him. I don't know how he had the guts to go and try to join. But maybe he had more than me. I guess it took more guts to say no and say yes.

Eric Brunt: (00:16:00) So after that where were you? Where were you sent?

Bill Neely: (00:16:04) When I first sent my days of training and Fort Garry to Winnipeg. Then I was sent to Camp Gordon to take advanced training. And that's where the story starts, you wanna hear it?

Eric Brunt: (00:16:18) Let's hear it.

Bill Neely: (00:16:19) Takes a while.

Eric Brunt: (00:16:20) Okay. I like this. I like it.

Bill Neely: (00:16:22) Oh. I'd been married about a year and I was down in Camborne and I got a...What do you call it? Telegram from my wife. My son was born so, so and so and so. I was like, well, at that time a birth that did you furlough of 14 days. So I went to my padre at night. It's too late to pray and there's nobody there. See you in the morning. The morning. There's nobody in the office. So it was 11 or 12. Oh, hell, that's not a word. You see, he wouldn't pass. So I went to the Padre. He wasn't in. There was a little box there. No, I didn't come and see. You know what I want. Two days later, he come to see me. I told him this story. He's all too late and I can't do nothing about it. And my wife had been heartbroken because I wasn't coming home. And so I wrote the letters. My dad go see the MLA and tell him what's happening. I need 14 days. He wants it to become two months. Apparently because my mom had broke her arm. My dad needed me at home. So I got two months. That kind of screwed up the whole war for me, too. I lost all my buddies. Anyways. I come home. My brother in law, Bill Bourne...

Bill Neely: (00:18:13) That's. That's all the work I've done at home. Didn't know. Anyways, when my two months were up, just before it was up, there was a wedding coming due. I can't remember who it was, but it was important that I'd be there. So I went to the wedding and I took another two weeks. Then I went back and it was the orderly room here in this big and orderly room. Here you go. In the camp, Gordon and I got picked up my pass here, so I went out, and when I went back, I went in the corporal and I told him my story. And he was he was a young guy like me, a little rebel. So he says, well, you go in that shop in the second row, put your pass in there. That's where the pass is on that outfit. The time you were away, that's where they go. Okay. But he said, you've never seen me. So I went in the building, stuck my pass where I went, went back to my home. Dad was still there when I left it, so I stayed there. I went for breakfast.

Bill Neely: (00:19:25) For two weeks I was in there. Nothing. And then one day, they hardly seen me. Who are you? And I told him. If you're not on my list. I said, well, it's not my fault. I've been here all the time. This is the thing that puts me first. And for those two weeks, I wasn't there. I didn't say that. That covered that one. Then went for another week and payday. So I lined up for pay. Come up to the table. The officer calls my name out. Tells me how much money? When she started to call it out. Sergeant major standing here looking at me. Just a minute. That son of a bitch is AWOL for about two months. I said no, I didn't know at the time. They couldn't figure it out. So he put me under arrest. They took me for me up for a court martial with a bunch of officers behind there. And I had an officer representing me. And I told my story the way I wanted it. And it sounded like it was feasible. How come you didn't turn your past in there? I said I didn't get it there. I got it over there. I put it back where I got it. And I found out if you're stupid enough in the army, you can get away with anything. But you got to be stupid. If you're smart, you're in trouble.

Bill Neely: (00:21:01) So I didn't know whether that's the first furlough I'd ever had. I knew what happened. That's where I got my pass to come back there. How long have you been that back here? I don't know. A couple of months, I guess. Why didn't you report? I reported to the. There's something wrong here. He tried to get me to admit that I was saying I wouldn't do it. I just and the officer in charge, I am throwing this case out. So I had to try it again. Two weeks later, I'll be back in the old same thing all over. Come out the same way. Remember, the sergeant has been pretty mad, and he knew well I was lying, but it was jabbing every time. I never changed my story and just kept it. And I played stupid. I don't know this. I don't know that. And I don't know that. And I got away with that. I called him the third time. He went through the same rigmarole, and it was the adjutant who was in charge. He's sitting there looking, and he looked at the sergeant and he said, look, you've had this man in three times. You can't prove a bloody thing. He's dismissed. So the sergeant major met with me outside and he said, you son of a bitch, I know you left us and I'm going to get you. Two weeks later, I was drafted for overseas and never saw him again. So that's that story.

Eric Brunt: (00:22:45) That's hilarious. So you were sent...Did you get sent to Halifax? Were you sent then to Halifax?

Bill Neely: (00:22:53) Yeah. Well, when Halifax took the boat there, he got on the Mauretania and we didn't have an escort. I know we were in the hold. Our regiment, it wasn't a regiment, it was a draft. I wasn't in the regiment, but the whole draft [audio cuts out] but I volunteered for some submarine watch, for torpedo watch. So I get two hours on, four hours off, and I got stayed up on deck quite a bit. I only had to go down once in a while. Once too often we got puke on my face. And I was watching for...The first time on the ocean for me. But when the ship was going, the wake of the ship was just like little lights. You could have read a paper about it. Got this high off the water just all lit up from...And if a torpedo is coming. He leaves the same kind of trail.

When he shoots a torpedo down it goes up to the top, and it's got its own little motor. And it's just like a boat on top of it. And you can spot it coming from quite a ways, and our ship was pretty fast, she could do 33 knots. It changed course every few minutes all the way across the ocean. And the reason for that is a submarine when it fires a torpedo, they have to aim the whole submarine because the torpedo tube is [inaudible] there. And so they see the ship over here. He's got to swing it around. Line it up. Up the periscope and let torpedo go. And then torpedo, it speeds up as it comes. It leaves with the pump, and it's got a little motor on there, a little that's going. And the ship's going like this. Just turns it up and lets the damn thing go. As long as they know it's coming. They can dodge it. So that's why they had us guys all around the room watching for...We yelled torpedo! And you seen something. I only seen one. Some of the other men have seen something, but it was pretty uneventful, except when that guy puked in my face.

Eric Brunt: (00:25:18) He literally...He puked on your face?

Bill Neely: (00:25:21) Well, we're sleeping in the hold. Sleeping on the floor, sleeping on the table, sleeping on the bench near the hammocks. And I was sleeping on the bench and this guy was in the hammock. He got sick, so I got sick and everybody around me got sick. And seasickness is the worst kind of sickness because there's nothing wrong with you. It's just movement. That was terrible. But when we got in sight of Britain, the first thing we seen is chalk...Cliffs of Dover. And where you see the sun shining up, white or just white limestone and somebody yell land! And I forget how many thousand soldiers are on that boat. Everybody rushed to that side of the boat and boat started going like this. And the pros rode sticks beating the guy. Get the hell out and get over there. If we all got over there we would have tipped the boat right over, it was a high boat and all on one side. Boat was like this, but straightened up and the trough was kept in the basin. Did you let it all the way up there when you get there? We landed in Brighton, and that's where he left for the D-Day. We waited. We trained as we got on the guard [audio cuts out]

Eric Brunt: (00:26:55) And you got there in late 43? You went over in 43? Yeah.

Bill Neely: (00:27:03) I gave my pay book to Sharon, but it gives a date of when I landed [audio cuts out]. It was about a mile wide and about half a mile deep and everything was concentrated. Then they broke out from there. Just as we landed, our infantry broke out and they like to get a lot of baloney about stuff at infantry. I'm glad I was an infantryman. They took a beating, Winnipeg Rifles, the PPCLI, Regina Rifles. They all landed one behind the other on D-Day on Juno Beach. Half of them drowned before they got there. But anyways, the rest of them made it and there was a German barrage about 3 or 4 big guns, six-eight inch guns....I know we didn't go in at first they went sit on it on the ocean, in the LST, shortly after daylight. Next morning, really, when the engineers had laid a path of mesh and with armoured cars could get out in about three feet of water and drove right up on the bank. But we prepared for weeks. We fasted every little [audio cuts out] any place there was a bolt. We waterproofed it and had a snorkel. It went

up. We could go in about eight feet of water and still travel. Was able to do that because of that snorkel eh. But the thing is, after all that work, we landed three feet of water beneath the wheels. The water didn't go up the side. I remember I was sitting in the back [inaudible] Patrick was on there. He comes to pass. What's the matter? You scared? Aren't you? He said, you know, he said, What are you scared of? I said, I'm scared I'm going to run. You see that guy hanging over the front of the front so anxious to get there. He said he wants to tell a German if you don't believe he's a German. Shoot me. Shoot me back. He hasn't talked. You're facing it. You won't know. I don't have to run him somewhere else. But that was the worst thing that scared me. I figured if I run, my dad would find out about that, you know it would break his heart. That was...Like a lot of guys. [inaudible]

Bill Neely: (00:30:53) And they had big steel and So I had a hard time getting in to shallow water. They were anti...They were stuck in the ground and they come across like ID stuff like [inaudible]. And those LST come in to about four feet of water. But a lot of them stopped in 10 or 12ft of water. And the guys walked out. See they were loaded and every shorty didn't get enough. And that was packed on...a little pack on the water, maybe 3 or 4 grenades tied to the stuff. If he had a rifle, he had two parts, was full of shells. He went in the water, straight to the bottom. I talked to one of them afterwards. I said, how did you make it? He said, I landed about 8ft of water, said I could feel the ground sloping. So I held my breath and walked until my head came above the water. So he made it, lots of them didn't. As far as I am concerned, he talked it with all the hills that come home. But the one just land on his [inaudible] The infantry. I sure glad I wasn't in the infantry, but I sure admired it. He was in, he could tell you some stories. I couldn't tell you that. I heard other guys talking about the things he said...I lost all my buddies when we trained. Basic training and going into tank training. When I went they were gone. I went over what some guys didn't know, lived in a tent for two years, and when I joined up, I requested a second armoured car. That was the standard, but I didn't know what I wanted. My dad was cavalryman and that was cavalry. And I figured that's what's for me. So I applied for that. So we're sleeping in a tent near...

Bill Neely: (00:33:35) Just out of London. About six miles. Tunbridge Wells, living there in tents. And there were two officers come in. They were looking for reinforcements. And one was Manitoba Dragoons. The one was the Headquarters. And there's another kid there with me. And I was at that time qualified. Was I ready to offer you? He was too. So these two officers come. One was wounded, hurt worse. And one. That's the first choice because my neighbor was already in for armored car. It wasn't for Manitoba Dragoons, but it was the same kind of regiment. So I turned to the other kid and I said, I would like to go to Dragoons. He said, I want to go to [inaudible] course, I said that's fine. We want to get what we want. So I get there. They don't need a wireless operator down there, but they were short of gunners. So I'd already trained before wireless. I trained as a gunner so I could take it. They had to drop $0.25 a day because. Radio was senior to a gunner, so I ended up going with that.

Eric Brunt: (00:35:01) You were in the Dragoons?

Bill Neely: (00:35:08) Yeah. The Dragoons. Eighteenth Armoured Car Regiment. And I stayed with them until the end. And I was in Blitz Troop in our HQ. [audio cuts out] Blitz troops were also reinforcement for any squadron that got in trouble that needed help. And that's what saved us. There'd be B squadron in trouble over here. You get down there. [audio cuts out] It's over when we get there. I went to rescue so many people, I never had to do anything. I fired my guns maybe about 6 or 8 times. Got to hit things a couple of times, mostly at trucks...And we were in a Staghound. We were armed with a 37mm cannon. [audio cuts out] It shook the hell out of it. The Germans were smarter than us. We built guns that were accurate, the machine guns. You don't want an accurate machine gun. You want to throw shots all over the place. There's a bunch of guys coming. Dun dun dun dun dun dun. You know, if the slugs was going all on, as long as you keep it in the right area, you're going to hit something. With ours, if you hit a guy, you're going to hit him about six times. You know, one is enough. And you didn't have to do much with it.

Bill Neely: (00:37:37) I never done much fighting. I knew the infantry, they faced men face to face, then bayonet to bayonet. Never had to do none of that. I was an armored car. I felt safe, and I had an 88 millimeter and it was bigger than anything the infantry had. So when we run into them and we made a mess of them, but never seen, I can remember one place down in a road track. And I parked. About 6 or 8 Germans coming around the edge of the building, and I opened fire. I pushed my guns down as fast as I could. Fast. They would go, and I fired over there and was going over the head and the Germans said Kamerad Kamerad Kamerad. So we didn't kill anybody. I took about ten prisoners and you'd go that way. You go there, you look after you, they'll feed you.

Bill Neely: (00:38:38) And towards the end it took...by accident. I don't want any prisoners with me [inaudible]. We're looking for souvenirs and the Regiment that's set up for the night. And it was still daylight. We went and it was kind of late...here. Park there, few trees here and low clouds here and here. Walking around here. All of a sudden these eight Germans, but then we'll see about that. They come up and I had a Sten gun. And I went to try and fire it. But I didn't go off. I tested it later and it worked perfect. But what I thought was. Never fired a shot. So I said, you got to go down. So they went. But one of them was, I swear, he was about 12 years old. Had an old Mauser rifle. He was as tall as you. I said you put that gun down. He's looking at me and starts to bawl. I said, I told you to put the gun down. He couldn't understand. He said, you going to shoot me? I said, put that bloody gun down. So he finally got through his head on it and I said now get up, they'll feed you down there at the end. They were using everything they had. They had young kids fighting. They never did much fighting, but they were there.

Bill Neely: (00:40:16) It's a funny thing. When I worked in Alberta, they had a place where they kept German prisoners and to teach them. You have to keep them busy. Or young men be hard and go home. They had a water trough at the bottom and water trough up the hill and it was one was running the other. They bailed this one out and carried it up the hill and poured it in, all day

long. You have to do the right thing. Nine out of ten of those guys were sent home after the army to come back, and they're here in Canada to be with friends. You'd probably be the same restaurant and everything. I love it. It's crazy. People were nuts so I said, have you come home after it?

Eric Brunt: (00:41:12) When you went over to France, was that was that the day after D-Day?

Bill Neely: (00:41:24) I was there...Yeah. It was. No, it was about two days after. We sat there for a couple of days, and then we went and got in the LSTs and we sat on there all night. wait, you know, that is...when you're a trooper or a soldier. Just cry that they don't tell you everything. They just tell you what they want you to know and what they want you to do. Your buddy can be killed and you never know about it. So I learned in good time. I never had to fire a shot going down. I drove right up, down. Set up at the edge of the bank. A bank is where sand goes into a bank like this. Infantry were on the other side of that. We had the line set up. Now the ships were bringing in supplies. There was other beachheads there, too. The Americans had a beachhead. I think they had two. And the British had a bridgehead. What did you call it? Juno Beach was ours. [audio cuts out] But some of the beaches were plastered worse. Juno Beach was bad. But some of them were worse. Because when the Germans had, they had Big Bertha for one thing. But that one they didn't use there they could fire from Calais. They could fire all the way to Brighton with that gun, it had a shell about this long, about this big round. And the barrel would be longer than this room. It was a big gun. They called it Big Bertha, and you could hear it go boom a mile away. You could hear them go. And when the shell went over [inaudible]. And like the Moaning Minnies, they were bastards. They were everywhere. You'd be sitting, having dinner and hear "Wheeeeeee" you jump and find a hole. You better go. A little more reinforcements we lost. I don't know how many men we lost. We were never told anything. A guy was here today. And in the morning he wasn't there, nobody said anything. He was either dead, wounded in the hospital or something they just snapped you out of there. You never know unless they drop beside you. You never seen it, which didn't happen to me.

Unknown Speaker: (00:44:47) You didn't tell him about the time you were just about court martialed?

Eric Brunt: (00:44:51) Oh, yeah. Tell me about this.

Bill Neely: (00:44:54) Which one?

Unknown Speaker: (00:44:55) Calvados.

Bill Neely: (00:44:58) Okay. It was in France. On the edge of Germany. Right close in [audio cuts out]. You know, that's something you have to experience. The people. Just worshiped us. Either that or they hated us, depending on whether we...But the French and especially the Dutch, they thought we were the next thing to The Lord. This is the edge of Germany and France. We pulled in for the night, so we stopped there and set up tents and stuff, and people come and grabbed us. Led us down. There's an old sawmill there, a big pile of sawdust and stuff, and they had tables all set, and I swear it was horse meat because it was dark red...didn't pay attention...we didn't think about it. We were hungry. We had it and chips and each table it had, each chair had two glasses. And behind each chair...her job was to keep your glasses full.

Bill Neely: (00:46:12) So we were drinking [audio cuts out]. I had a .38 Smith & Wesson in a holster. And this Free Frenchman...had a little Browning automatic. He wanted to trade. I said, no, I can't trade. That gun is issued to me. This is a serial number, and that serial number is my number. I lose that one. That's a real crime, if you lose your gun...you are not supposed to lose your gun. I put him off, put him off, and he was getting kind of drunk, and I felt him come behind me and try and slip it. But I had my cup held near it...So he had didn't know that I felt it. So I grabbed him by the hand. I give them a turn on the run. But I got mad. And when I got mad, that liquor just started to work and I lost it. The rest is mostly hearsay, but other guys told me anyways.

Bill Neely: (00:47:40) I remember leaving. I got mad that I left that party and went back over to the sawmill. And then I fell in the thatch. Nettles. Well, that sobered me up. My face was just plastered. This woman came out, bathed my face in milk, and that took the sting out. Back out drunk again and laying there. 3 or 4 guys come and grab me. See what happened while all this was going on. The colonel got a call to some other regiment and we were given three days off. We weren't supposed to have to go in and never said nothing, but we couldn't get drunk. The whole damn regiment got drunk, actually, but they sent the guys to get. He wanted his crew, and I'm his gunner. So they sent those guys...I thought the Germans had took me prisoner. And I'm fighting like hell every time. But a fist noose. I let them have it. Every time I got a foot loose, I got a kick. They managed to get me over the hill. Our car was parked over there. They couldn't get any further. So they just sit me down, took my blankets and threw them over top of me. But just before that, the colonel came down and tried to talk to me.

Bill Neely: (00:49:08) And I was still mad that I called him a son of a bitch. I can remember that. And I remember I could see his chin. I couldn't see his whole face, but I could see his chin. And I thought I'd take off his head. And then I took a swing, I remembered that I went around [inaudible] down and got up and took another whack at him and missed again. So that's my last chance. Put that man under arrest. Noticed he didn't take me. He tells the guy he's put that man under arrest. So that's what happened to me. So it couldn't be much of it. That night, he put me in the brig.

Bill Neely: (00:49:50) In the morning I was sober, but man I was weak, and sergeant major came, and he ran off the charges. I had to stand attention while he did it to desertion in the face of the enemy. Insubordination. Assaulting an officer. Conduct unbecoming of a soldier. There were more charges. I don't remember, had 12 charges. When they said desertion in the face of the enemy, I couldn't see how I had earned that. But that's what they called it. It scared the hell out of me, they could shoot you for that. And they do sometimes. So they march me down in the big hall and two provosts, one in front of me, one behind me. They walked me down the hall like this, tear by [inaudible] off, tearing the buttons...in fact I lost two buttons had them sewn back on again.

Bill Neely: (00:50:52) Left turn, four steps. This was over there, the colonel sitting behind the desk, and 5 or 6 officers standing at attention behind him, he looks at me and says Neely, why were you drinking last night? I said alcohol sir. He said, what does it do? It said, don't do nothing until you drink about 3 or 4 glasses. Then all at once, he said. Well, I was surprised...you have a perfect record. You've been a good soldier and you go and do a thing like this? I said, yes, sir. He said you see these gentlemen behind me? I said yes, sir. They were damn near as bad as you last night. Then I had a little grin and I thought...I'm going to get out of this. Sure enough for a minute. It was a little later, I think. Maybe he had a taste himself. I'm going to throw these charges out, he said. Seven days CB, seven days pay. I got $1.30 a day. $1.50 A day of trades pay. So seven days pay wasn't really that much in seven days CB. [audio cuts out] I believe he died of Alzheimer's in Switzerland over 20 years ago, but I never seen a guy so calm and laid back and he smoked a crooked shank probably. He became a brigadier general just after that. [audio cuts out] I got away with it anyway. That was fine. It was later on when he became a brigadier. He was in charge of...There was five of them. I think my brain's getting tired. The hell do you call it? You probably know it.

Eric Brunt: (00:53:27) Yeah. Tell me. Explain to me what you're trying to say.

Bill Neely: (00:53:31) Yeah. Well, you know, you've got squadrons and you've got.

Eric Brunt: (00:53:38) Regiments.

Bill Neely: (00:53:38) Troops and regiment. It takes about four regiments to make a.

Eric Brunt: (00:53:44) Platoon?

Bill Neely: (00:53:47) No, platoon, that's just part of an infantry...division. Yeah. Division. Yeah. Division is about 4 or 5 of these. No. First division. Second division. Third division. Fourth Division. Yeah. So maybe he came over a divisions. And later on in the war. We were moving on. Our car [audio cuts out] In generals car comes all the flags flying. And we were parked in with the British. Drives through the British, stops in front of us. Gets out. We jumped up to attention. Sit down boys. Sit down. Got any coffee in the pot?. No, we got tea. So we have some tea. And the British soldiers were watching us. We just ordinary guys with Brigadier General coming to visit us. I don't know what they thought, but they treated us good after that.

Eric Brunt: (00:54:50) Did you have much interactions with the British or the Americans?

Bill Neely: (00:54:57) We had one squadron doing reconnaissance for the Brits [audio cuts out] The Americans. That's what I'm doing for our own outfit. We had A squadron, B squadron, D Squadron and A, B, C and D and headquarters Squadron and HQ, and LAD. That was our regiment.

Eric Brunt: (00:55:23) You were LAD?

Bill Neely: (00:55:24) LAD. They were what looked after our vehicles and changed oil and whatever. Fix something anything...even flat tires and brought out a wheel and would put it on. You didn't have to do nothing. You had to shoot if you could. That was the main thing that those guys were back up the LAD and the RHQ. They were over all [inaudible] And then there was a lesser headquarters and lower officers in it.

Eric Brunt: (00:56:02) And which one were you?

Bill Neely: (00:56:06) What do you mean?

Eric Brunt: (00:56:06) Like which one were you in?

Bill Neely: (00:56:08) I was in HQ.

Eric Brunt: (00:56:09) HQ.

Bill Neely: (00:56:10) Yeah, we were in Blitz troop. We were. You know, it sounded good. We were the heroes. We were the guys that put the fat on the fire. But when we got there, the fat was already pulled out. I only once had a bullet go by my ear, and a guy 20ft from me claimed it went by his ear. So that was a sniper, and he missed. Thank God.

Eric Brunt: (00:56:41) Did you have to worry about snipers?

Bill Neely: (00:56:44) Yeah. They were the biggest bugaboo. You come into a field, you figured you had it all to yourself. [audio cuts out] They were good and safe, but where they could nail somebody. And there might be a dozen people there thereafter, though officers mostly. They'll sit there for an hour or two hours and people doing things, they don't shoot until they get everything lined up the way. And then bang, bang, bang, bang as many as they can. Then they get the hell out of there. We were on top of the hill when that sniper took a [audio cuts out]. One of the officers took two men and they went to find that sniper. They found where he was, about a mile away, but he was gone. But I could have been a statistic then half a dozen, even 5 or 6 times close. Yeah, but not close enough. And we found out that after him in three weeks [audio cuts out] So you can tell the difference, you know, right away by the pop. And German machine guns go "brrrrt" They take about three shots for every one of ours, our little Sten gun goes "da da da da", you know, and machine gun "baaaaa." And our mortars are about two inch and set them down like this. They had a little leg on them. You want to get some guys on the other side of the barn? You gotta set it at the right angle, and you just take the bomb in your hand. There's a pin down there, and a shotguns cap in the bottom of the bomb. You got to be careful or you blow your hand off. You put the gun, you put your hand down like that, and you drop the bomb in there. Hits something goes "pop," it goes up in a big arc. You can see it go down behind the barn. It's nice. Only the Germans had the Moaning Minnie. And that thing was a six barrel. It was damn near six inches. It was big four inches anyway, but there was a certain circle on the stand and they loaded it up with bombs. It was so big. And then it was set off electronically. Then they went up like a mushroom.

Unknown Speaker: (00:59:41) I gotta leave. I want you to tell them the story about you having to pray when they were bombing.

Bill Neely: (00:59:48) About what?

Unknown Speaker: (00:59:49) Remember, you had to say a prayer when they were bombing, that story?

Bill Neely: (00:59:54) That's my story. Lord, Earth. And France was like England all the time.

Eric Brunt: (01:00:04) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (01:00:04) Are you leaving?

Unknown Speaker: (01:00:05) I have to leave.

Bill Neely: (01:00:06) Okay.

Eric Brunt: (01:00:07) Well, nice meeting you.

Bill Neely: (01:00:08) Thanks for coming, anyway.

Unknown Speaker: (01:00:10) I think you're in really good hands.

Bill Neely: (01:00:11) You got me over the hump.

Eric Brunt: (01:00:12) Yeah.

Unknown Speaker: (01:00:12) I think you're in good hands.

Eric Brunt: (01:00:14) You're leaving him with the pirate? Yeah, an Irish pirate, though, so we're good.

Bill Neely: (01:00:22) Well, this story is one of my favorites because it affected me. There's four of us living in that tent. I don't know why we're staying there, but then we were told to stay, and

we were told to stay, you stay. Don't matter what the hell happens. You gotta have an order to move. That's the way the army is [audio cuts out]

Eric Brunt: (01:01:03) No, I don't think you did.

Bill Neely: (01:01:05) Well, we had over there we had an ammunition dump for reloading tanks and stuff. The Germans knew it was there, but they didn't know where it was. And they were shelling progressively. And they started down that end of the field about 8 or 10 shells. But then it's quiet for half an hour or less. Moves up 00ft. Bang bang bang. Wait another 15 minutes. Close up. Bang bang bang. The next one was going to hit us right on the way it's coming. So I remember Donnelly [audio cuts out] And I used to try to tell him that it was God, and He stands by you. I was no fanatic, but I believed anyways. Donnelly said listen to me. I think it's time somebody said a prayer. He said Neely. I said, well, go ahead. He said, Neely, you're the only one who knows how to pray. I said, I don't know any better than you all. You got to talk to God. He said, Will you talk to him? I said, okay. I stood up and I said, Lord, if you'll get us out of this, I'll never do that again. So everything was quiet for about 15 minutes. Nothing happened. Then we heard the shots going overhead. They started doing it. They lifted it. They bombed here and they bombed all that. They lifted their guns and bombed here and bombed on there and never touched us. So maybe that's coincidence, but I don't think so. And I always believe it. So I don't think there was any atheists. Not very many in a shell hole. When shells were around, you hear a lot of guys say oh, God. Oh, Jesus. Oh, mom...a lot of it's called for the mom. Yeah. Get wounded or something. Mom, I want my mom. You know, you're 20 years old and you're not that old. Then was after the war. Had a nice trip and think you better believe it. It would not be documented that the illegal bootlegging, the black market didn't play gambling. Let me chase the girls so I could tell you a story or two about that...

Eric Brunt: (01:03:52) Please do.

Bill Neely: (01:04:01) Well, I was married before, but not long. About a year. And I was a farm boy. We were pretty straight laced and a lot of stuff that was going on. I didn't care for it. But anyways, I went out back to see5 or 6 of them. He went to the townhouse brought the girls out and lined them up and guys just grabbed them, and I was left with a little fatty. Not that [inaudible] she was young. I didn't know what to go for. Took me in the room, checked me out. You know, I wasn't dosed or nothing. Then she went in shorts like this. She went to the bed to a short, soft pain. Shot himself like this. Was anything that had to. I couldn't. I couldn't even think of doing anything. I'd asked how much was 1000 francs? The other guys were doing their thing. I didn't know, each had their room. I didn't know what to do. I took the money out of my pocket. [inaudible] had to go down the hall. She'd come out, she was in boots and yell and screaming. I get down to the hall status. I insulted her somehow. I told her don’t worry, but she got paid for nothing. That was nuts. I insulted her. I stayed away from this and that. Most of them. The conscience was too fresh. And, I mean, I was in love with my wife. And I courted her for four

years when I was about 16. So I didn't want to lose her. There's two incidents like that, but not much. I wasn't a goody goody. It's just the symptoms. Couldn't stand it. Trouble is no good [inaudible].

Eric Brunt: (01:06:17) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (01:07:17) You know, one kid left everything gone losing the whole bloody family. I want to know my sister tonight. She's coming 90. But you don't. You don't know anybody, but I know. Alzheimer's. Dementia. What it is. She knows you one minute then not the next.

Eric Brunt: (01:07:37) Right? Like grandpa got like that at the very end.

Bill Neely: (01:07:40) I was so scared. It's going to happen to me. I'm getting up there. I've got past. There's lots of my age that are dead from it.

Eric Brunt: (01:07:46) I think I think you've reached a certain age where you've. You're in the clear.

Bill Neely: (01:07:50) I hope you're right.

Eric Brunt: (01:07:51) I think I think so. Yeah.

Bill Neely: (01:07:54) I'm up there.

Eric Brunt: (01:07:55) Well, you're almost 96, right?

Bill Neely: (01:07:57) And just about 97 the 1st of September. 97.

Eric Brunt: (01:08:03) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (01:08:04) I think I might make it to 100.

Eric Brunt: (01:08:07) I think you are.

Bill Neely: (01:08:08) Yeah.

Eric Brunt: (01:08:09) Did you?

Bill Neely: (01:08:12) I would have and had Cat scan. [audio cuts out] Results on that that my eyes tested and they told me I haven't got any worse. It's as good as they were two years ago. Something wrong, a fuss. But then I was taking these things.

Eric Brunt: (01:08:32) Pills?

Bill Neely: (01:08:32) Yeah, yeah. And I think maybe I did too much volume three or something, so I'm not taking anything now. Only my own prescriptions.

Eric Brunt: (01:08:43) Did you ever, uh [audio cuts out]

Bill Neely: (01:08:51) Regiment really...

Eric Brunt: (01:08:54) How come?

Bill Neely: (01:08:57) I don't know. You know. Things worked against me in a lot of ways. I went through 11 months of action. Never had had a...weekend leave once in a while, but never had a furlough. Everybody put your names in the hat and put your name after so many. They put our names back in. Some guys had a second. I hadn't had one yet. But finally I'm about the middle. My name was drawn and had a furlough come. 14 days come by surprise. I had no money, so I said I can't go. I gotta stay at home. Sergeant Simmons had come to me and said, I am trying to get a furlough. I can't get one. I want to get married. Could I take yours? And then when my twin does come, you can have it. I said, sure you want it? I got no money and can't go. I'll have to start saving. Maybe I'll get another one. So he went another couple of months to come

to the end of the war. The last day. The last [audio cuts out] Sergeant Simpson comes. He's got a guy with him. He said to me. My father has come. Do you want it? I said, well, they're going in. I gotta go with my...another gunner will come along. Take your place. You want to go? You can go. You don't have to if you don't want to. I don't know what the hell to you. But I hadn't gone all in once know for known and not only got it for. So I got in the truck. I landed in London on VE-Day. All the arms linked together. Going down the street here people see you in the uniform they just took you with them. So you went to a party. Free booze. You come out of that and another outfit picks you up the way you go, had 14 days leave. I don't think I drew a sober breath for the whole 14 days. When I went back, the doctor checked me out and put me to bed for a week. Then one row we shared the same bloody blankets [audio cuts out]

Bill Neely: (01:11:47) Doctor. I phoned twice, nothing ever happened, so I never phoned again. Something about me not going on that last day. That was superstition. Everybody feeling the last day. They're here. The war is over. But we got to go once more. We're going to die. I never thought of it that way. I just wanted to be friendly. But I think one of them thought I let him down. He never spoke. I only got the 88. I got credit. The unit should have had. I think that was toward the end. I never told you about that.

Eric Brunt: (01:12:33) Know what happened?

Bill Neely: (01:12:35) Well, we were. Our car was moving up a trail [audio cuts out] Front was moving. We were pushing the Germans back. We were coming around the truck. The Germans had an 88 set up and knocked out two tanks. And they were both burning. And they...did I tell you about the 88? They had about the sweetest gun was ever made for a tank. The Germans had it. We had a 75 on our tanks. On a Sherman. You couldn't even touch that 88. The 88 was a squeeze bore, you know. Just slightly smaller at the muzzle than that. So when that then went off, it was forced through there, and it had more power...more pressure behind it. So come out of there fast...and 88 go in one side of the tank, out the other. [inaudible] they were a beautiful gun. They would knock a tank out a mile away. If it hadn't been for that gun. The war wouldn't have lasted, since the Germans had that. But then we had a different kind of training than the Germans and our Sherman tanks were twice as fast as a German Panther, and half as big. And we had a 75mm on, but their shells bounced off the Panthers. So 2 or 3 of them were surrounding the Panther and the fire underneath them.

Bill Neely: (01:14:19) And under that they were heavy tanks, but underneath they were not the same, we could would blow the motor up. And so I sat on a hill and watched a tank battle. I don't know where it was, somewhere in France, but it was Americans. Canadians, Americans. British in Shermans against the Germans Panzer tanks. My job was I was on the radio was to send message back to headquarters where the how the battle was going. Well, all I could see was clouds of dust. All I could report was cloud of dust is going north. Cloud and dust going south. It's going north. We're winning. It's going south. They're winning. Here and there I would see a

Panther tank burning about three Shermans around it, hammering the hell out of it. And I sitting up on the hill just watching it. There was burning tanks all over the place. Dozens of men died, but [audio cuts out] I don't know where that was. I just my orders were to keep ready and keep out of sight. I went to [inaudible] and went. What to call? [inaudible]. Show just your gun and periscope over the top. And that's all you want is. This way when you're looking through you can see so much, but our turret moved pretty fast. That's another advantage we had. We had electric [audio cuts out]

Bill Neely: (01:16:51) They can't go to the front by themselves.

Eric Brunt: (01:16:54) That's what he was mad about.

Bill Neely: (01:16:56) They have a green guy now for a gunner. I've been with him for months. We know we don't have to talk. You can touch a guy and give him a signal. He knows what you mean. Somebody else don't. I should have went, but I couldn't turn down the furlough. And I got this thinking to me a little bit. Just a little selfish. But then guys want to go. He had a furlough and went and got married and Donnelly had a furlough in between. Blue [inaudible] in between. I didn't. Well, I once I did, but I didn't have the money. So this is at the end. I'm getting my furlough missing that I wasn't...I was quite happy about missing that last ticket I thought I might get two, you know. So a little bit of a coward I guess. I don't think there's too many heroes. Heroes are all dead. There was a few. I never was a hero, but I seen them. I seen a few.

Eric Brunt: (01:18:11) What makes a hero?

Bill Neely: (01:18:12) I don't know, way beyond what is expected of you, what you have to do. I can tell you about Kramer. Kramer. Oh, Petersen. I only know part of the story, but he was infantry. I know there's the rifle. It's in a museum in Calgary. He was in the PPPC...He was in the Winnipeg Rifles. And at one point, the regiment was cut almost in half. All the officers were gone. And they were supposed to take a position, but there was no one at that time. Kramer picked up his rifle. Come on, you guys, let's go. So he...took the hill and took the position. I don't know what he got for it, but he was...When he came home, he was an alcoholic, and all he could do was fight and get in trouble. But when he was overseas, he was a first class soldier. Prince was the same thing. He was off by himself lots of times. He was...They were warriors. They were good warriors. When they come home, they were drunkards. And I would say about two thirds of the army were alcoholic when they come home. If they weren't, they drank a lot. I traveled all across Holland from [inaudible]. I never drank much of it, but it was there and all the other guys had their favorite drink. Whatever it was. Where did you get it? [audio cuts out] They were different than they give you 300. Well, for $3, you got 300 cigarettes a month. And you could drink all you wanted. As long as you do your job. As long as you could drive, fire your

guns, do what you had to do. The smell of whiskey on you didn't bother them. That was okay. But you got drunk. You got booted. Yeah. Once you get drunk, you didn't mind you taking a wife, even on duty. Except on guard duty, you couldn't drink on guard duty. You couldn't smoke on that. Some guys did, but sometimes I had the....Cigarette. He said in the back. You got a shot? That's why there's no three in a match that come in the first four. You know the story there.

Eric Brunt: (01:21:02) Remind me. I think I do. It has to do with...

Bill Neely: (01:21:06) There was three soldiers lighting up. By the time the match got to the third soldier, the [inaudible] line that took them that long that was [inaudible]. I remember one place. Was sleet, rain and sleet. We had a tarp tied to the car and down and our beds were underneath it. And then a nice big pocket like this, full of water. And the rope up...the ropes as you come in and just flooded us. And it was cold. And we had a tub of sand and we used to burn gas and a couple of stuff. So I was damn near frozen. I grabbed a bottle of gas and threw a match. A nice big bang. Sergeant Major's voice was like, that doesn't fire up. Yeah, I got shit for that, but I got it working before he got there.

Eric Brunt: (01:22:15) Were you given a rum ration or how did you get alcohol?

Bill Neely: (01:22:19) Well, I was doing a lot of it, but we did get a rum ration for about the winter months. We had messed tin. Aluminum, about like this. They poured in about that deep and it was thick, like glass we had to put water and mix it so we could drink it. But, you know, when you drank it, you'd just feel it going down on your legs and down on your head, as warm as toast to get into your leg as you go to sleep. I slept in a snowbank for a week. Then we started confiscating empty buildings. We made our own furnace. Take a Jerry can. Punch two little weights [audio cuts out]

Bill Neely: (01:23:11) Just barely. Up near the top. I put about this much gas and set them with two bricks under fire and a little bit of fire, and you get that going, and then it comes out a light like a blowtorch. And blows thin and about this far. Boy that heated, things cooked by it and anything else. But some guys want to make the hole too big. And they blew up and one kid got burnt very bad, so they stopped doing it. But we scrounged. Yeah, if you want to survive, you've got to be good at scrounging. You're not afraid to steal if you see something you want. They didn't want to go. We stole the tarp off an American 1500. We'd cut it in half, and he used half for his bedroom. And I used half in my bedroom. And the way we made him cut it. Like this. Done the same thing on this end. So this would fold in this fold in this fold over this fold over, and this sheet was holding this major bend of rain falling flat on your head and let it rain. Let it snow.

Eric Brunt: (01:24:29) When you would scrounge, did you ever have to worry about things being booby trapped?

Bill Neely: (01:24:36) [inaudible]...more than one of our guys lost legs. I remember one place. There wasn't any observation. A lot of that stuff is frayed, you know? But we were walking. We were looking for souvenirs. We pulled into this place just near Caen [audio cuts out] Found beautiful little black ball. Well, beside it looked like it was plastic or something. Not a crack. Not a seam or nothing. One of them picked it up. [inaudible] threw it to me and I looked it over carefully. I don't see not a crack. Couldn't be a bomb. How the hell would they know it? He threw it back to him and he caught it and walked off. He's going to throw it at our feet. No, don't. It's something odd, no one wanted it so throw it in a slit trench. He threw it in the slit trench, then Pow! It was booby trapped. And they took pencils like this. And you'd find one. The first ballpoint pen I ever seen was lying on the street in Holland. Never seen one before. I kept that in that wallet. I never had no trouble. But what the Germans are doing. The first one, they said was for guys to get them and started looking for them eh. Then they started booby trapping them. You take it, you press the thing. Boom! Blow off a couple of fingers. Whatever it is, get your eyes. There was a place, and Caen let the infantry cleaned Caen out.

Bill Neely: (01:26:24) But they went through it. There was residue left behind. There were Germans hiding in the...snipers. Our job was clean it out. So we went through house by house by house. Now, we didn't get many. 1 or 2. In one place. The door was partly open. Sergeant was in charge. Pushing the door. Stuck his foot in and gave it another push and Boom! Blew it off just above the ankle. There was a landmine behind the hook to the door. He pushed. It, blew up, and they did different things. You see a dead German don't roll him over. Probably a the landmine underneath. Different.

Bill Neely: (01:27:11) You know, you they had some smart men there. They thought up things faster than we could. We get 2 or 3 guys killed that were not warned. If you weren't warned you were lucky, all kinds of...nothing was safe. Nothing. Anything. Leave it alone if you don't want this. Leave it alone. And they did. They mined underneath roads and stuff. Sea bombs. They were big bombs were blowing up a ship. Did stick them in underneath and have a detonator sticking up through. And the way the detonator worked, every time something went over, click, click, click, click till it hit the bottom one. BANG. You blow up a whole body car, road and everything. All the way across the whole thing. You had to be on your toes. If you played around, you're dead. It was just the same as. Yeah.

Eric Brunt: (01:28:28) What was Caen like?

Bill Neely: (01:28:32) Rubble. And we blew it to [inaudible]? Then it was bombed. Was close to the coast. And then there was Falaise. They bombed us there. I remember. We had to go to Falaise. Headquarters. Had headquarters here. [audio cuts out] Anything that would carry a bomb and they were just about touching wings. As far as you can see, in any direction. And I don't know how high they were, not very high, a couple hundred feet and it was just a steady drone. It was such a drone that in the trenches and stuff mud was falling from the ground was just shaking and...The first wave went in. The Germans were here and allies were here. The Germans were all up in here. They were trapped in. There's no place to go. The ocean was out there. The first wave bombed the Germans. That was good. Then they were supposed to move up and bomb them again and move up and bomb them again. Then we were to move in and take over. But they goofed. The first blast took the Germans. The next one wiped out our artillery. I don't know how many [inaudible], but there's about. I think there's about 500 [inaudible]. And they were big guns...Five inch, six inch guns. And it was about five [inaudible]. Bombs went right out. Clean as a whistle. That is another way to come in. Being vulnerable was there. Then we seen them coming and up about here. Opened their bomb bays and the bomb started unloading right over top of us.

Bill Neely: (01:30:52) We're looking for a shell hole to get into. When you get in the shell hole, you feel about 20ft high. You're the only guy in the world, and they're aiming all at you. That's feeling. And I think the other guy's got the same...thing is the planes are moving. They don't hover, but they're moving about 100 miles an hour. They've got to move down enough to stay up there. And when they drop their bombs, the bombs are moving like that, too. So it looks like they're going to land on this one half a mile away before you hit the ground. So we didn't get bombed. That happened a lot to me too. It just scared me as much every time too. And we didn't know what to do. Put up the yellow smoke. That was Canadian Ally's color for this is allied. Stop whatever the hell you're shooting at. That's an emergency that goes up in yellow smoke. But the Americans...I don't know if they meant well. They're good fighters. They're good pilots. But they shoot anything that moved. And if you happen to be there and they'd shoot you just the same. They shot more of our guys than I think the Germans did.

Bill Neely: (01:32:07) But the leader of that, that this next bunch was an American. And he's coming in. And this was the artillery had little planes that would go up and like...when the artillery...they can't see where the bullets were. It's going to move way up. But there's a little plane up there seeing where they were landing. Tell them whether or not far enough or not far enough. And one of them turned on. He's come at the leader of the squadron, and he's doing loops and lighting and everything. So he finally took a big shot, and he comes straight at him...the plane either had to turn or get hit, so it turned. And then the whole thousand planes or whatever, they all turned and went back.

Bill Neely: (01:33:01) One of those pilots lived in Cottingham. And we were at a Remembrance Day. And he said something to me. I said, don't` tell me about the air raid at Falaise, we weren't very happy with you. Would have shot you in a minute if we could. He said, I know I was there,

he said. When we turned, I was about to turn back and we got the cams and a lot of the boys were crying. There's that flood. That was the end of the war. If we didn't get through there and took that, but then Germans were screwed. All we had to do was deal with the Russians. But it didn't happen. That night. Our car...I don't know where everybody else was. Their car was. And there was a hole. [audio cuts out] The 37mm nut would take on 88. So you got the hell out the road. Let him go. Whatever got with him. And he closed them. He stopped the infantry. I don't know if it's quite dark...Shoot, where do you think they are? Then that stops them for a while, then a tank comes. You got to get on the road. And then once more around the tank. People saw trucks. They get out. We kept radioing headquarters. We need help with the big guns. There's a hole. And they kept telling us there's no hole. And their officers are pulling their hair. I don't know how to convince them, but they finally convinced them there was a hole and half the German army was already out.

Bill Neely: (01:35:02) So they sent in AT. I'm not sure if it was the 17pdr or 25pdr but a big gun on his carriage behind the truck. Five guys, jump out, set the gun up. The sergeant said to us, do you want to see the best anti-tank gun in France go to work? And we said, sure as hell would. The next time tank had come out there, boom, he was gone. Next tank that came out there boom. He was gone. The shell went right through. It was a big gun that was bigger than the 88. If we had that kind of a gun, well, later on we did. They took the turrets off the back of some of the Shermans and made them into mobile guns. [audio cuts out] And that kind of matched the 88. But up until then, the 88 was boss, the 88 was built in...I don't know.

Eric Brunt: (01:36:08) How many men were in your vehicle, because there's you, the gunner...

Bill Neely: (01:36:13) Four, there was a gunner, a driver and a co-driver. They sat down there. I was a gunner and I sat up here. The operator sat up here. And if you had a commander like an officer come, and he'd sit over there. We're sitting on shells. It was all loaded around. Just reached down to pick up shells for his 37. We've got so long [inaudible], but so long...It was like a big hand grenade. And he just...The operator was the loader. I was a gunner. My job was to fire the guns, aim the guns and look after the gun.

Eric Brunt: (01:36:56) ...Would there be a fifth person, the commanding officer with you often, or would it usually just be four of you?

Bill Neely: (01:37:10) Mostly we were alone.

Eric Brunt: (01:37:11) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (01:37:12) Once in a while he was with you. It was [audio cuts out]. That was not enough. I had my tarp. So what we did. We laid the tarp out and put my blankets down. He put one of those blankets on top and had a guys blankets on top, and other guys blankets on top about this thick. Then we crawled in the middle and put the other tarp over top, and we kept warm. We only took our boots off, that was for six weeks. I never had my jacket off. I only had boots off for the night.

Eric Brunt: (01:38:25) It was pretty cold eh?

Bill Neely: (01:38:26) Cold and we were on the move. They liked the dark. We couldn't travel in the dark. We couldn't have no lights. Because you got a light then the artillery was on you right away.

Eric Brunt: (01:38:43) Are these the guys that you play blackjack with.

Bill Neely: (01:38:47) Some of them. No. The whole regiment was in that, guys from all over. That was after the war. You know everything just...I can't explain what it felt when they heard the war was...It was such a feeling of relief. Like we were kids with...seen war stories. That steady bang bang bang bang bang. A good part..I don't [inaudible] anyone's I talked to...we didn't think we were coming home. I figured it was a battle. Had to be done. He had to go. When you went to war, you fought till you died. That was our idea of what war was. It's not that...war is a firefight here. Then maybe two weeks before you hit another big and you're chasing them, they're running or you're running and they're chasing you. Then you hit the spot when there's another battle. Whoever's there is in it.

Bill Neely: (01:39:52) And that may last 2 or 3 hours or so, but...It's high, high explosives. And it don't take long to...one of them bombs...Leave a hole as big as...you can put a tank in there...it's like this. And it's something that takes a while to learn it. You're better off to be close to that bomb than out here, because when it blows up, it goes like this. And if you're here, it goes over top of you. When you're so far, the only thing that's...a concussion. But if you're further away, you're blown up. It does the same the other way. It does the same the other way. It just blows in all directions. With different kinds of explosives. They had a bomb...They got it now...it'll penetrate I don't know how many feet before it explodes. So they get underground bunkers and stuff. That was in the Maginot Line. It was all cement and a beautiful place on the cement above this thick that was going to stop us. We never even looked at who was around the end of it. But the Germans invented Blitzkrieg slightly more. And when they moved in, they were good. People said they were a bunch of bastards and they didn't know nothing. The Germans were the

smartest friggin soldiers and the best trained. They had years of training. And they had some generals that knew what was going on. Hitler killed some of his best. The Desert Fox. There was 4 or 5, but they were willing to do Hitler in because they figured Hitler would doing Germany more harm than good. And they put a bomb and he missed it by about three minutes. So what was his name? The Desert Fox?

Eric Brunt: (01:42:07) They made a movie about him...but I know exactly what you're talking about. Yeah.

Bill Neely: (01:42:12) Anyways, he poisoned him and made him take poison, but he was too smart. He outsmarted our generals different times in South Africa. Our guys should have took him easy, but he was too damn smart. He was always there, a little ahead of anybody else. And he was a genius. The Germans had people like that. And the Germans are war minded people. We're a peace minded people. We don't want to fight.

Eric Brunt: (01:42:47) Did you find that as the war progressed, that's when you were seeing younger and younger German soldiers?

Bill Neely: (01:42:53) Yeah. Toward the end. Yeah. Younger and younger. And they had Hitler Youth. I don't know what to send them guys, but they were a bunch of bastards. The Wehrmacht, which was the ordinary German soldier, was just like us. They were paid soldiers and they were doing what they were told. But those Hitler Youth, they were fanatics. I remember one time was coming in. He had about five prisoners on, on the tank. One of them stood up and yelled, I die for Hitler. He jumped in front of the tank. The guy that was driving drove away from him. That's what he wants. That's what he gets. Yeah. I don't know. Have I told you about getting the 88? That was murder. That sticks with me. That's what I told you about. The tanks were running up there. He went around to the town about three miles. He went in an old trail through the bush and come out on all pockmarked with shells that had been [inaudible], setting off the buzz bombs and that had been bombed out. And we followed in past there. We pulled in. Where was it? I don't know whether it was a pub, but then a bar. It might have been a bit of a hotel and bar in it. And I need that person. Worsley. So I said the officer, I want to go in there. Nothing going fancy now. He said, don't stay so long. We're behind the lines. We're about a mile behind the lines now in German lines up here. We've got through them so. So I have to pee.

Eric Brunt: (01:44:54) I can edit that out.

Bill Neely: (01:44:56) I better be careful.

Eric Brunt: (01:44:57) That's okay.

Bill Neely: (01:44:58) Anyways, girl come out with a glass of wine for me. Well first off I didn't know where it happened. I couldn't get to the head. I said yeah. She takes me outside through the door, another door. And there's a place in there trough on the side. That's where you pee. And I'm doing my thing. She comes out with a glass of wine for me. Vive La France, you know? So. Okay. I do my thing...I come out and get back into the car. I'm just getting in and put my earphones on and I get 37 fires, 37 fires. This is how good the officers fire orders were. See, a fire order was coax left. Steady on. Then come on where I can see it. So I take it from there. I get this order. 37 fire. 37 fire. My guns are sitting up in the air like this, and I'm just getting in. How am I going to fire? I got my guns down. A whole bunch of people there. I couldn't fire them. I seen a tractor going around the corner. Took a shot at it, but had to shoot high, and I missed. And then they were gone. But in the meantime, before that, this other tractor. And we've seen it...They were pulling a great big spruce [audio cuts out]. But the tractor...Moore was the corner. He sent me the machine gun. He could move about that much. And he's sitting, looking at this bloody thing. And he noticed that one of the guys was wearing German helmet. Son of a bitch. You going to fire? It hit the gas tank, blew up the tractor, and there's two guys who was on it.

Bill Neely: (01:46:48) And where these people come from, I don't know what a damn person around except them drunks. And then all of a sudden, there were 200 people there all around. And they had those two soldiers. Now beating the hell out of them. And the building was up here and it was building down here, and it was a fence and a alley down here. That's where he came from. And one got away around up, but this one was coming around this place. And when we got there, I took a shot. That's where he's been. That was just one of the ones. Anyways. They got those two, got to beating them up. And I said to our colonel that they were our prisoners. He said you just shut up? He said, you get over there. They'll tell you apart. I said I got my 9mm automatic, I got nine shots, and every one of you guys got nine shots in yours. We've got a machine gun sitting here. We'll take on the whole bloody lot. But them are our prisoners. He said you just sit down and shut up. So he's a Colonel so I just sat there.

Bill Neely: (01:48:01) ...so sad what I watched through the periscope. They take him down into the shed. And then all of a sudden, people move out. This maybe an opening about 20ft wide. All through the crowd. All of a sudden the two soldiers run like hell and you see them with big long German overcoats running like hell. You get about halfway now, almost in front of me. Guy comes over with one of these free French heroes, takes a rifle. Bang bang. Shoots them both in the back. Didn't kill him, but it wounded them pretty bad. I don't know what happened to them, but I know that the one guy had his legs around his waist and his and he is swinging and his head is going thump thump, and I don't know if it's possible...I Was looking at through my periscope. I swear that guy had blue eyes, and he looked me straight in the eye, and he could see the

hopelessness. And I said to the officer, they are killing our goddamn prisoners. He said, sit down and shut up. You go out there, you're dead. So, I sat and shut up.

Bill Neely: (01:49:26) But I've never seen those guys. But, you know, they were prisoners. They were. They didn't knock the 88 out. We did. They were our prisoners. And they would have been taken. And they'd been let go after the war and maybe lived a good life. Instead they got the shit kicked out of them. And. I was explained to me that these guys suffered under the Germans. The thing is, was that those two guys were suffering, it was murder. It was nothing but cold blooded murder. Ever seen that in a town...they said, shoot, people have done it, but they got away with it. I never forgive my Colonel for not doing something. I said to him, I got nine shots in this damn thing. We got a machine gun, and take down the whole bloody crowd. They want it. Let them have it. No! So we did nothing. I wonder if it's in this record. I wonder if that's...I know he wanted medals.

Eric Brunt: (01:50:35) Was this in France or is this in Holland?

Bill Neely: (01:50:41) That's a good question. It wasn't Holland. I think it was in Belgium. You were on the ball. I never knew half the time where the hell I was. I knew that if I was going along and the officer said, load your guns, I knew we were awful damn close to the front line. Sometimes we were...more than once we were behind the lines. The children were running up and down behind the lines there. [audio cuts out]

Bill Neely: (01:51:27) ...for two days. Couldn't find a way back. Every place you go, the Germans had to fill it in. They're tearing up and down here. Two days. They finally decided to make a run for it. And in that part of the country, there were sunken roads. That was...that was Germany, because they had sunken roads. Like this. And you could ride down there, but you couldn't even drive. The banks were too steep. And they come down there with their armored car full blast. They had a marching platoon of Germans. Some of them tried to climb the banks to get away. I don't know how many they killed or maimed, but you know for sure each one because his head was hanging on the muzzle of the 88 or 37 when they came out, but they finally got through and they got home to the regiment. I remember seeing them. They were shook up. They were no good for a day or two.

Eric Brunt: (01:52:30) Were there ever anybody from your regiment that tried to desert that just couldn't take it any longer?

Bill Neely: (01:52:38) Right in the beginning, I had a sergeant major. The first piece of action. He was in a jeep with three others, and he turned the Jeep until off back, and he was cashiered.

He was kicked out of the regiment later on when Turner became the brigadier general. He took him in as an aide, and he'd done wonderful things just that once he panicked. And they were a little softer this war than, in other wars, they realized that if panicked, if somebody panicked and there was an officer saying they shouldn't because panic is contagious. And if you panic and I panic, everybody around is going to panic. And pretty soon nobody knows what the hell is going on. Panic is what I was taught was if you feel panic coming up, sit down for a little smoke. Smoke it. For at that time you got time to think and settle down. And it's true. Panic takes hold. You let go...it's got you. But if you hold against it for a few minutes, it fades.

Bill Neely: (01:54:01) I've been scared a few times. But I never, I never. I toured the whole of France and Holland, and I was there for the whole friggin show. And I missed most of the war. I was in the wrong place. Or maybe I was in the right place at the right time. I was scared a few times, but mostly. When I come home, I was okay. The only thing I couldn't stand it. Airplanes going over at night. I didn't want to go see those lights on me. I'd done that for 2 or 3 years. And then. It took spells that was passing out. I'd go load the hay and they'd come home put the horses in. I just bunked out for an hour. Get up and get going again. Done that time after time. I scared me I though there was something wrong with my brain. So I asked the doctor, he checked me out, said Warner's. I said, how can it be two years since the war? That's all he said. No, that's one, he said the longer it takes the worse it will be. You are lucky, some guys will be 3 or 4 years before it hits him. So what do I do? We had to pay our own doctors and $5 from the health department. We had to pay $25 to see a doctor. You know, you didn't want to have to see a doctor too often, so he said, I said, I can't afford coming back for the doctor. He said, no, it's up to the Army to look after you. He said, I'm going to send you to the DVA. And I didn't know what the DVA was, didn't know what the hell they called it - it was the army anyway. So I went to Winnipeg, took the slip of paper, went in there. And a little fat guy came out. Nice suit, tie and everything. All good. That shouldn't be on there.

Eric Brunt: (01:56:21) That's okay. I'll cut out the bad parts. Okay?

Bill Neely: (01:56:24) Yeah, and. He took me into his office, asked me a few questions, and I answered them. He said, well, no, he was telling me your symptoms. He said, I'm not a doctor. I said, oh, what the hell are you? He said, I'm a lawyer. What am I here talking to a lawyer for? I need a doctor. He said when you come here, you're looking for a pension. I got mad, I wasn't looking for a pension. I never asked them for nothing. I got a little cheeky. He said to me, you know you could go to jail. I said, okay, send me to jail. It's been bloody sorry because you hear your name mentioned in Ottawa so many times, you know you'll be hiding. So they let me go. He said, what's your problem? I said, well, I told you what my problem is. I think it's my eyes. Okay. So he sent me through, an optometrist checked me out, I got 20/20 vision and nothing wrong. But later on, we found out I got Meniere's Disease. But I had that all through the war. Had it since I was young, didn't know it and. Still got my eyes test. And that's the last time I...I did a lot of stuff for the army, but for stuff I wont ask.

Bill Neely: (01:57:51) Oh that scooter, she got it. What happened was she told me it was dead. I took it her to her and she straightened it out. And then she said, you're a vet aren't you.? I said, yeah. She said, I'm going to talk to you. I said, leave me alone, that's the taxpayer's money. She said, it's not. It's grants are made for guys like you. And she said. You're the reason we're free. I said, I don't think I'm much of a reason. I didn't do very damn much. But she said, you weren't there for four years and did nothing. I said, maybe you're right. There was a lot of guys same as me. We done what we were told, there's other guys in hot water all the time. But I admired the men in the infantry. They took a shit kicking, the Winnipeg Rifles, PPCLI, Regina Rifles, all the infantry outfits. They were the spearheads and these were the static. When it gets moving, then armored cars are out front and in the tanks behind where the action is, infantry is there first, and they're out in the open...there was one place that I told you about it. About the one nearly hitting the Jeep. The guys coming in to the basement where we were hiding. I told the guy: I sure admire you guys. Got more than enough guts out there. Nothing between you and enemy. He said, I don't know. We're better off than you riding around in that bloody coffin, he said. So that's the way you're training. They were trained. They were the best. We were trained, we were the best, and we were all the best.

Eric Brunt: (01:59:46) So the armored cars would go in ahead of the tanks?

Bill Neely: (01:59:50) Oh, yeah. Yeah, armoured cars...we were reconnaissance. Our job wasn't to fight unless it was necessary...soft stuff. Our job was to find out what Germans were. The Germans were moving, and they would set up their 88s and stuff and their hidden. Tanks come in. They blasted tanks to hell out of the country. [audio cuts out] And fire at us. They'd let us go by if we didn't see. They let us go by a tank and they got them. We were just small fry as far as they were concerned. But we thought we were pretty damn important. If we spotted anything suspicious. We had maps and coordinates on it. And you sent back a word. At coordinates such and such there is an 88. Coordinates such and such a couple of tanks. So our guys, when they come in, they knew where they were. They knew what they were fighting. You know, that was our job. Our job wasn't to fight. Only if necessary.

Eric Brunt: (02:01:05) Your job was so important, though.

Bill Neely: (02:01:09) Montgomery didn't think so. He thought we were a useless bunch. We didn't think much of him either. In the old days, we had scouts for the wagon trains and stuff that warned him of Indians. We were scouts that warned him of the enemy, and we'd done it for not only...we had squadrons with the Americans, but squadrons with the British. We'd done reconnaissance. There was two Armoured regiments. Scout regiments, armoured car regiments. One of them was hit later someplace. We were the only one there at that time that they came in later, but we had four squadrons and their job was out in front. And sometimes, sometimes you'd

be behind the lines. We didn't go in to get into trouble, we got the hell out, you know. If we seen a tank coming, we didn't argue with them. We put as much ground between us and them as possible, them 88s were good from a mile away, they would knock us out. I remember it was about as thick as this table, about this thick. And the tank tanks outside were hard, hardened steel. But inside of this they were soft. And when they were hit with the shell, they didn't...a bunch of shrapnel inside.

Eric Brunt: (02:02:51) Well...your job sounds like it was quite like if you weren't careful, you could get yourself into a lot of trouble.

Bill Neely: (02:03:00) We lost men. There was never any fuss made up....They were here today. They weren't here tomorrow. Nobody said nothing. I don't know how many I think we lost. I don't know, at least 90 or 100 men. I regiment was a thousand strong, so I don't know what they lost. Every squadron lost a few. [audio cuts out] Whole regiments were wiped out, but they were rebuilt. And they were still Manitoba...

Eric Brunt: (02:03:37) Winnipeg rifles?

Bill Neely: (02:03:39) Whatever regiment they were still in. Regiment. All new guys, but the stores, the same uniform. So to us they were still the same guys. But them guys were buried. They didn't even know it.

Eric Brunt: (02:03:54) I have talked to a few veterans who were in the infantry, and they said...They told me that you didn't...You tried not to make any friends because...

Bill Neely: (02:04:04) You were going to lose them.

Eric Brunt: (02:04:05) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (02:04:06) Yeah. I didn't have many friends, in my regiment I didn't know many. I met one guy in town here. We became friends. He was in the same regiment as me. We went through the war together never even seen each other. I don't know, he was one of the squadrons. He told me. I think he was in B Squadron or C Squadron. I kid from my hometown. I went to school with, he was in B Squadron. I didn't know that...I met him in England and you know, I didn't lose many friends. I guess maybe I lost...I told that AWOL deal...My friends all went

overseas. I'm two months behind. They're spread out. By the time I was getting trained, we were reinforcements. We didn't go with regiment. We went to regiments as build ups because a lot of them regiments were sent over understaffed, and then we're trained behind them. We went each one and we made friends there. But I'm kind of disillusioned. A lot of them wouldn't speak to me anymore. I don't know what I'd done. I was not going on that last trip. To hell with you.

Eric Brunt: (02:05:35) Well, what was his name? The one that wouldn't speak to, you.

Bill Neely: (02:05:39) [inaudible]

Eric Brunt: (02:05:41) Was he the driver?

Bill Neely: (02:05:43) He was the driver.

Eric Brunt: (02:05:45) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (02:05:46) And at this shooting down. This 88...Black was there. He gave the statement, he screwed everything up. The statement came out. Don Neely and Bill Moore. Don Neely hit the gas tank. I went to the office and said that was Don Moore that did that. It wasn't me. I was back up. He was the first one to see it. He hit the gas tank. It's his tank. It's our...it's the whole car that did it. But it was...He was the one who pulled the trigger. He's the one that should get the write up. I had a piece. It was written up on the Staghound. I don't know where it is around so much, but it tells the story. And Moore blamed me for that. He never forgave me. He thought I had taken his. But it wasn't...That wasn't what I was looking for. All I wanted was to get it over and get home. I felt lonely for my wife.

Eric Brunt: (02:07:22) I bet.

Bill Neely: (02:07:24) That's the story of our coming home, too. We were on the Queen Elizabeth. And we had...it was lousy...I got bit by a louse. It was itchy and I scratched it. It would turn your blood into poison, it went up my arm had a lump under my arm. About the size of an egg. That's after I lost all my money and crept in. I got on the train, and we made our bunks down every day we had to make them up and we'd have to have inspection. Just like you were in the barracks this morning. And then there...John [inaudible] will come. He's the officer in the next car. You better get up, get dressed, or you'll be on charge, because that's their favorite thing

to charge you for everything. You'll be on charge...I said John, if you can lift my head. That's about all...I'll get off...I can't lift it. He said what's the matter? I showed him my hand, all swollen up, big bump here. So he ran and got the MO. MO came and looked at it and he said My God. All the antibiotics they had in Superdrug, they had big pills for this. You take five of those things every two hours for about 24 hours. And he lanced this lump but nothing happened.

Bill Neely: (02:09:09) So. The stuff was working. I was getting better then he told me the next day He didn't know if it would work or not because it was too late, but it wasn't. It didn't get the upper hand. I was getting better and it was bringing this to a head and this lump was still here. Then the next day we...That next evening he pulled it into the station. And the only thing. I was set aside. They went next call an ambulance to take me to the hospital because this hadn't broken. But I said to them, can I go out on stage and see if my wife was around? Well, you can have a look around. But they marched the guys up. Never got a great big welcome out here. All spit and polish...Back in the back...Door there and I looked out and I see...my wife she was waving. Herschel Walker was with her. They were waving they were way over there. So they opened in the chain fence there. A fence back then. So I seen her. I starts walking across there I threw my rifle, to hell with it and my pack to hell with it, I run I hit that, chain fence and my finger went through and I burst this in a way. I just felt it coming right down. Such a relief.

Bill Neely: (02:10:43) I can't tell you how my wife kind of try and talk to her. She cries and said, well, I got the car, you want to go home? I said, well, I'm not supposed to go, but I can't go back. So I got in the car. Next morning I reported back to [inaudible]. And Sergeant, he gave me shit. He said, why did you. I said, well, I looked out. My wife was there. I hadn't seen her for four years, for crying out loud. I couldn't leave. Well, I don't blame you too damn much. He said, I want to see my wife do. But I had to look for you for a whole bloody hour, the evidence was there and we couldn't find you. I said, well, sorry, but I'd try it over again. I'll let it go this time, so I got away with it. But I don't know where my helmet is. I don't wear my pack is and I don't know where my rifle is. You're on the platform [inaudible]. Four years we were [inaudible]. And that was the shits. I think it took us a year to get used to each other again. We were total strangers.

Eric Brunt: (02:12:15) Yeah. I can't. What would you even like? When you see her? I don't even know what you'd even say to her. Right? How do you sum up four years in a...

Bill Neely: (02:12:22) Yeah, in a minute.

Eric Brunt: (02:12:23) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (02:12:25) In a year you haven't told anything. And then there was questions. She said to me. Did you fool around with any of those girls? I said, that's not a fair question. I said, if I said no, you won't believe me. If I said yes, you're going to be hurt. So what am I going to do? But just remember one thing. There was a long ways away. I come home to you. She accepted that we were 65 years together.

Eric Brunt: (02:13:06) Your first. I guess your first son must have been four years old then. Yeah. What was it like seeing him for the first time?

Bill Neely: (02:13:16) Well, they had showed him pictures of me, and I was daddy Bill, so she asked who is this? He says that's daddy Bill. You're glad to see him? Yeah. Looked me over pretty carefully, didn't say nothing. That night, about 9:00 wife [inaudible]...She was getting him ready for bed. He said, mommy when is that man going to go home? It took a long time for him to...He didn't figure I should be able to give him money. He was his momma's boy until the day he died. He died here of cancer five years ago.

Eric Brunt: (02:13:59) In this building? In this building as well, or just...?

Bill Neely: (02:14:04) I was in 14. He was in 16. Yeah. And then my daughter got married to Jim, and my daughter decided I'd be better off. [audio cuts out] Be back in here and come back to me. Jim picks me up every Saturday and Sunday and buys me breakfast. He done that for his wife all the time when she was alive, and I went to. She's gone. I am still here, so he brings me to breakfast.

Eric Brunt: (02:14:50) Do you like it here?

Bill Neely: (02:14:54) No. I don't like being alone. I got a chance to shack up with 1 or 2 that I don't want. I'll check out this one. I can't get her. She's about 40 years younger than me, and she thinks a lot of me. But I'm kind of a hero to them. I helped free the people. I never even thought about it. Tell the story here. I had Shaw Cable and I never got a bill. Then he started dialing me for...To pay. Pay what? I said. Send me a bill and I'll pay. Never got a bill. So he cut me off. I got a little bit pissed off. I tried to get down in the powers that be. [inaudible] I said it's supposed to be a free country. There's supposed to be some. Opposition here. That's when Shaw said they got to do what the hell he liked. You got no opposition. Tell him I got your back. And this is a public building, and I'm paying rent. And this is my end. He wanted to have whatever the hell I want in here. I said, that's what freedom is all about. That's what they told us we were fighting for. I said, I have a lot of freedom before the war, and there's no way I could pick up my 22 and walk out into the bush and shoot it there. No sweat. Now I can't even fart without a permit. It's the truth.

Eric Brunt: (02:16:48) Did you get your did you get your Shaw back?

Bill Neely: (02:16:51) I got it back. She got it for me and phoned up and had the phone about six times before he got through to anybody with skin on them. You talked to was always...

Eric Brunt: (02:17:06) Robots.

Bill Neely: (02:17:06) Robot and they wouldn't answer the questions. She got to finally got one. She said put the box number on and he'll get a bill. The way you've got it set, he'll never get a bill and he can't pay it unless...they said well he owes $250. I said, I haven't got nothing for that. I'll pay that, but I'm not paying no extras. They said no, it cost me $160 to reinstate me. I said tell them to go to hell. So she told him to go to hell. She says. He says go to hell. So he modified it and he said, this is good neighbors kind of a deal. A show of I can't find the words for it, but a good show, good faith. He paid this. Tell him again. Go to hell. They took it. I'm willing to pay what I got and not $0.01 more. I'm not paying to be reinstated. And I said, tell him they you can't do that. Stick it up their ass. And she told them that. She said she. He tells me to stick it up your ass.

Bill Neely: (02:18:30) So the guy modified that again. He said, well, you still like the statement that we're charging him $100 to reinstate, but he'll get credit for that for the next two months. In other words, I won't have to pay for two months. So I accepted that, and she told him I was listening to her and she said, you got a man. He's only 96 years old. He fought in the war to free you so that you could do this kind of shit that you're doing. Yeah. They think more of me now than they did when I come home. That's another thing. I still think you've quoted some on the way home. They didn't have here. They didn't know what to do with this. They had more friends who were just a pain in the ass. You know, were big shots and they were all here with nothing. For a while, it was like that. And all of a sudden I was working at [inaudible] a guy came in and said, I'm from DVA. What was your rank? Said I was a trooper with the Manitoba Dragoons. How long were you with them? about four years. Okay. [audio cuts out]

Bill Neely: (02:20:10) I said, I can't go for $300 a month. I'm making three times that much here. Yeah. And I'm healthy. I'm strong and still work. No, he said, it's not the $300 a month. I want to get you on...They call it...

Eric Brunt: (02:20:25) Pension?

Bill Neely: (02:20:27) Not pension, but service. You get ambulance if you need it. You get cancer and you get looked after in the hospital. You need your tonsils out together. You need teeth, you get it. You pay for my pills for $100 a month. They fix my teeth. They're $2400 bucks. You want glasses for $800 bucks? They paid for all that. Every month you pay that year, except for about three things that they've prescribed. It's not covered...all that stuff because of that. I said okay to that. After putting the fat on the fire and getting me alive again. I'm going to get you a scooter. I said I don't need a scooter. She says yes you do. So I got it and I use it.

Bill Neely: (02:21:32) She says you were a vet. You deserve it. I said I didn't do a bloody thing. She said you weren't there four years and didn't nothing. All I said, compared to what some other guy has done, I didn't do fuck all. No, she won't take that for an answer. So I'm not going to push you. I don't want to [inaudible] she's a smart person. She got on and she talked him into coming, checking me out, and I got that water. The girl from DVA. She took a look at the walker that was here...that don't fit you. You need a new walker. I said no it's OK. For the walker...and I got a housekeeper that comes twice a month washing things up, she didn't come this month. She's mad at me.

Bill Neely: (02:22:29) ...Different. Now I'm in trouble. I'm going for tests. I don't have a car that I can drive to Winnipeg, pay to play for that. So they pay...the DVA pay and my granddaughter take me down to supper, and Barb's going to take me on the 14th in Winnipeg to get the scope. I had cancer and removed five...five tumors I mean, about six years ago. And last year I was real sick. Of course, I didn't know. My granddaughter told me I wouldn't do a damn thing. She told me, and I didn't know who she was. She took me into the hospital. Anyways, I come through that....

Bill Neely: (02:23:39) And things are slipping. I'm scared as hell of getting Alzheimer's or something, you know? But I talked to other guys same things happen to them. You talk about something, you lose your train of thought. Not necessarily something wrong, but I feel like it's...It's the first step in the wrong direction. I don't know what they said, but. There's more stuff comes. It takes a while. It comes back, comes back, comes back. What did you assume the statement was?

Bill Neely: (02:24:27) I seen Germans after the flamethrowers went through...all pink, no clothes lying here and there...frigid where they fell. It stinks. You know, the whole country stunk. We used to call it smell of death. But everywhere you went, the smell was there. The only thing that comes close to it is undertaking product.

Eric Brunt: (02:25:00) It's what?

Bill Neely: (02:25:01) The smell. The smell and undertaking product is something that is like the war, or only is not as strong, but you get used to it. You get so you can't smell it. For the war zone. It's more dead than you see or know about. You're real action is just a part of what's happening for 2 or 3 miles. Growing up, I had four uncles in the First World War. The Second World War was not as tough as that. I mean, it was mostly machines against machines and guns against guns who were on the move all the time in the first [audio cuts out]

Eric Brunt: (02:25:59) Sometimes face to face. Right?

Bill Neely: (02:26:01) Right over there, just on the other side. While we had some fish. Our infantry...like Caen. Places like that. Bomb houses, clean people out. There was face to face there. Germans were good at...like some of these eastern outfits, putting civilians in the way. They didn't have to fight, but put them in our way. We'd have to take it easy on the Germans with that free shot. They didn't care if we killed them. We didn't want to kill them. They didn't care. I didn't run into too much of that. But I heard a lot about it.

Bill Neely: (02:26:51) I think I had a charmed life. I think I went through with angels sitting on my shoulder, but I didn't get...One place that...We couldn't drink the water, So they supplied us with water. We had an armored car. We had four jerry cans from water tied on the turret. And when water come up every day when it's your turn, you had to go to and fill it. It was always two jerry cans empty. You never let the whole four get empty, because you never knew when one would stuck with no the water. So it was my turn. And a water truck with water starts to hit the road out there. I took two jerry cans and went from the mountain top to the guy that was there. Come back in time...hear a loud BOOM. Take a look where the truck was sitting. Just a pile of smoke. I don't know if somebody was killed or not. Nobody said nothing. Never went back. I had no water. The truck was screwed direct hit.

Eric Brunt: (02:28:00) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (02:28:00) I don't know what with, but it had to be a good sized shell to hit it because it blew the whole thing to rat shit. And. I don't know, there were a couple of guys there when I left, whether they were gone or whether they got killed, I don't know. I don't ask too many questions.

Eric Brunt: (02:28:26) Can you tell me again what exactly happened at that time when you took those prisoners but your gun didn't fire? Can you tell me again what happened again there?

Bill Neely: (02:28:36) Nothing happened, they just went right toward him that's all.

Eric Brunt: (02:28:39) So were you behind enemy lines when that when you saw them or. Tell me how that went. How that went down.

Bill Neely: (02:28:44) We had moved up. We moved up into the lines. We were chasing the Germans. You know, the Germans were on the run. The Germans were beat, but they still had a stink, and we had to round them up over and chase them. And sometimes we can make 4 or 5 miles in a day, and then they set up and haunt us. And when they were haunting, you weren't going to walk in there because they could fight. They were better trained than we were. They knew their weapons better. A lot of our guys are green as grass. They're in the army six weeks and they're in front line towards the end, because reinforcements were getting lesser and lesser because all of the zombies were still back there. And that's another story, but I don't think we should talk about it anyways.

Bill Neely: (02:29:42) I was scared and I guess I was pretty rough. Get the hell out of here. You go down there. They'll feed you. Somebody there could understand English. They had the Kamerad, Kamerad, Kamerad. Some of them were close to crying. Some of them were bright as hell, but they took off as a bunch. What happened to them I don't know, but there's only one place to go. If they went down, there was to the regiment, so they got to walk in with their hands up and they know what to do with them. They got wired off places. They'd set up keep guys in overnight.

Eric Brunt: (02:30:18) And where did you find them? Where were they?

Bill Neely: (02:30:21) It was just when we were moving up and we stopped here. And we're wandering through here. There's clumps of bush, and these guys just come out of the grass, like, just out of nowhere to throw their arms away. Most of them all of a sudden. Just one guy. He's still holding his. It's not that he didn't understand. I don't want to know. You leave it there and you go down there, and he looks at me. Tears running down. He said, are you going to shoot me? I said, go that way and they'll feed you. So somebody there was 3 or 4. They took him with him. They all went. What happened from there? I don't know. They were running back. We were looking for souvenirs. Looking for something to send home that would remind people of us. I had a German. [audio cuts out] Blacksmith, gunsmith. And had him make it down into a sporting model. Not sure it was 7mm or 8mm, but it was a beautiful gun. And I had that. And I had two

swords, and they had a set of silver spoons are so heavy, you know. Solid silver. I had to go for it. And tonsillitis and was sent to the hospital for two weeks. I come back. It was all gone. I had it, you know, the size of the car. They had said. Put it in there. It was all gone. I sometimes wonder if that's some of the reason they don't want to talk. And it had to be the old guys who took it. But they took it all. That silver... [inaudible]

Eric Brunt: (02:32:28) So there was a lot of thievery amongst even your own regiment?

Bill Neely: (02:32:32) Oh, yeah. Those guys didn't care for nothing but themselves. Each car was a family. You lived with those guys. You slept with those guys? With some of those guys. And there was for months on. The next car was the same well that somebody got sick and that when I was sick. If somebody's taking my place. But when I come back, I'm hoping to get my place back. So far I was able to get my place, but it didn't happen. And no one. I got back to the regiment. After that, I was. Discharged. I was waiting outside and there's two officers come through and one was from the Manitoba Grooms. And I run to him and said, I clear, I want to come back to the regiment. And I had my patches on and you could see I was a goon. He said, well, I haven't got no one for him. I said, I belong to the regiment. I was sick. I'm over it. My blood should still be there. I'll take a chance. He signed the papers, and so I got back. And the guy that was taking my place. So I don't have. That answer. Just took a chance. He could have got his finger snapping. Then you got to be. Unauthorized. Signed. Anything. It's just that today.

Eric Brunt: (02:34:06) So it would be guys from other trucks in the regiment who would be stealing things from you. And what sort of...You told me before, but what sort of things would they take?

Bill Neely: (02:34:20) Well, I never had that much that was worth to be taken, except I had two ceremonial swords about this long. Both beautifully engraved. I had those stolen around Caen, and the silverware was in a box lined with red silk and red...Not silk, padding, anyway, but it was layers and layers. They had soup spoons as big as that in about six of them. Each one of them with your half pound. You know you hit a man with them. I wanted that for my wife. I wanted the swords for that to cross on this wall. It's all about...Nobody knew nothing. That's where the estrangement. From then on, things were never the same. Before that, we were like this. You know, we slept in the same blankets. Roman slept. I slept in a bunk in him, laying on the girder here, doing his thing. You know, I think maybe that was part of it, too, because he married an [inaudible], and I always wondered if he was afraid I might tell I was not going to tell him nothing. He....I got his address, somewhere in Winnipeg. I don't know if he's alive or dead. I don't give a shit. It was then them that pulled out. Not me. But to this day, I kind of wondered what the hell. I must have done something. The only thing I think is either that or that stuff being missing. I wouldn't be surprised if that's hanging on his wall. But I'm not sure he wouldn't do that to me because we were buddies to the thick and thin of everything. Any place I was, any story I got he's got.

Eric Brunt: (02:36:47) What was his name again?

Bill Neely: (02:36:49) No one. Was Ukrainian, I think. Tall, slim, good looking day. I never seen his wife, but I know he's going to leave. To go to Holland, to go to Ireland.

Eric Brunt: (02:37:10) To marry her.

Bill Neely: (02:37:11) Yeah.

Eric Brunt: (02:37:13) And then I guess...

Bill Neely: (02:37:14) You know, I loved him like a brother. It hurt when he wouldn't...But the thing is, his sister answered the phone both times. She would not let me talk to him. I don't know what that's all about. I never looked any further. I thought, to hell with it. That's what it is. Kiss my ass.

Eric Brunt: (02:37:37) Do you think maybe he was he was trying to cut out all the...everything to do with the war?

Bill Neely: (02:37:43) Yeah, it could be.

Eric Brunt: (02:37:44) Maybe that's the reason?

Bill Neely: (02:37:46) It could be.

Eric Brunt: (02:37:47) Because...

Bill Neely: (02:37:47) Maybe he was afraid I knew too much. I knew him inside out. I knew the things he'd done. I did some things, too. He knew what I did. We didn't hide nothing. We slept in

the same blankets. And I remember him and me were a pair. Donnelly and Moore was a pair. Then one. And I remember Colonel Black. We didn't like him. He was from a rich family, and we were trash. He was our overlords. But I don't think he could drive a nail. He used to have a sleeping bag and a thing tucked on the side of the...Like a tent on the side of the car. He set up his bed...me and others didn't have that. That day after day after day, when we come in, we automatically made his bed and set up his tent. But he gives us some kind of shit or something like that. And we didn't think it was fair. And it was raining that night, so we didn't. We didn't make his bed. He could make his own fucking bed. And then we were working with him damn near midnight. And every time we let go, he couldn't put up his tent right. He couldn't make his bed right. And he said to him, this day I swear he was bawling. I couldn't tell for sure.

Eric Brunt: (02:39:31) He was what?

Bill Neely: (02:39:32) Bawling.

Eric Brunt: (02:39:32) Oh.

Bill Neely: (02:39:32) So frustrated. He couldn't do it. He couldn't make his set up his tent and make his bed. We done that from all the time. And it wasn't our job. We're soldiers. We're not batmen eh? But anyway, I said to him, I can't go to sleep with him. He's sitting in the car with car geeks around him, but it's all wet. Okay, so we got up. Never said nothing to me. We set that up in about ten minutes. Had everything went back? I've never said a word, but after that, we never did the guard duty for a long time. He pulled us out. He did have. But he realized that you need friends when you are in the army.

Bill Neely: (02:40:16) You need buddies. You learn to love your buddy. If one [inaudible] came to me now and said sorry. I'd forgive him for the whole thing, but I will not go to him. He took off. He has got to come back. He may be dead, I don't know. That's a hell of a long time. Seven years. And he was a couple years older than me. Probably is, because he was driving the drivers, were point men, and they were older. They were the first one in the regiment. Then came the wireless operators and then came the gunners. And they were all, you know, a year or two apart. So I'm coming 97. He'd be down here if he's alive. I wouldn't want to see him. I'll even spit on his grave. But you know, in his old age, it's hard to live with. I am damn near 100. But I feel about 70, except for my leg. Not good. But my upper body and my health and my mind so far has been young, and I thank him. I used to dance. Can't dance anymore. But I still think about it. And I tried to line me up with 2 or 3. In their 90s. I said I picked my own out. I had one old girl who accepted, ready to marry me. I said, I'm free. I want to stay free. No one wants to say to you that I'd rather do it. Yeah. So I guess it was all just thinking.

Eric Brunt: (02:42:22) Yeah. It's like you're...Well, you're like a young man, kind of in an older...

Bill Neely: (02:42:27) That's what I told him. Yeah. There's a young guy in here just waiting to get out. You want to let him? But Barb has been a second arm to me, because I didn't know nothing about getting anything from anybody. I always made my own way. [audio cuts out]...farming.

Eric Brunt: (02:42:56) Well, I feel like if you were in your 20s, we'd be friends. That's how I...

Bill Neely: (02:43:01) That's right. I feel the same way. As soon as you came in. I felt I was ready. I wasn't too sure about this. I didn't want to say no. I figured you were doing a job, but I didn't want...I didn't want to talk about it. I didn't know what kind of questions you'd ask, but, you know, I knew I had to be honest, so I didn't want some...But I don't have any background I need to be ashamed of, except for a few prostitutes a couple of times not getting anywhere, but I was there. I went home with one once that was in France. Got into bed with her, went to sleep, slept till the morning and got up put my clothes on. She was still there. If my buddies knew that they [inaudible].

Eric Brunt: (02:44:04) Well, I'm glad that...so I felt as soon as I came in, I thought we were fellow Irishman, you know.

Bill Neely: (02:44:13) No. We could be friends. I know the way they can talk or almost unsayable here. You know a little more about these things going on than I did. I'm kind of on my depth. I'm from four, six generations ago. When...well just take women. I was brought up to respect women. I was brought up...Take my hat off when I talked to a woman. I'd come into a woman's house. I took my hat off. Don't happen anymore. Everybody wears a hat all the time. But I was taught that that was respect. If I stopped to talk to women in the street, I took my hat off. I was trained to do that. It's just automatic. I went with my nephew to a coffee shop in [inaudible] to house it. [audio cuts out]...My brother, so I quit.

Eric Brunt: (02:46:12) What the Blackball. Why did they blackball your brother?

Bill Neely: (02:46:14) Well, he wasn't in the army.

Eric Brunt: (02:46:16) Oh.

Bill Neely: (02:46:17) He. He was. I don't know. They turned him down for some reason. He had a heart attack shortly after.

Eric Brunt: (02:46:25) So you said screw them.

Bill Neely: (02:46:29) Gee [inaudible] The First Electric and I was in Seven Sisters working, but all the work I was doing was going to lack the money. And seven sisters kids were getting nothing. Nothing. So I pulled out and joined the Soccer Legion and stayed with them for 4 or 5 years. And then, uh. Some reason he wanted me to come there. So I transferred to Stonewall Legion, and I stayed there, and my brother wanted to be associate member, and he put it in an application, we all voted for him. But they had they passed out balls. Two balls. Anybody got a black ball and a white ball. You put the white ball in if you OK'd it. You put the black ball if no. And the way it works. One black ball out of 100 with stuff like that didn't it.

Eric Brunt: (02:47:37) Just one.

Bill Neely: (02:47:38) Just one. I didn't mind that so much. But they don't have to explain why they [inaudible], I say they should have to say why. If they haven't got guts enough to say why, they just keep that black ball in their pocket.

Eric Brunt: (02:47:53) Or stick it up their ass, right? Right.

Bill Neely: (02:47:57) That pissed me off. So we waited a year and we tried again. Same black ball. Nobody said nothing. And we were blackballed. So I said, that's enough. I'm not a Legionnaire anymore, I want out. They tried to talk me into staying. I said no, my brother ain't good enough for this place. I ain't good enough for it. So I haven't belonged to a Legion...I should be. See, the Legion puts those headstones. I doubt if I'll get one, because I'm not an Legionnaire, but I was. I don't give a damn. When I tried to get it for my grandfather, he was in the first war, his two sons have one, but he hasn't got one. And I went to bat. Everything I could and my Uncle Joe married to my grandfather's daughter. My mother's sister. He was German. And when he went to sign up they said they don’t need him to sign up. So they didn't. I tried to reinstate. I told the story. They said it was going to happen. I checked. It never happened. But he lost an eye over there. He and his two sons were in the first war. He was in his 60s.

Eric Brunt: (02:49:42) Wow. And he fought?

Bill Neely: (02:49:45) And he out walk...you know, they trained us pretty hard. I remember them waking up 12:00 at night, getting into full pack, full dress everything. March 20th miles, digging a hole, having it inspected. Fill it in. March back 20 miles overnight and then expected to work the next day. They have no sympathy. You know. I never liked an officer. Oh, yeah there was one field officer I did like. But basically, they were a class. They had their own mess...

Eric Brunt: (02:50:33) Their own sleeping....

Bill Neely: (02:50:34) Their own extra pay. They didn't do no friggin work. We didn't all want to come to battle. We're in the front lines. They're back here giving orders.

Eric Brunt: (02:50:46) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (02:50:46) Captains. Lieutenants. Sergeants. Corporals. They were the ones in that door.

Eric Brunt: (02:50:57) Not officers.

Bill Neely: (02:50:59) Not up to Major, but most anything above that was usually a couple of miles behind giving orders.

Eric Brunt: (02:51:04) Mm.

Bill Neely: (02:51:05) They were more important than us guys.

Eric Brunt: (02:51:07) My, uh, my grandmother's brother. So my great uncle was, uh, was a captain. Yeah. And he was. He was killed in Holland.

Bill Neely: (02:51:17) Yeah. Yeah. Captain, there was a lot of captains, that seemed to be the...It was not a major, but it was captains, lieutenants, sergeants that...

Eric Brunt: (02:51:26) Were there...

Bill Neely: (02:51:27) ...In the war. And the corporals were back up to sergeants. Mhm.

Eric Brunt: (02:51:32) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (02:51:33) But to me it was a dictatorship and I'm against any kind of dictatorship. I figured it should be a free vote and everybody's got to agree or you don't do it. You got to convince people you're right. I had a chance to run for the liberals a few years back. I turned it down, and I'm glad I did. I'm not a Liberal now. I think Trudeau's a liberal. I'd shoot him in a minute. He's ruining this country. And his dad did the same thing he ruined it. He ruined Calgary, Alberta.

Eric Brunt: (02:52:18) What do you think of Trump? Hey, what do you think of Trump?

Bill Neely: (02:52:21) Hell of a good man. I think he's doing more for the country than any president in the last ten years. That's 20 years. He's a little bit of a bullshitter and he makes mistakes, but he's got a great heart. He's working for the country. He loves his country just a little bit too much. Trying to alienating the other countries when he should be asking for their help, but he won't. He's a tough old bugger. And he's honest. I'm sure he told us anything. I watched him right from the beginning before he got in. And I think those Democrats are a bunch of bastards, and they think Hillary and...are a bunch of crooks. How the hell could they be broke two years later? Have over $100,000 in the kitty? Supposed to be going into...Charity. But most of that's going into somebody's pocket. Bill made speeches that over $100,000. But don't tell me that wasn't a bloody bribe. He thought it was $100,000 an hour. I'll talk fast. Tell a whole lot of shit. But I want to see my money. And he's the same. He's a crook. And he's done crooked things that hadn't been nailed. They say he backed up a murder. Some young people that knew too much.

Eric Brunt: (02:54:15) He had a bit too much fun with some secretaries. Yeah.

Bill Neely: (02:54:19) Yeah, well that's sex. That's a different thing. If it's consensual, I can't see any problem. Sex is something that's built into you. It's something that rides you. If you see somebody you like and they like you and it's consensual, there's nothing wrong. But force should be cracked down like murder. As far as I'm concerned, a rape, a real rape should be classified as manslaughter. Because what it does, it's not just what happens. You see some of these guys that raped them, they think they're doing them a favor. They think they're doing...Doing a good job that this is what they look for. But it leaves a mark on them. They never get rid of trauma. Yeah. They live with it. You take even us guys. They went through a war. You didn't do nothing. We still got problems. You can't name them because you don't know what the hell they are. You talk about this, what they called. We would have called it shellshock years ago.

Eric Brunt: (02:55:37) Oh, PTSD.

Bill Neely: (02:55:38) Yeah. I think we all had it when we come home. I know two years after I come home, I started passing out. Well, it was one of these things, that's an imbalance of the inner ear. And I think that was what was doing...Most of it was triggered it because it lived for years and everybody knew it had it. Went to war. Didn't know it. Had only had one spell in the towers coming down with the flu. And I never knew what caused it or why. But I think I told you this story.

Eric Brunt: (02:56:22) Do you ever still have dreams that you're back?

Bill Neely: (02:56:30) No. I never had nightmares. The only thing I got...I couldn't stand a plane going over at night. That...every night, every night, all summer long. Spotter plane come over at night. Loud in the night. And you had no lights on. Everything was pitch bloody black. And the plane had no lights on it. But you hear it. I'm sitting there thinking it was a German plane. "Wow wow wow wow." You could hear it coming. You knew what it was. It circled around so you didn't look up because your face will reflect the skylight, they can see you. They can't tell what you are, but they can see that the light from the plane. Then you are going to get bombed. So the [inaudible] is always head down, but they circle. Maybe 15 minutes or so. [audio cuts out] They drop it.

Bill Neely: (02:57:31) It's such a white, white light. It lights up the whole countryside. You see everything you are sitting reading the paper, and it comes down slowly like this. But if there's a little bit of breeze it drifts...So wherever it lands, about two minutes later. Bombers. Sometimes one, sometimes three. Come on and plaster that place. Then they are gone, night know the night that happens. Its one night. When I was in trouble anyway. They drop a flare right over me. I couldn't go anywhere so I looked at it. It drifted down here half a mile away. They come over and bomb half a mile of bare ground. I'm sitting here watching the whole show. Felt so weak.

Couldn't hardly move. But that happened every night. And you didn't get a decent sleep. That was what it was called eh. That's what it was, was worn nerves. They knew they very seldom got us. But if they spotted, at least a little light. They dropped bombs. They got something. That went on and on and on and on. So when I got home and the plane went over at night, I go, get up and go to the window. It's got lights on the window. Okay. Funny. I knew damn well when we went to bed, there was no German overhead. So I woke up. There was a German plane making noise. Unless it had lights. It took about two years to get over that.

Eric Brunt: (02:59:24) And you never went back to Europe?

Bill Neely: (02:59:27) No. [inaudible] kind of like to go back to Holland a couple times. I remember the Dutch kids. They come out of the woodwork, set up at night and they were all around their hands out. Cigarettes for mama. Cigarettes for papa. Chocolates for baby. You take the smoke around the corner and smoke it. And eat hot chocolate. And. You know, one of the things is, a lot of things shock you. I was a farm boy. I knew all about sex. Bred cows and sheep and stuff. Chase girls, knew what it was all about, but it wasn't to the flagrancy. That it was Holland, and it was wide open. France was worse. I never get that straight. I had...I was standing guard. I think it was Roosendaal. It was a kind of an old fort there and there was a fence around it and places for guards sitting on a wall and I was taking my guard duty in there. This guy comes up to me, come walking, see this man, I'm walking with a nice looking woman. He was a youngish man. [inaudible] He's older than me. He'd come up to me and said, sleeping with *mein frau* for three packs of cigarettes. I said, what? Sleeping with my girl. Yeah, yeah. I said, you know, you son of a bitch, if you don't get out of sight in about 10 seconds, I'm going to put this bayonet right through you. You get the hell out of here. His wife's standing over there, and you still see that, and it still disturbs me. Would you sell your wife for three packs of cigarettes? Or ten? Or a truckload?

Eric Brunt: (03:01:37) No. No matter. No cigarettes in the world.

Bill Neely: (03:01:43) No. Even when I was working for the government, you had a Ranger, you know. It wouldn't do you any harm in your career if you were to let your wife come on. Never said in so many words, but nobody was talking about it. I said, look, let's put it this way. You bring your wife out here, I might make a pass at her, but you make a pass at mine. I'll knock your fucking head off. Oh. That's enough. Never bothered me again. He couldn't stand it. I was taught to respect women. And it's getting so women that don't deserve it. When women come in. I fought for them in the beginning. I believed in equality...Even Steven. You're my girlfriend. You're my friend. You're a human being. Just same as me. The only difference you've got to sit down to pee. That was my philosophy. And that I still think that. When I see girls acting like men with their ways, shocks me a little. I'm getting used to it. I'm growing up. Yeah. I would like to go with you. But it wouldn't work. I reinstated those pills, and I got my doctors here. I don't need them very bad. I don't trust them altogether.

Eric Brunt: (03:04:01) Well, you've done. You've done something right. If you've been able to live this long with such an amazing mind still left. Right?

Bill Neely: (03:04:08) Yeah. But things are deteriorating. My legs are going now. My eyes are going yet? This I can't understand. Just a week ago, I had them tested. And he said my eyes haven't slipped. My vision is as good as they were two years. Yet they're not. They're under pressure.

Eric Brunt: (03:04:26) Mm.

Bill Neely: (03:04:27) And it might be that I took too many vitamins. I can't believe that any water soluble vitamin don't matter. You can't overdose.

Eric Brunt: (03:04:38) On. No you can't. Right?

Bill Neely: (03:04:39) No, it just goes on.

Eric Brunt: (03:04:40) Yeah. So I don't know if that's it.

Bill Neely: (03:04:43) So I wonder if I'm being threatened with a stroke, that sometimes happens to you. That's funny. Yeah. And bang you get a stroke. I can't ask for much more. I mean, the Lord's been good to me. I believe in him. He won't give me the woman I want. This one is almost. She might do as much as I say. So this is just what I'm looking for is a companion. I'm lonely. I see that's what I'm looking for, too. But I don't want to. I said I really don't know what I want. I don't want to give up. I want to want. I want. To want. You want freedom. If you live there and I live here, my friends that will work? I was 65 years married. I think that's long enough.

Eric Brunt: (03:05:43) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (03:05:43) And the way I'm lonely but if I've got the money in my pocket I don't go anywhere. Shut my door. Lock it. As long as I pay my rent the place is here. But they're roughing

it probably $700 a month. That makes a hole in a pension. That's about all my superannuation. You could sit and tell them. Thinking you start feeling sorry for yourself and it's time to quit.

Eric Brunt: (03:06:25) I guess yeah. You have to think about how, how fortunate you've been. Not, not many men get to live to the age that you got to live. Not many men got to marry a woman for 65 years.

Bill Neely: (03:06:37) And not many got the woman they wanted.

Eric Brunt: (03:06:39) Exactly.

Bill Neely: (03:06:41) Well, actually I didn't. The one I really wanted turned me down and she broke my heart. I fell in love with her when I was 13 years old and I chased her. I was 17. I made a date with her. I had it. She used to go with other guys and then between guys she'd come back to me. But I forgive her for all that. She thought she liked me. She still does. She's as old as me.

Eric Brunt: (03:07:12) She's still alive?

Bill Neely: (03:07:14) Yeah. She's alive. Her husband died two years before. I made a date with her for the 17th Saint Patrick's Day. And I still. Had a hard time convincing to convince her that she needed to date at least once. Two days. Two days before she come to me. I want to break our date. Why? I do something though a friend of mine has come home. He wants to take me. He's about five years older than her. Or she just likes his uniform, that's all. I said it's a free country. You want to bring him. No hard feelings, go ahead. But in those days, you had a floor manager for a dance. He called the dances. This is square dance. This is foxtrot. This is waltz. This is the humble.

Eric Brunt: (03:08:29) Mhm. Yeah.

Bill Neely: (03:08:31) And then once during the night they have a lady's choice. So ladies choice. I never went [inaudible] in Britain, and we spoke to her that night. But when ladies choice come up and you could not refuse a lady if she asked otherwise you got to go sit down...nobody else like that. You have the right to refuse. You don't have the right to refuse to go to somebody else. That was the rules, right? So I danced with her, and there was three grades. And then the third grade, seven grade I guess it was would write down codes for the doors. The

two big doors opened, and these two girls walked in. And the wife was one of them. And I looked and I said: "Who's that pretty girl that just come in?" Jesus kind of message. You're weird. I said yeah. So she takes me over and introduces herself and introduce me to May...I said can I have the next dance. Sure. Dance all the rest of the night with her and never looked at May again. We went together for about a year. I asked her to marry me. I was only 19. Then she said no, I'll marry you when you are 21. Could you wire me before that? Or you won't marry me at all? I said, by the time I'm 21, I'm going to be overseas. But when I was 20, I asked her again, and she said, I want you 21. And I said, go ahead and wait for the next 21 years. It's now or never. Make up your bloody mind. Okay, okay, okay. So we're going to get married. Then this thing come off in between. No damn way. Kay was the one who she really wanted. But I'd made my deal. And we were brought up to keep her word. And she was a nice girl. I loved her, too. I was [inaudible]. So I said, that's it. Nope. So she wrote me a letter. I burnt it. She wrote me another letter that said "Why don't you answer my letters?" Chucked it in the fire. I got a third one. I never even opened it. I chucked it in the fire. Sometimes [inaudible] I was afraid. I knew she had a bigger hold on me than they had, Later on, No. At that time she actually did, and she offered herself inside one of those letters I just might...except I didn't want it. So when I didn't know what was going to hurt, so that was it. I never spoke to...But after that, years later, we'd meet some place really friendly danced with her. I knew her husband well, I liked him. Way back down deep, I got a soft spot for her yet.

Eric Brunt: (03:12:06) And she. She lives here?

Bill Neely: (03:12:08) Hey?

Eric Brunt: (03:12:08) She's in this building?

Bill Neely: (03:12:14) She's got her own home.

Eric Brunt: (03:12:15) Mm.

Bill Neely: (03:12:17) I think if I was, I could probably convince her to. Put salt water in the fridge. There were different days. This is different. And I guess. She turned me down when I needed her most. I don't need her now. I need a companion. But no, sir. I don't want to get too close to anybody. But I like company. If I said a good man friend that we could talk and go home and chase the girls together and stuff [inaudible] just then. Only I don't want somebody that's so hot in the pants, fucking snake or something like that. I just hate living alone. I lived with my parents till I was 13 went to work for $0.10 a day, but I lived with the people I worked for and I got married. I lived with the person I married...it is just this last 13 years I've been all alone and

it's getting lonelier all the time. But the way things are slipping, I'm scared to make an impediment with anybody. If my eyes go, my mind goes. It would be better to just drink my beer and stay home. I guess I've run out of life. You know what all I am.

Eric Brunt: (03:14:19) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (03:14:22) Do you want to go for supper?

Eric Brunt: (03:14:24) We could. What time? Oh, yeah. Five. We could for sure.

Bill Neely: (03:14:30) I usually go for breakfast. About five. Yeah, they're open until 8:00.

Eric Brunt: (03:14:37) Oh, perfect.

Bill Neely: (03:14:38) They make a pretty nice breakfast.

Eric Brunt: (03:14:40) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (03:14:40) Do you like breakfast?

Eric Brunt: (03:14:42) I do.

Bill Neely: (03:14:44) I'll finance.

Eric Brunt: (03:14:45) Oh no you don't. Don't worry. Do you, do you walk or should we drive?

Bill Neely: (03:14:51) Well maybe we should drive. I got a scooter. Yeah, but I got a car. I can drive too. It's just. Here.

Eric Brunt: (03:15:00) Okay. Oh, it's just the one on the corner. Oh, perfect.

Bill Neely: (03:15:03) Yeah. that's the only one that's open, I think. Unless you want it. Yeah. Anyone?

Eric Brunt: (03:15:12) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (03:15:13) But they make a good breakfast.

Eric Brunt: (03:15:14) That's perfect. The only last thing is...you told me it before we started, but could you tell me that that story about those Americans and the...You were sitting in England with the black soldier? Can you tell me that story again?

Bill Neely: (03:15:36) Well, there's not much to it. My buddy and I went in. This was in Scotland, in Glasgow. I was on leave, and we went in to pub and a whole bunch of Americans in there.

Eric Brunt: (03:15:49) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (03:15:49) 4 or 5 black men.

Eric Brunt: (03:15:51) Mhm.

Bill Neely: (03:15:52) And we sat down at the table. It was only one empty table. And like I sat here and my buddy sat here and there was 2 or 3 chairs there. Empty. This black boy come to me tapped me on the shoulder. It's okay if we sit there. I said sure. It's empty. Help yourself. Never thought nothing of it. Him and his buddy sit down. The order of beer. And here it comes. They order us a beer. We're having a beer. I get a tap on the shoulder. It's an American. I think he was a corporal or something...blonde anyway. He tapped me on the shoulder and said, you know where I come from we don't sit with people like this. That kind of goofed me. I said, what the hell? Where I come from, we usually mind your own damn business. So he went away. And that's all there is to it. Those two blacks came to sit with us. They took our girls off us. They

were black as [inaudible]. But they were friendly. They was never anything wrong with it. They never hurt me sitting over there. I don't know about that prejudice. We're got a doctor here who is just as bad. Doctor hates a black man. Don't like an Indian. He's in control. He's wrecking our hospital. You put that on if you like. That would give you something to take it with and leave it...someplace.

Eric Brunt: (03:17:47) What's this? Oh.

Bill Neely: (03:17:51) We tried to get a town meeting with the mayor, and...

Eric Brunt: (03:18:01) They're closing it. Are they closing it?

Bill Neely: (03:18:05) Pardon?

Eric Brunt: (03:18:06) Is this. Are they closing the hospital? It was just saying...

Bill Neely: (03:18:11) It's closed as far as...they've got partly...Now they've got a clinic and they've got a couple in there. They wont last. Every time we get a doctor, every time we get a practitioner, they last about a year. And they're gone. Because they're under Laudon. They're not...They can't...The doctor can't be here, doctor. The Texas order from Loudon, and Loudon, in some ways is an asshole. He's arrogant. He's a good doctor, but he's a good businessman. And he's pulling in thousands of dollars into his own pocket. What he's doing, what he's done. He did it there. But they kicked him. Out. And we tried. But our mayor is for him. Oh, and our medical adviser for the town. It's for buddies with him. We finally made them come forward and make a statement. They stated there's no sense to have a meeting of the people because there's nobody really interested. But the people in the Gateway and the people that hired you and the people in Cedar. They're the only ones that's interested. This is bullshit. The people in Inwood are interested. The people in Harvard are interested in Peter Thiel are interested. The people in Baltimore are. They would. All this was their hospital. Now we have to go to Stonewall.

Eric Brunt: (03:19:42) Mm.

Bill Neely: (03:19:43) All this is a holding place for all these people.

Eric Brunt: (03:19:46) Mm.

Bill Neely: (03:19:47) And those people that are laying there. [inaudible] is getting paid for them. Mm. He's looking after. I don't know how many people. She's in once a year. Maybe he gets paid every day for every one of you.

Eric Brunt: (03:20:02) Mm.

Bill Neely: (03:20:02) And we tried to get the meeting and we couldn't get it. They finally got...Laudon finally put a piece in the paper, and they called a meeting for...They said for the people. But it wasn't. It was for him to show...He brought in two practitioners and opening the clinic. And they're taking patients. They're making it look like they're going to keep the hospital. We are waiting. Figure about a year they'll be gone. He's got this place right by the throat, and you can't say too much. You end up in jail. You've got to be damn sure you're telling the bloody truth that he can't twist it. The day is long. It's pretty hard to say anything that they can't twist around and get you in trouble. That thing needs to be pinned up someplace further away. That's what I got up for.

Bill Neely: (03:21:11) This is a free country. It was till the war. This was a freer country before the war than it is now. There's a lot of this political correctness. It's bullshit. You're an Irishman. You're a Mic. I'm Irishman. Im a Mic, if you are a German you are a Kraut. You know. You're Polish. You're a Polack. What's wrong with that? That's what you are. It's just like when I joined the army. The one thing you asked me. What's your nationality? I said, I'm Canadian. He says no such thing as a Canadian. I said I was born here. I'm a Canadian. He said, no you're not. I said, I am, so, if I'm not a Canadian I'm not going to be in your fucking army. I'll go join the Irish Army. He said, you trying to be smart? I said, no, trying to be sensible. I said, I was born here. This is Canada. I'm joining the Canadian Army. How the hell can't I be a Canadian? He thought for a minute. He said, well, what if I put you down as a Canadian of Irish descent? I said, that's exactly what I am. That's fine. I'll take that. But now we're Canadians. We weren't Canadians. We were British soldiers. I couldn't. Couldn't have that. He says alright to want to join the British Army. Fine. But if you join the Canadian Army and we live here and we're born here. What the hell are we?

Eric Brunt: (03:22:59) Exactly.

Bill Neely: (03:23:02) There's some funny thinking. Maybe I'm funny. Too opinionated. That's the Irish in me.

Eric Brunt: (03:23:12) I love it.

Bill Neely: (03:23:13) Irishmen are rebels.

Eric Brunt: (03:23:16) Yeah, definitely. Yeah.

Bill Neely: (03:23:19) What'd you gonna do? I'm not like a lot of the Irish I don't hate everybody.

Eric Brunt: (03:23:24) Mm.

Bill Neely: (03:23:25) My mom hated this question.

Eric Brunt: (03:23:29) Did she?

Bill Neely: (03:23:30) She didn't like the Englishmen. You should describe [inaudible] and my mom's accent, a lot of people took her for Scotch.

Eric Brunt: (03:23:45) Oh, she must have hated that.

Bill Neely: (03:23:46) Oh. She didn't like that.

Eric Brunt: (03:23:48) Yeah.

Bill Neely: (03:23:51) But my son. No. His mother is Scottish and Irish. I love it.

Eric Brunt: (03:23:59) Yeah. Well, I think that's great.

TRANSCRIPTION ENDS