Interviewee: **Salganik, Gordon J.**
Interviewer: **Jack Sigler**
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Sigler: Good morning, Gordon. This is Jack Sigler, and you understand that this interview will be recorded?

Salganik: Yes, I do.

Sigler: Okay, why don't we start with you telling me a little bit about where you were before World War II and how you got into the service and we'll go from there.

Salganik: I was a freshman student at the University of Maryland in 1942. I was in the pre-veterinary medicine program. I wanted to be a veterinary doctor. I was, of course, part of the ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps, which was part of most of the university curriculums at that time. Just before Thanksgiving approached, we were informed that we were subject to the draft. But, to ensure that we could stay in school till we finished our studies and graduated with a degree, a new program was being offered to us. If we signed up with the Enlisted Reserve Corps, committing to serve in the Army for two or three years in the service after we graduated, one would be exempt from the draft.

Sigler: This would be in addition to the ROTC program?

Salganik: Yes, it was something that was just a matter of paperwork. You were still a part of the ROTC, but you were part of another umbrella group, you might call it. The only way that you could be called up from school was if the President of the United States deemed it necessary, that conditions were such that you had to be called up for immediate duty. I went home, discussed this with my parents, and they said I should take my chances and not join up. That was Thanksgiving, and I went back to school after Thanksgiving and most of my friends were all signing up for Enlisted Reserve Corps, very few were not. My parents wanted me to take a chance and not worry about going into the Army. They didn't want me to even get near the Army. But, I thought about it and being one who could make decisions for myself, I decided just before I left for Christmas holiday to sign up for the Enlisted Reserve Corps, which I did. One of the responsibilities we had as an ROTC member, we were supposed to daily walk by the bulletin board at the Armory, which was more or less our ROTC headquarters, and read the orders on the bulletin board for any instructions that may come about. Went home for Christmas vacation and didn't say anything to my parents, as I remember, kept it to myself and came back to school after the holiday.

I returned to the campus, to the fraternity house where I was living, and the first thing the

men confronted me with was, "Did you walk by the Armory and read the bulletin board?" I said, "No." Well, on the bulletin board (this was about the 2nd or 3rd of January of '43), the notice on the bulletin board read, to my recollection, that the President of the United States deems it necessary that the following men be called up for immediate duty and gave a list of where they were to report and the date. So that was the beginning of the call up. I was called to report; I think it was March 3 of 1943. I had to report to Fort Meade in Maryland, which I did, and from there I was shipped out to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where I was assigned to a medical detachment, having been a pre-vet medicine student. There were twenty men in the detachment that were part of the 295th Combat Engineers.

Sigler: So you didn't do any basic training? They figured your ROTC was enough for that?

Salganik: No, no, this was an outfit that was just forming, a new outfit, and we were going into basic training. The cadre was a bunch of older men, most of them had been serving in the Engineer Corps in the Panama Canal and now they returned to the States to organize the 295th Engineer Battalion. There were men from all over, the Middle Atlantic and Northeast states, and a great majority from Pittsburgh, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. I went in and served my basic training. I was recognized as a college student and was able to advance rapidly to a non-commissioned officer. I became the 1st sergeant of the Medical Detachment. I was assisting the medical officer and the dentist who was part of the program. We were eighteen men plus a medical officer and a dental officer. We provided medical care to the battalion. I was anxious to go back to school. I was told that one would serve his basic training and then be able to return to college, so it made me feel a little bit better. I'd do my basic, then go back to school. I went through basic training and then had the opportunity to go home for furlough or apply for ASTP, the college program. If you wanted to apply for ASTP, you had to forego your furlough. If you wanted your furlough, you took your furlough; then when you came back, you applied for the ASTP. I lost both of my mother's parents, my grandfather and grandmother passed away right after I went into the service in March and April. In May my mother had come down with my father to visit me and my mother ... her hair was black before I went into the service; when she came down, it was all gray. Of course, I was a little bit upset at the time and decided I wanted to go home for furlough, then I would apply for ASTP. Because of my position I was able to choose to take the first wave. We went in groups on furlough, so I took the first opportunity to go on furlough and went home in June of '43. I went home – it was ten days or two weeks – and when I returned, I applied for my ASTP. Well, immediately after that in July, we started to move out from the Camp Shelby area. We had finished our basic training. We went down to Natchez, Mississippi, and that area, maneuvered, and then went into the Louisiana maneuver area and then went into El Centro, Texas, where we maneuvered for a time. We were on the move from the end of July until we finally settled. Our longest settlement was ... we reached Yuma, Arizona. I think it was in October of '43. We were in the desert maneuvers there, California - Arizona maneuver area where we trained on the desert. Of course, each time we made a move from different areas, from the Natchez area to the Shreveport, Louisiana, area to the El Centro area to the Yuma area, every time my Army post office, APO, would change – I had a new address. It was finally in December, we were frozen for overseas shipment, and

nobody could leave. We were on very strict orders to stay around the camp, couldn't go out too much, and we were preparing, making boxes and packing up equipment for overseas shipment. Preparing the automobiles with all kinds of gook on the engine to protect it from the weather and so forth and getting lumber and building boxes to pack all of our equipment. I guess we were frozen for about a week when I received a letter ... orders for me to appear for ASTP. Of course, I got the papers and I went to the colonel of the battalion, Colonel Carter, and I had a good relationship with him. He knew I was looking for the papers because we had discussed it, talked about it; I kept on searching the mail for my orders to go to ASTP. I wanted to go back to school. He said, "Gordon, this is the Army. We're frozen. Nobody can leave the outfit." So I was frozen in the outfit and I had to forego my orders to ASTP. I couldn't leave. I went overseas right after that.

Sigler: With the whole unit?

Salganik: Yes, as a battalion. We got on a troop train with our equipment and all, we loaded it all on and we traveled for one whole week, from Yuma, Arizona. This was coach – didn't have any Pullman style of any kind – and went through all kinds of cities and up to Boston, Massachusetts. Took us seven days to travel that distance. I remember going into the Baltimore-Pennsylvania station, I was right at home, and we stopped right outside the station. We always stopped frequently for other trains to go by us. The train was guarded so nobody could jump the train. There were guards at all the entrances because we all knew we were going to overseas and they wanted to protect – so nobody would leave the outfit. Of course, we finally got into Miles Standish and the routine there was just to go right through and prepare ourselves for embarkation. We got on this ship, a Liberty ship, *Excelsior III*, and went to Scotland, landed in Glasgow, Scotland, on January 29, 1944.

I wonder sometimes how we won the war because of the many, many goofs in the service I experienced. I was lucky. I was one of the lucky ones, very lucky. In my outfit, one out of every seventeen died, and one out of every seven was wounded. I escaped, clean. I was never wounded and I'm here to tell this story. I had many close calls. But the story I like to tell – on the Liberty ship, we were in a huge convoy of many ships, with escort vessels, destroyers, aircraft carriers and corvettes. It was January and rough seas. The ship was going up and down. The medical doctor, I was very close to, of course, working with him, he said, "Gordon, eat a lot of saltine crackers and that will take care of your stomach. You won't get upset." So of course, I did what he said and I ate a lot of saltine crackers and I was one of the few who did not become ill and have an upset stomach due to the rocking of the ship, up and down. It was known that I was one of these survivors, so to speak, of the trip. They said to me one night, "We're short people. We'd like very much, Gordon, for you to take duty for watch at night." We had a lookout at different points on the ship. They said, "We want you to go up just below where the ship's captain is, up on the bridge, you know how to get up there. There will be a man there who will have the headphones. You put on the headphones and he'll give you instructions on what to do and it will be a two hour watch. We'll wake you around twelve o'clock. You'll go from one o'clock to three o'clock." I said, "Fine." So I was awakened out of my bunk and I went to the mess hall and then went on up to the bridge and, of course, it was pitch black. I walked up to the bridge and a man said to me, "You looking for the headphones?" I said, "Yes." He said,

"Well, here they are. The instructions are right there. Just follow the instructions and report to the captain right above you." So, I put on the headphones and he disappears in the darkness and it's very dark and he said, "Just listen on the headphones." I listened and all I heard was Morse code and I didn't know the first word about Morse code. I was waiting for somebody to say something and I remember he said, "You're connected to a lot of other points, just listen. I thought it was within the ship, but it wasn't. The headphones were communication from ship to ship in the convoy. Within the ship there was another set of headphones for men who were on watch, which they repeated in words if he saw anything in the water that was strange and should be noticed. This set of headphones was near where I was in error and from this point this person was to also pass the information on to the captain. So I finished. A fellow came up and relieved me at three o'clock and I went down to the mess hall to get a cup of coffee and a little roll. As I'm going back to my bunk and somebody saw me and said, "Gee, Gordon, I thought you were overboard. Where have you been? They've been looking all over the place for you." I said, "I was up where I was told to go, up on the deck and the bridge, right where the captain was. I was on headphones there." They said, "you were? You weren't in the right place." What happened is the fellow that was supposed to take the place, where I went by mistake, he overslept, stayed in his bunk, so he never got there. He knew what he was supposed to do. I didn't know. So we finally found out that he overslept and I was on the wrong headphones. I was supposed to be on the headphones that were connected with other headphones within our ship. In various points of the ship there were people reporting back to this headphone. Then I said to myself, "How are we going to win this war if this is how we're going to go through exercises?"

Also, I must tell you that we finally landed in Glasgow at 2 AM and we were about twenty-four hours going from Glasgow to Tidworth Barracks, which is north of Salisbury in England and the Salisbury Plain. It was army barracks. I remember they told us that the accommodations were not the best. It was an English Lieutenant General who briefed us where we were going and the surroundings, what it was like. It was cramped, it was crowded. They weren't the best and he apologized, but this was wartime and we were trying to make do with whatever we had. Well, we went down to Tidworth Barracks and, of course, this was heaven compared to where we'd been living on maneuver areas in the States during the past few months, in tents and on the desert where sandstorms went up frequently. They talk about sandstorms in Kuwait. Well, I know what it is. We went through sandstorms in California in the desert maneuver area where the sand got into everything that you had. You wore a gas mask, it was in your shoes, your clothing, in your gas mask. The sand, it was just fierce, awful. It's awful to go through a sandstorm. Before you know it, the sand is like a whirl, twirling up, and you see just sand moving up in a circular motion, like a cyclone. It's sometimes difficult to avoid it, you run right into it. But we found the accommodations very comfortable as far as we were concerned compared to where we had been living in the States. We were in England, we got there around January and, of course, we prepared for the invasion. We were on maneuver areas in various parts of England. We shipped out of England right after D-Day. I got the notice from Eisenhower, "You're about to embark on a mission, the eyes of the world are on you." Anyhow, we boarded a Liberty ship and we arrived at the landing area off the coast of France, Omaha Beach. It was about the 13th or 14th of June. We were with a lot of ships there and, of course, we put up balloons with wires so that the German planes couldn't strafe us. They were heavy wires. Some of us got off the ship, I can't remember the exact date, but I was one of the

fortunate ones. I got off because we were to set up a battalion aid station, go in with the headquarters company headquarters company to set up first. We always went ahead to set up our CP. We got off the ship; it was rather rough climbing down the ship and getting the equipment off with us because the ship was rocking back and forth and the landing craft that we're getting on was going back, up and down, bobbing up and down. But we got off and got ashore. But I recall right after that in the next day they stopped unloading the ships because the sea was too rough. Very bad weather. We were lucky we got across. It's a sight I'll never forget, just unbelievable, going over the beach. We got our equipment in and got our trucks into Isigny, France, where we marshaled there, and then we went to a place called Briqueville where we waited for the rest of our men. So our men didn't come in for another week to ten days later. They had to wait as a severe channel storm blew itself out. Then we regrouped. It was a very nervous situation because we were concerned that supplies were going to be running out because supplies were not coming in. We were rationing, being very careful not to waste anything. That happened frequently, where we had to be very careful about supplies where we were running short.

Sigler: At this point, was your battalion assigned to a division?

Salganik: Yes, we were a combat battalion, part of the 115th Engineer Combat Group, which we were called Corps Engineers. We were part of the 19th Corps. Wherever they needed men, two hands, they called upon us. We were called upon as infantry at times, called upon to do scouting, and also building bridges, clearing roadways, and maintaining roads. Our group, the 115th Engineer Combat Group, consisted of the 295th Combat Battalion; there was also the 992nd Engineer Treadway Bridge Company and there was the 512th Engineer Light Pontoon Company; there was also the 234th Engineer Combat Battalion. So we were all a group together and we worked together. In total, we built over 100 bridges. I guess the bridges added up to something over 11,000 feet in length. Of course, we removed like 6,000 mines. This is from Omaha to the Elbe River.

Sigler: All through the entire European campaign?

Salganik: Yeah, we maintained and averaged around 6,000 miles of roads. We used rock, gravel, rubble, brick, sand ... cinders were hauled. We hauled like 65,000 cubic yards of material. At Saint Lô, we helped capture the locks then operated the locks, repair and then operate the locks on the Vire River near Airel, France. The locks were not operating, they were closed to keep the water back, dam the water because down the road there were bridges there that were knocked out. Of course, if there was no water there the Germans could escape. They were escaping on one particular bridge that was partially submerged and, what we did is open the lock; so we flooded that bridge so they couldn't escape.

Sigler: You guys were pretty versatile.

Salganik: Yes, very much so. So we went on, and we moved along and moved so rapidly through France and up to Belgium, many places we were stalled because we were out of

gasoline, had to wait for gasoline to catch up with us.

Sigler: So you were then part of Patton's Third Army?

Salganik: We were the First Army, then the Ninth Army. We got up into Germany and were part of the Ninth Army. At different times we were attached to the 8th Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry Division, the 29th Infantry Division, the 30th Infantry Division, the 35th, the 78th, the 2nd Armored Division, 7th Armored Division, then the 8th Armored Division, the 79th Infantry Division, 83rd Infantry, 95th Infantry, 102nd Infantry, the 104th Infantry, and 113th Cavalry Group.

We supported them at various times during the war, from Omaha Beach to Elbe River in Germany, we were attached where they needed us. We did many things. Many things come to my mind. When we were stopped at the Rhine River, we wanted to keep the Germans on edge and not know what was going to happen and the idea was to cross the Rhine River, run up the banks, and shoot up a storm. It was to keep them off their feet so they didn't know where we were really going to put a push and break through, and we were only one of many groups that did this. We lost a couple of men at the time. Shoot up a storm, then we would retreat and get back into the boats. There was one point, near Gulpen, Holland, we had to cross a river and move on. To cross the river it was necessary to build a bridge. The site was under direct observation by the enemy. I can't remember what river it was, but it wasn't a very wide river. It was a narrow river and all the bridges were knocked down, but it was at a point where the Germans could zero in on us and stop us from building the bridge. So we had to put a bridge across this narrow river and do it quickly. It had to be done at night and it had to be done quickly so the men and tanks could run across the river. So we got upon the idea of attaching a constructed Bailey bridge, by welding it to the front end of a tank, a big Sherman tank, and then the tank went down to the river. We detonated a charge at the welded point and it broke the attachment and the bridge fell right across the river. The tank crossed the river and other tanks and men followed. That was ingenuity that we had to come up with to go across the river so we wouldn't lose any men to be sighted by the German while we would be building a bridge. You had to use your ingenuity in many, many areas and times.

Another experience, I remember we were in a convoy behind Headquarters Company, A Company, B Company, and C Company. We were moving rather fast at night. The vehicle behind us bumped into our trailer. We had heavy equipment, part of Headquarters Company, bulldozers and big heavy trucks for towing vehicles and whatnot behind us. We were always on the tail end as a medical detachment. Of course, we had about six enlisted men as part of the aid station there plus the medical doctor and the dentist. We were in a weapons carrier with a trailer attached. We stopped to see if any damage was done and we lost the convoy. Next thing you knew ... well, with all that heavy equipment behind us and we became the lead vehicle going into Belgium. We drove into a town called Cambrai. I remember, we came to an intersection and we were not sure what direction we were supposed to go. We really didn't know where we were. It was pitch dark. We stopped, one of the men got out of the weapons carrier, he climbed a telegraph pole where they had a sign of the street so we could identify where we were. The streets were deserted. This is in the middle of the city of Cambrai, Belgium. Anyhow, we saw where we were and we finally reached our destination like 4:30 o'clock in the morning,

daybreak. We pulled into the area in Sameon and we knew we had arrived because a C Company guard leaped onto the running board, shoved a rifle into the dentist's ribs, and asked for the password. At 7 o'clock when we had just completed unloading and setting up, we were greeted by some girls with some flowers and with the mayor of the city. I remember the girls coming up to us and so happy to see us and thanked us for liberating them and so forth. The mayor made a speech thanking us. But we heard on the radio that morning that there was a pocket of Germans who made a counterattack in Cambrai and there was fighting going on at that time. That's right where we were and we didn't know. We thought the Germans had retreated, but there was a pocket of Germans in Cambrai and, of course, there were other units behind us which ran into them and had a battle with them.

We went on to the Elbe River. We built the Truman Bridge across the Elbe. That was with the 83rd Infantry Division. That was April. President Roosevelt had just passed away and Truman had taken over as President of the United States. We built the pontoon bridge across the Elbe River there south of Barby, Germany. But a decision was made by the commander of the 83rd Division to call this the Truman Bridge and he decided to have a sign constructed at the entrance to the bridge. It read, "Truman Bridge - Gateway to Berlin over the Elbe, courtesy of the 83rd Thunderbird Division, constructed by the 295th Engineer Combat Battalion and 992nd Bridge Company." Well, I tell you about this sign because we were, of course, censored. We couldn't write where we were, what we were doing, where we had been to anybody at home. I don't think my parents ever knew where I was. They had their ideas and this particular incident, this bridge, was probably promoted in more papers and printed over the United States than any other thing during the war. It was very exciting. It was printed in the *Baltimore Sun* and my mother saw the sign and she could read it very clearly. It had the 295th Engineer Combat Battalion right on there. She wrote me a letter with a clipping of the picture of the bridge and wanted to know, "Is this my outfit? Is this where I was?" Of course, I was right there, but at that point in time we were told we couldn't write anybody, tell anybody, and here it's being broadcast. So I went to the Colonel with my mother's letter, with the clipping from the *Sun* paper and said, "Colonel, you have censored us. We can't write and give any answers to where we are, what we're doing, but my mother's asking me a question. She sends me this picture and wants to know is this my outfit and is this where I am?" He says, "You answer her." At that time they eased the restrictions so we could write home. Because it was ridiculous, we didn't have to write home, everybody knew where we were, just had to acknowledge it.

During the Battle of the Bulge, we were infantry on the very northern or western end of the Bulge, the hinge. We were at the edge of it, a place called Hindon, Germany. I'll never forget, it was cold. There was snow on the ground, a lot of snow. In fact, one night before we got there we were in the Huertgen Forest and we had to dig ourselves in and it was bitter cold. We finally got in to take positions as infantry up on this edge of the Bulge. The "no man's land" was down in the valley and we were headquartered up on the hill. Of course, the Germans were on the opposite hill and they had sight on us and we had sight on them. But we had control of the valley. We were stationed on the hill and we went down to the valley to set up a mine field. We took a lot of mines down and I was down there with them. Then I went back to the hill that night, as we went in shifts back and forth to the valley. That night after I left ... there was a little community there and we had placed the mines in between houses so the Germans couldn't see us. We were trying to hide it. We stayed in houses most of the time and from the

houses we could watch over the front. The Germans lobbied up that night and an .88 hit the mines and, of course, leveled the whole area. Blew up all the mines. We lost thirty, forty men in that episode. The worst part about it is we could do nothing about going in there because the Germans had their guns right on us. Right after that we had to move on and, of course, all this rubble was there and our men were buried in the rubble. Of course, after the war was over we decided to go back to that point just to see what was done and, just as we had thought, nothing had been done because nobody knew how many men were under that rubble because it was just a pile of debris. The grave people came up to that point and they didn't see any bodies and didn't bother to move any of the rubble. But we knew, the rubble looked just the way we left it and we start digging and, of course, recover our men. This was in January when this all happened and now it's April. That's a horrible sight. But nobody knew what was underneath the rubble. What else can I tell you? I'm running out of things.

Sigler: Well, tell me a little bit about your own duties there. You were a senior NCO with the medical detachment of Headquarters Company and what did that require you to do?

Salganik: I was basically overseeing the assignment of the men to their various companies. We placed men out in the line companies. Brings to mind, we lost a medic and a replacement medic came in, had just come from the States. He said, "Assign me to a company." I was going to place him in, to get his feet wet, remain with us in the medical detachment and the dispensary.

Sigler: You ran a dispensary and a battalion aid station?

Salganik: Yes, a battalion aid station. He said, "I'd like to go up and be with the men up front." I said, "Okay." He went up there and he was with B Company, I remember, and this was at Saint Lô. We were just doing a lot of engineer work and trying to maintain the roads and the bridges. At one point the German Luftwaffe came over and started to strafe the vehicles and the men who were maintaining the road. Well, he got underneath the truck for protection, he thought. Well, they hit the truck, so he was blown to bits. I felt very, very bad. I felt I had assigned him to his death. At that point, I couldn't keep myself together that day. He wasn't with us five days. But I took care of a lot of the detail work, the reports we had to make out for various men, keep medical records, gave shots, whether it was for a cold or whatever it might be. We had, unfortunately, a number of men who had syphilis, had to give them shots for syphilis.

Sigler: What did they use? A sulfur drug for that?

Salganik: Yes. We gave them a shot in the arm. I didn't enjoy doing that, but it was one of those things. I can also tell you this story, we were up in Maastricht, Holland, and we were searching around the city for Germans. Germans were on the run, but we always found a few pockets here and there. The men were searching from house to house and I went with them, stayed in the area. Went to this one house and asked the people, "Any German soldiers been there?" They said, "No." Well, we'd like to search the house because we had been told by other neighbors that they were harboring some German soldiers. Sure enough, we found two German soldiers in the basement; both had been wounded and they were being treated and being

comforted. There was a stove there, were trying to keep warm.

Sigler: It's curious that the Dutch would harbor a German soldier.

Salganik: Well, remember the soldiers probably had been living there and they had become close and developed relationships with them. So we took them prisoner and took them back to the battalion aid station to examine them and send them back as POWs, but we thought first we would treat their wounds, give them first aid. We took them back into the battalion aid station and put them up on the litter and the doctor started to look at the wound and dress the wound. The German started asking us questions. He wanted to see the doctor's diploma.

End Side A

Sigler: Okay, the German prisoner was questioning the doctor's credentials.

Salganik: Right. He was questioning the doctor, where he got his degree, is he a medical doctor, and so forth. It, of course, irritated the doctor very much and all of us. Here we're trying to help him, be nice to him, and he is questioning what are we doing. So we wrapped him very quickly and said, "Send him back!" But those were some of my experiences. What else did you want to know?

Sigler: At the end of the war, you were on the Elbe River at that point when the war ended and . . .

Salganik: We went back to recover our men at Hindon and then went back to a place called Giessen, Germany. In Giessen we broke up. I had seventy points. You needed eighty-five points to go home. Oh wait, some of us broke up, but most of us went on to La Havre, France. There it was nothing but empty land, a field, and we built the cigarette camps – Lucky Strike.

Sigler: Oh, you built Camp Lucky Strike?

Salganik: We helped build the camps. We were the first soldiers there and it was nothing but a field and we developed the camps for our processing of embarkation to go back to the States. It was during the construction of those camps that they broke us up. The men that had eighty-five points remained on in the construction and the rest of us were sent to different places. Well, I was pulled out and sent to an engineer replacement depot and that was in Rouen, France. A lot of POWs were working there.

Sigler: Your formal designation was still engineer, not medical corps?

Salganik: Right. Now we were just guarding the POWs and making sure they were doing the work and watching over them. We didn't do much work. They did all the work of parts replacement. Then we moved as a unit to Marseilles, France. Now, this is now in August of

‘45. We were very much upset because we could see the handwriting on the wall. We had seventy points and we had been eleven and a half months in steady combat and didn’t relish the idea of going to the Far East, but it looked very much like we were destined to go to the Far East. We could tell by the way they were priming us up, this is where we were going to go. Of course, we would like to go back to the States, but we didn’t have a choice. Fortunately, VJ Day came.

Sigler: While you were in Marseilles?

Salganik: In Marseilles, and we had a big celebration. Then the captain told us, now, we’ll get our break. So they broke us up because of the points I had then I was earmarked to go back to the States. So I went from Marseilles, went to again near Maastricht, Holland, and there I was attached to a pipe laying outfit. They put pipes down to carry the gasoline and everything across the country. Then we went on from there and, of course, most of it was maintaining the pipes and there were POWs who were doing all the work.

Sigler: Even after the war, they were still holding them?

Salganik: Oh, yeah. They were doing the work and we were just overseeing, guarding them, watching them, making sure they did their job. Then went on, from there, they put us into Antwerp, Belgium, and that was an experience too, I had there an unfortunate experience. We were now earmarked to go back to the States out of Antwerp. We were in a camp there and a group of us came down with dysentery. How we knew it, we were all down at the latrine at one time. I couldn’t get up for roll call in the morning I was so sick at night. They said, “Well, you’ll have to go into the dispensary.” I said, “I don’t want to go. We’re going back to the States.” “Well, you’re in no condition to go back to the States.” So I missed my boat. I went into the dispensary for forty-eight hours and I recovered and then they put me back on another assignment to go back to the States. I finally got back to the States on the 31st of December 1945.

Sigler: Wow. That’s a long time after they ended the war in Europe.

Salganik: Yeah. Will never forget, I came into Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, it was really a sight to . . . we were on a Liberty ship, coming into the nearest harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty, and all the ships were blowing their whistles and everything welcoming us. It was really thrilling. Got into camp and we were told that we were frozen in the camp, couldn’t go out, that we were to stay in our barracks for further orders. Well, when I got to my barracks an order caught up to me to call a friend of mine who was stationed at Camp Kilmer. He was part of the cadre there, the station cadre. I called him on the telephone. He says, “Gordon, don’t ask any questions. Just get yourself together, go into town, meet me at a certain point.” He told me where to go and he would be there to pick me up, which was nearby where I was. I said, “You sure?” He said, “I’m sure. Don’t worry about it.” So I met him. He says, “I got you a pass” and gave me the pass. I went to New York City that evening. I was in New York City, Times Square, celebrating New Years’ Eve. That was my first night back in the States. In his position, he was able to obtain the pass to go out. He told me, “Don’t say anything just meet me.” So I

had some fun. We went to a movie and it was the first time I had been in Times Square for New Years' Eve. I'll never forget that. A lot of excitement. Of course, it was after the war and a lot was going on. Have I told you enough stories?

Sigler: You sure have. Can you think of anything else?

Salganik: No. I had many, many experiences. I'll tell you a story. I administered blood plasma. At one point, a man came into the aid station and both his feet were blown off by a mine. The doctor said to me, he said, "Gordon, I want you to go back with him in the ambulance to the rear and administer the blood and keep watch on him." Of course, we bandaged him up and all and I got in the ambulance, his pulse was very, very weak. I kept on his pulse and was feeding him the plasma and as we drove on and got nearer to the rear, the next aid station behind us, the hospital, I could feel his pulse getting stronger and stronger. Actually I saw this young man come back to life. He lost a lot of blood, but my feeding him the plasma revived him. I probably saved his life. It was one of the experiences I'll never forget, seeing somebody, because of plasma, come back to life. He opened his eyes as we got to the hospital. I felt very good about it, that I did something good, but I felt very bad about the attitude of Americans back at home. There was a lot being said about not enough blood was being given, people were not volunteering to give blood to create the plasma for us overseas in the war.

Sigler: I wonder why.

Salganik: There were just . . . the Americans, in my mind at that time, really didn't know what war was, were not aware of the dangers really, the big dangers, and they were safe at home and satisfied and comfortable and didn't care, many of them, what's happening overseas to their fellow Americans. They didn't show appreciation for us on the trip going from Yuma, Arizona, to Boston. We never saw anybody, but on the trip from Scotland to Tidworth Barracks whenever we stopped at a railway station there were Gray Ladies, they called them that because they had gray uniforms, they were the English Red Cross ladies. They had doughnuts. They had coffee. They thanked us for coming over and being with them and sharing with them. You could see the difference in the people. They were very appreciative. They knew what war was because they were in it. They were really the front line because I visited homes where people were living in cages to protect themselves. They had a cage with pipes built over their bed to protect them in case of the roof coming down. So in the States there was a big push to give blood and they had a lot of problems getting people to give. I wrote home and told them my experience of this young man and told them how the plasma saved his life. I was able to administer it to him to bring him back to life where he was very, very weak and out of it. My letter was very strong. I read in the papers where it's so difficult to get people to give blood. Well, my mother took the letter to an editor in the *Baltimore Sun* and the letter was published in the *Sun*, a story about what plasma can do from a GI on the front and I was the GI.

Sigler: That's great. I fear Americans still don't know what war really looks like.

Salganik: Right. They really don't. They're very, very comfortable, lackadaisical about

things. I'm very concerned about this war. I know what war is, it's hell, but I'm hoping that with the sophistication we have today that we can save a lot of lives that, if we didn't have the sophistication, could be lost. I think of the night of the 5th of June, the 6th of June that morning I can recall in my foxhole in England, listening to the drone of the planes overhead, one after another, hour on hour from eleven o'clock at night up to the early hours of the morning. There was one plane after another, loads of planes, going across the Channel dropping bombs. I'm sure that's going to happen either tonight or tomorrow night. That they will soften up the Iraqis so they don't put up any resistance because they really have no choice and no chance of them surviving by fighting.

Sigler: That's absolutely true. Okay, well, thanks a lot for taking the time on this.

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