

Interview with
DANIEL “DAN” P. NEVOT

February 6, 2018

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DANIEL "DAN" P. NEVOT

Daniel "Dan" P. Nevot was interviewed by Randall J. Bunn on February 6, 2018 in St. George, Washington County, Utah. He related his experiences during World War II. Also participating were his wife, Helen Nevot and Brady Fronk.

RB: I wanted to start off by having you tell a little bit about your childhood before you joined the French Army. When were you born?

DN: When was I born? I was born [inaudible].

HN: [Inaudible].

DN: [Inaudible].

RB: That is October?

DN: I was born the April 26, 1920.

RB: April 26, 1920. Is that correct? Where were you born?

DN: Yes. Yes. [Inaudible].

RB: Okay. Let me see if I can get that correctly. In La Bord Oemont [France].

DN: Yes. [Inaudible].

RB: [Do] you have brothers and sisters?

DN: Yes. I have seven brothers and — no, no. I have four brothers and three sisters.

RB: Seven brothers and three sisters.

DN: The family [inaudible].

RB: The family was what?

DN: [Inaudible].

HN: [There were] eight children. [Inaudible] He doesn't want me [inaudible].

RB: Well, I am going to need you, sometimes, to interpret a little bit.

HN: I will interpret, no problem. [Laughter].

RB: Where were you in the mix of those children?

DN: [I was] number four.

RB: You are the fourth of eight children in the family?

DN: Yes.

RB: Very good. Now, maybe we can fast forward. I read in your biography that you had a usual childhood growing up.

DN: Yes.

RB: The normal hijinks, you said. [Laughter].

DN: Yes, yes, yes.

RB: [Laughter]. You wanted to join the army at age sixteen?

DN: Yes, sixteen [years old].

RB: What happened?

DN: The fellow told me to go back home to my mother, drink milk and grow up.

HN: Grow up?

DN: Grow up [inaudible].

RB: They said go home and grow up?

DN: Yes.

HN: Drink your milk and grow up.

RB: To drink your milk and to grow up?

DN: Yes, yes.

RB: And so you did?

DN: I did.

RB: You came back [to join] when you were —.

DN: I came back six months afterwards. A lady told me, “Go to the back office to sign your contract.”

RB: Now say that again.

HN: [He had] to sign the contract.

RB: You went back?

DN: Yes.

HN: [Inaudible].

RB: At age eighteen, [you] signed a contract?

DN: Yes.

RB: When you were accepted, at that point, where did they send you to train?

DN: I go to the Maginot Line.
RB: To the Maginot Line?
DN: Yes. And then after the war started —.
RB: The war started?
DN: Yes.
RB: I think you said in your memoir that you were sent to Norway?
DN: Yes.
RB: I am sorry. You were going to go to Finland?
DN: Yes.
RB: First to Finland?
DN: Yes. [Inaudible] to Narvik, Norway.
RB: You never got to Finland?
DN: No.
RB: Because the Germans —
HN: The Germans [inaudible] —.
RB: — had already overrun Finland?
DN: Yes, yes. [Inaudible]. I went to Narvik, Norway.
RB: You went to Norway.
DN: Yes.
RB: What do you recall about Norway? Was there fighting [there] then?
DN: Yes, yes. Fighting. We fight three or four weeks. We take Narvik. [Inaudible].
RB: You were fighting for a week? I did not understand that.
BF: [He was] three weeks in Narvik.
RB: Three weeks and then what happened?
DN: We take Narvik.
HN: Then the Germans overcame —.
DN: [Inaudible].
RB: The Germans took over where you were in Norway?
DN: Yes, yes.
RB: What did you do?

DN: [Inaudible] by the sea. [Inaudible]. I was maybe four hours in the water —.

RB: You were by the sea and —.

DN: Yes.

HN: It was the fjords.

RB: The fjords? Did you —.

DN: I was in the water for four hours.

RB: You were in the water for four hours?

DN: Yes, yes.

HN: “Dan,” tell him that the main group was evacuated by the British.

RB: I see.

DN: Yes.

RB: The British took the main group, but not you?

HN: The British [inaudible].

DN: No.

HN: He and a small group stayed behind to destroy the [equipment].

DN: To destroy the [inaudible].

RB: The material that the French and the Norwegians had?

DN: Yes.

RB: So the Germans would not get it?

DN: Yes, yes.

HN: Tell him how you took care of the trucks.

DN: Yes. We started out [by] bombing the truck. We destroyed all the equipment.

RB: You destroyed all the equipment?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible].

HN: And the Germans came in.

RB: Then the Germans came in. How did you escape?

DN: [Inaudible]. Four hours in the water.

HN: Well, tell him.

DN: Then the British —.

HN: They took a fishing boat.

RB: With a fishing boat you went over to Britain?

DN: Yes.

HN: No. They were trying to get —.

DN: The British Navy picked us up.

RB: They picked you up?

DN: [Inaudible] fishing boat.

HN: The bombardment swamped the boat and it broke up.

RB: Then you were in the water?

HN: [Inaudible]

RB: Then the navy rescued you?

DN: Yes, the British [Navy].

RB: Where did they take you?

DN: England.

RB: To England?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: No. They took you back to France, did they not?

DN: [Inaudible].

HN: At that point. He kept escaping.

RB: You went back to —.

HN: Portsmouth, England. Was it Portsmouth, “Dan?” Was it Portsmouth that you all went back to?

BF: After Narvik, Norway?

DN: Yes.

HN: Then they sent them back to France.

BF: Sent them back to France.

RB: I have in —.

BF: Okay, I have it right here.

HN: Do you want me to move over by him? [Laughter].

BF: [Laughter].

RB: [Laughter]. You are fine.

BF: I have read the document a bunch, so I can help him if he needs it.

HN: Yes.

BF: [It was] Belgium, “Randy.”

HN: They were supposed to go to Belgium.

BF: [They were] sent to reinforce Belgium. [The] train [was] stopped by bombardments in England. Then [they were] put in refugee camp in Aldershot, England.

RB: So you went from Norway to Belgium?

HN: To England to Belgium.

BF: To England to Belgium. After many hours [inaudible] returned to France.

RB: Then the train was stopped by the bombardment —

DN: Yes.

RB: — and you escaped at that point to a refugee camp at Aldershot, [England]?

HN: And they went to France.

DN: [Inaudible].

HN: And a pickup to Britain.

RB: After they got to Britain, where [did] they go?

HN: They went to the coast. He ran, jumped and got on the last boat out.

RB: To England?

HN: To England.

BF: That was the last boat at Dunkirk, England.

HN: He ended up in Aldershot, England. [Laughter]

RB: Aldershot. That was what I was trying to establish. Was that in England?

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: Was it a refugee camp?

DN: Yes.

RB: When you were in the refugee camp, I think you [write] there were 25,000 French in the camp, including Charles de Gaulle.

DN: Yes.

HN: No, no, De Gaulle was not there.

RB: He was not there? Where was de Gaulle? Still in France?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: He had escaped.

BF: He had escaped.

RB: He had escaped? Right, obviously. Then he, [General de Gaulle], made a call for the French to try and free France?

DN: [Inaudible].

HN: L'Appel du 18 June 1940.

BF: I have that in here.

HN: I put the English translation in there. [Laughter]. I did not think you would want to struggle with it.

BF: Right! I can speak some French — a little bit — not as much.

HN: [Laughter] Well, I [can speak] even less.

RB: When you went from England, where did you go?

DN: [To] Aldershot.

HN: Aldershot [inaudible].

DN: [Inaudible] Yes.

RB: In Aldershot — but then de Gaulle called the French to get together?

DN: Yes.

HN: They went to the Olympia Imperial Theater.

DN: Yes, we went over there.

HN: And heard the officers explain what was going on.

RB: And that is on page six of the — [*Memoire of a Free French Soldier* by Daniel P. Nevot — hereafter, *Memoire*.]

BF: Yes, [page] six. I have it right here.

RB: So, de Gaulle made a speech —

HN: It was on the radio.

RB: — and you heard it on the radio?

DN: Yes.

RB: What do you remember about that [speech]?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: Not much. [Laughter]

RB: Not much? You wanted to join the group?

DN: The corps. Yes. [Inaudible] go to London [inaudible].

RB: Yes.

DN: [Inaudible].

HN: It was a theater and —.

DN: For the refugees.

RB: All the refugees were there and you heard the radio?

DN: Yes.

HN: No, he heard the radio [speech] before that.

RB: Oh, oh. oh. Then you went to the theater in London and that is where they organized?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

BF: To organize the young corps, essentially.

HN: He signed on line 183.

DN: [Inaudible] sign [inaudible] number 183.

HN: Page seven, if you are looking [for it].

BF: I have it.

RB: So he signed up on line 183. That was just all the people who were signing up?

DN: Yes.

RB: His signature appears on [line] 183?

HN: Some of them did not sign. Was not that what you told me?

DN: No. [Inaudible]

HN: They took them back [inaudible].

RB: So when you signed, you were assigned to Captain Koernig?

HN: Koernig.

DN: Koernig, yes. [Inaudible]

HN: He was his driver.

RB: Oh! You were the driver for the captain?

DN: Koernig was an officer of [Prime Minister Charles] de Gaulle.

RB: One of de Gaulle's officers [and] you were the driver for him?

DN: Yes.

RB: [Prime Minister Sir] Winston Churchill gave de Gaulle an assignment to take a group of men, go to Africa and get the French colonies to support the cause?

DN: Yes.

RB: Where did you —.

DN: We go to Dakar, Senegal.

RB: You went where?

BF: Dakar.

HN: Dakar.

RB: Oh. Dachau, [Germany]?

BF: Dakar, Senegal.

RB: Dakar in Senegal. You went by ship?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

RB: That is on the west side of Africa, right?

HN: Yes.

BF: The capital of Senegal.

HN: That is where the French colonies were all clustered there and over into the northern part of Africa.

RB: What do you remember about that in Senegal?

DN: [Inaudible] de Gaulle we are going over there with a boat. [Inaudible] in the port [inaudible].

HN: They sent a small boat in with a French flag up [flying]. And everybody was screaming, "Yay! Yay!" And then they said, "Go back! Go back!"

DN: "Go back! Go back!"

RB: To go back to England?

HN: No.

RB: No to Vichy, France?

BF: The Vichy French.

RB: Oh, they thought you were the Vichy French?

HN: No. They had a flag in front. [Laughter]

RB: Who said to go back?

HN: The people on the shore.

DN: The people on the shore.

RB: They did not want you to come?

DN: No.

HN: The Vichy were in control there and so they shot at them.

RB: Your fellow countrymen shot at the Free French?

BF: Yes. [Inaudible]

RB: Okay. You abandoned that attempt in Senegal and from there you went to Gabon, Africa?

DN: Yes. Gabon [inaudible] Gabon.

HN: He said the people had been fighting and then they decided they would go with de Gaulle, just as they got there.

RB: What do you recall about Africa? You say in your memoir that it was full of sights, smells and sounds. Very hot.

DN: Yes, yes. It was the first time I saw some Black.

RB: The first time you [saw] some Black people?

DN: Yes.

RB: Yes. Were they happy to see you?

DN: Yes.

RB: From there you went to the Congo?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible] de Gaulle.

HN: The Black governor rallied to de Gaulle.

RB: You say that the —.

HN: Is that how you say it?

DN: Yes.

HN: Governor Ebui.

DN: Yes. Governor Ebui, first Black governor.

RB: Were you successful in the Congo?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: They gave him some Black troops from the — they called them the “tirailleurs.” They are the riflemen. I cannot say it right.

RB: [Laughter]

BF: Regiment Tirailleurs Senegalese du Tchad.

HN: Du Tchad, the R-S-T-S.

BF: R-T-S-T.

HN: [Laughter]

RB: From the Congo you went through the jungle?

DN: Yes.

HN: First they went up by boat — up the Congo [River] — and they came to a place [where] they had to portage, so they hacked through the jungle.

BF: It says here, “the trip [was] up the Congo River to Bangui, Congo.”

HN: Bangui.

BF: Bangui.

HN: I have learned that one. [Laughter]

BF: African. [Laughter]

RB: What was that experience like going through the jungle?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: Do not say that.

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: They were hacking a road trying to —.

RB: You were trying to make a road through the jungle?

DN: Yes.

RB: Was it pretty hot there?

DN: Yes.

BF: Did some of the people who were in the convoy catch malaria or some other disease from mosquitoes?

DN: Yes, yes. [Inaudible]

RB: Parasites?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: [Inaudible]

DN: [Inaudible] fever.

HN: Fever. You were telling about the animals — how they scattered, except one.
[Laughter]

DN: Yes.

RB: Is that right?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: It was a big black panther.

DN: [A] black panther.

RB: Is that right?

HN: How long did it stalk?

BF: “She stalked the group looking for a meal no doubt. Four other soldiers and I decided to take care of the problem by going hunting ourselves. It took twelve shots to kill her.” [*Memoir*, page 9]

HN: [Laughter]

BF: “She weighed around 300 pounds.” [Laughter]

RB: That is a claw from the panther?

DN: Yes.

RB: Really! Wow!

HN: Can you imagine it is older than you are? [Laughter]

RB: Oh! My goodness!

BF: That is amazing.

DN: [Laughter] We cut the feet and everybody took [a claw].

RB: Everybody took one of the claws. You saved that all through the war?

DN: Yes.

HN: Then he had a jeweler fix this mounting.

DN: Yes, a Hindu jeweler in Brazzaville, Congo [inaudible].

RB: Let me take a picture of that. That is really incredible. Thank you. [Shows claw necklace.]

HN: The Black troops ate it.

RB: Oh?

BF: They said, “We are happy to have meat to eat.”

HN: It was quite a trip.

BF: Twelve shots though. What type of rifle were you using?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: Handgun.

BF: Oh! Ruby? Rubies or? They call them rubies. [Laughter]. What type of handgun were you using?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: They were World War I [guns].

BF: Oh! So FN Brownings and Rubies.

[In 1910 John Browning designed the Fabrique Nationale of Belgium gun also known as a FN Browning.]

HN: Yes.

RB: It took you a month, you say, to get to the other side of the jungle at Fort Archambeau, Chad?

DN: Yes. At Archambeau and to Fort-Lamy, Chad.

RB: And to Fort-Lamy? Then you continued along the desert road for over a thousand kilometers to Faya in Chad?

DN: To Faya.

HN: That is where you bought the horse. [Laughter]

DN: Yes.

RB: You bought a horse?

DN: Yes.

BF: Yes, an Arabian stallion.

HN: [Laughter]

DN: Yes.

HN: It was a short ownership. [Laughter]

DN: I have [inaudible] maybe five minutes. [Laughter] He started —.

RB: He started to run? To gallop?

DN: Yes, yes.

HN: To buck.

BF: To buck.

RB: To buck you? Oh, no!

DN: Put me out!

RB: You fell on the ground?

DN: Fell on the ground!

HN: And the officers were laughing at him. [Laughter]

RB: They laughed at you?

DN: Yes.

RB: Had you ever been on a horse before?

DN: No.

RB: Oh, goodness!

DN: Never before.

HN: That was the end of his [riding career].

RB: So later, you were never a horse trainer or rider?

DN: No, no.

RB: When you are at Fort-Lamy, was [that] when Colonel [Philippe] Leclerc arrived.

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: Was he in charge of the Free French officers?

DN: No, no. He [inaudible].

HN: He became the second in command to De Gaulle. He gave himself a couple of upgrades. [Laughter]

RB: Is that right? Did you meet Colonel Leclerc?

DN: Yes.

HN: He cooked breakfast for him many times.

RB: What did you do at Fort-Lamy?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: That is where you met [Lieutenant] Dubut, was it not?

DN: Yes.

HN: Tell about Lieutenant Dubut.

BF: Yes, [Lieutenant] Dubut. I have it right here [on] page eleven.

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: Here is a picture of him. I will make you a copy, if you want.
BF: I would actually like that.
RB: Yes. [Lieutenant] Dubut was a French officer?
DN: Yes.
RB: What do you remember about him?
DN: [Inaudible]
HN: The [fellows] under his command, and he taught them.
RB: You say that he [taught them] —.
HN: French grammar. French [inaudible].
RB: He took you under his wing?
DN: Yes.
HN: [And] basic math. All these [fellows'] education had been stopped.
RB: So he was a mentor and a tutor to you?
DN: Yes.
HN: This is in French, but you can figure it out.
BF: Yes, I can.
RB: Yes.
BF: I have a translator somewhere.
RB: How long were you at Fort-Lamy? Very long?
DN: One month and then after [we went] to Faya, Chad.
RB: You went back to Faya?
HN: Where did you go?
DN: Faya.
HN: Faya.
DN: [Inaudible].
HN: [Inaudible].
BF: And then [to] the Kufra Oasis [in Libya].
HN: And it is Fort —.
BF: [Inaudible]. [Helen] has a map here.
HN: El Tag is the name of the fort.

RB: El Tag at Kufra Oasis?

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: And you were there in preparation for an assault on the fort?

HN: There is [a picture of] his commemorative ring that they gave him many years ago.

RB: Who gave that to you?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: The [inaudible]. The retired people. Like the veterans' groups here.

RB: Could I take a picture of that?

HN: They put on there his Army number, the Kufra [emblem], which is a big deal, because that was the only one [battle] that the Free French did all by themselves.

DN: Yes.

HN: The British and French group that went before them [were] repulsed and suffered a lot of casualties.

BF: Kufra was, if I remember correctly, was just a mud brick ancient oasis.

HN: But it had an industry —

BF: Yes.

HN: — it supplied the Germans.

RB: So by attacking that, you were helping to repel and expel the Germans from that area. Was that an important victory [for] the Free French?

BF: [Inaudible]

DN: Yes.

BF: It says here that they modified all of your trucks that were in Faya?

DN: Yes.

BF: It says a .37mm gun. I assume it was a Bofors. Correct? A Quad Bofors gun.

HN: They had whatever they could scratch together. [Laughter]

BF: Yes.

HN: Then your friend, what was his name?

HN: They called him the cannoniere of Kufra.

DN: [Inaudible]. A/C [Adjutant Chef] Gacia.

HN: No, no, no.

DN: [A/C Roger] Cecaldi.

HN: [A/C Roger] Cecaldi, he had the big gun.

RB: After the Kufra Oasis, then Colonel Leclerc took a small force of thirty-five Europeans and 150 trailleurs?

DN: Yes.

HN: Trailleurs. [Laughter]

RB: Trailleurs were reconnoitered [to] Fort El Tag. You were the gunner on a truck?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: Well, that is later. We will add [that] in [later].

RB: What do you remember about that experience?

HN: About Kufra?

DN: Kufra, yes. [Inaudible] Kufra was the first French victory during World War II.

HN: It was their first battle that they won.

RB: First battle and that you won.

HN: [A/C Roger] Cecaldi would drive his truck around and fire off a bunch of shots.

DN: Cecaldi had a cannon. [Inaudible]

HN: [Inaudible]

RB: You were shooting a cannon?

HN: No, he was shooting a small one.

BF: Yes, he had a .37 mm.

HN: It was a big one. He would have to pour water over the breech to keep it from warping.

RB: Goodness!

BF: Did the Italians put up much of a fight at Kufra?

DN: Yes, yes, yes.

BF: It is often a misconception that the Italians really did not fight as well as the Germans. That is just something that I know I have wondered about.

HN: It probably depended on the circumstances. [Laughter]

RB: Right.

HN: But they were coming [at them]. They asked them, after they had surrendered, why did you surrender? Because they were a small force. How many were in the fort? There was like 300 or so in the fort.

DN: Yes.

HN: They were outnumbered. They said, “Why did you surrender?” They said, “You had such overwhelming fire power.” [Laughter] It was only chutzpah. [Laughter]

RB: Is that right?

HN: Audacity, or whatever you want to call it! [Laughter]

RB: Then you [write], “As the soldiers replaced the flag of the fort with the Free French flag, a French tri-color with a cross of Lorraine on the white section —

DN: Yes.

RB: — Colonel Leclerc gave his Serment de Kufra.”

DN: Serment de Kufra.

RB: What was that? The Pledge of Kufra?

DN: [Inaudible] French flag [inaudible] free under [inaudible].

HN: [Inaudible].

RB: “We will not put down our arms until the beautiful colors fly from the steeple of Strasbourg Cathedral.”

DN: Yes.

RB: They call that The Pledge of Kufra.

HN: He actually heard him give it.

RB: You heard that from Colonel Leclerc?

DN: Yes, I was there.

HN: [Laughter]

RB: It was a what?

DN: I was there.

HN: He was right there.

RB: You were there?

DN: Yes.

RB: Wow!

HN: That is a modified looking one. It is the tri-color plus the Croix de Lorraine.

RB: The Cross of Lorraine?

HN: The Cross of Lorraine.

BF: If I remember correctly, there was a circle around the Croix de Lorraine, if I am right.

HN: What they did, they just put a Croix de Lorraine in the middle of the white part.

BF: Well, even I could be wrong! [After] fourteen years.

HN: [Laughter] There may have been some that were the other way, too. Some of them [were] a little whimsical.

RB: From there, you were organized into the Scorpions?

DN: Yes.

RB: Some of you [were]; and you would go in groups of two [or] three armed trucks?

DN: Yes.

RB: Were you a driver?

DN: No, no.

RB: A gunner?

DN: A gunner, yes. We fought three or four weeks in the desert. We blew up [inaudible].

RB: So for three or four weeks you would go out into the desert and you would blow up what?

DN: Yes, yes. Munitions.

RB: The munitions?

HN: The Germans' munitions.

DN: Everything.

RB: [Did] you have to do so with radio silence?

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: No contact with your headquarters?

DN: No, [inaudible].

RB: And you say the heat was sometimes over 120 degrees Fahrenheit?

DN: Yes.

RB: Very hot, then?

HN: They know it was that because it blew up the thermometers. [Laughter]

RB: The mercury in the thermometers would break out and spill all over?

DN: It blew up, yes.

HN: So it may have been more [higher temperature] than that, you know.

HN: They were like the desert rats. They made that series on that.

RB: Right, and that was based upon the Free French?

DN: Yes.

RB: You say that the operation was successful to keep [Field Marshall Erwin] Rommel off balance —

DN: Yes.

RB: — and confined in North Africa. That was a critical part the Free French played in containing the Germans in Africa.

BF: I would say the next [event] would probably be Utah Beach.

RB: Yes. Let us go there.

HN: Well, now the stuka got him.

BF: Yes, that is actually good.

HN: Right at the end of the Scorpion business —

BF: The Scorpions.

HN: — the driver froze, so he grabbed the wheel and try to steer from the passenger side.

RB: What is the stuka?

HN: An aircraft.

DN: [Inaudible] Italian.

RB: It is an Italian aircraft?

DN: Yes.

BF: A German dive bomber.

HN: They were attacking.

RB: And several of the vehicles [were] destroyed?

DN: Yes.

RB: But you escaped that, obviously.

DN: Yes.

HN: He crawled out from under.
DN: [Inaudible]
HN: Two of the people were killed.
RB: Oh, your vehicle [was] hit?
DN: [Inaudible] wheel over here [inaudible].
RB: Under the truck and you were able to crawl out?
DN: Yes.
RB: Wow!
DN: [Inaudible] and get out.
HN: Then he ran, but there was no cover. [Laughter]
DN: Yes.
RB: And they are shooting at you?
DN: Yes. [Inaudible] The Italian continue to [inaudible]. The truck was on fire.
RB: The truck was on fire and you were running from [it]?
DN: I was under the truck.
RB: Yes.
DN: [Under] the wheel.
HN: Yes, but he got out.
RB: The wheel was over your chest?
HN: He dug out.
DN: I ran, maybe, fifty yards and put a rock on my head.
HN: A rock over his head.
RB: You put a rock over your head to protect yourself?
HN: [Laughter]
DN: [Laughter]
RB: Well, you obviously survived!
BF: [He] made it!
HN: Yes.
RB: Let us transition further on to —.
HN: Oh, El Gatroun [a fort in southern Libya]! You really need to hear about [that].

RB: The Fifteenth. Yes, what happened on El Gatroun?

DN: El Gatroun. [Inaudible] We take the [inaudible] three people [inaudible] A/C Gacia and me. We take the four.

HN: Lieutenant Dubut, A/C Gacia and “Dan [Nevot].”

RB: [Captain] Massu, [Captain] Tarodek and [Lieutenant] Dubut.

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: Were [these] the three leaders of the three groups?

DN: Yes.

HN: He was in [Lieutenant] Dubut’s command.

RB: You were under [Lieutenant] Dubut’s command and you were to capture Fort El Gatroun?

HN: Well, reconnoiter and —.

RB: Reconnoiter and capture that, yes. You were surrounded by the palmeraies [palm tree grove]?

DN: Yes, palmeraies.

HN: Yes.

RB: What is that?

DN: [Inaudible]. Palm. The palm.

HN: It was a palm.

RB: Palm trees?

DN: Yes, palm tree.

HN: Palm trees. There was a spring [inaudible].

RB: Oh, I see! El Gatroun was surrounded by [palm trees]. Lieutenant Dubut called for two volunteers to do reconnaissance [and] you volunteered.

DN: Yes, I went out with [A/C] Gacia.

HN: With his buddy [A/C] Gacia. [Laughter]

RB: [Did] you have one of the Arabs borrow clothes that you could use as disguises?

DN: Yes.

RB: [Did] you have robes?

DN: Yes.

RB: [They were] over your uniforms, machine guns and head dresses that concealed your faces?

DN: Yes, yes, yes.

RB: [Did] your goggles covered your blue eyes? [Laughter] [Did] you walk toward the fort?

DN: Yes.

HN: They had lines [fences] of barbed wire around.

RB: You reached the first perimeter of the barbed wire, unmanned?

DN: Yes.

RB: You walked along the fence until you found an opening, then you went through and continued to the fort.

DN: Yes.

RB: [When] you came to the second barbed wire, it was more heavily fortified and it was unmanned?

HN: It was siesta time. [Laughter]

RB: Yes.

HN: Everybody was asleep.

RB: There were no guards posted though. When you got to the fort and entered it, you went to the commandant's office. You were posted at the door while Lieutenant Dubut and [A/C] Gacia snuck into the office?

DN: Yes.

RB: And the commandant was counting out the soldier's pay?

DN: Yes.

HN: [Laughter]

RB: [Did] Lieutenant Dubut asked him to surrender the fort and [fired a] shot into the ceiling?

DN: Yes, to scare him.

RB: To scare him and the soldier who was a secretary came running out. [Did] you ordered him to halt, but he continued running so you had to shoot him?

DN: Yes.

HN: It was the only casualty. [Laughter]

RB: [When] taking that over? And then they surrendered.

BF: Incredible!

RB: That was a pretty exciting experience.

HN: And then [we waited] for the big [fellow] to come in and say, “Okay, I will let you enter.” [Laughter]

BF: Were you terrified wearing the robes and going into the fort?

DN: No.

BF: That is incredible. Because I would have been terrified! [Laughter]

HN: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] From there, [did] you [go] to Tunisia?

DN: Yes.

RB: [A/C] Gacia and you were sent out on patrol. There you saw some bushes that, maybe, were hiding places for the enemy.

DN: Yes.

HN: This is at night. It was very early morning.

RB: [Did] it turn out to be the advance point of protection [for] the Italians?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

RB: The soldier who had been sleeping clutching a “potato masher” —

DN: [It was a] hand grenade.

RB: — [a] hand grenade.

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: [Were] you hit by shrapnel?

DN: No!

HN: No! He went —.

RB: Oh, he hit you with this?

DN: Yes, and afterwards he cut me with his knife. [Inaudible] cut me over here.

HN: Like a club.

RB: [He] cut you on your arm and your wrist.

HN: His hands [were] cut.

RB: Oh! You say this was a “potato masher.” Is that a slang word?

HN: That is just a word.

BF: Yes, it was a stick grenade.

RB: For a hand grenade? So he had that in his hand and he struck you on your face?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: Smashed it on him.

DN: Then after I get out. [Inaudible] with his knife he cut me over here.

RB: He cut your arms using the grenade?

HN: [Inaudible]

BF: With his [inaudible] knife?

RB: And he broke your nose and knocked out three or four teeth?

DN: Yes.

RB: You were bleeding and could not see. He pulled his knife and came at you.

DN: Yes.

RB: All you could do was fend off the attack with your hands.

DN: Yes.

RB: You got cut pretty severely —

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: — right there on your wrist and you still have the scars.

HN: That is why he cannot straighten that finger out.

RB: You cannot straighten that finger?

DN: Yes.

HN: The tendon [was] cut. Yes.

RB: Wow!

HN: But his friend [A/C] Gacia sneaked up behind the [fellow].

RB: [Did] he shoot the Italian and you escaped?

DN: Yes, I escaped. [Inaudible] Askari [inaudible] and Italian.

HN: They were Italians and Askarians [African Black people]. That is what they called the [inaudible].

RB: Askarians?

BF: Yes, Askari. They were African Black [people].

RB: [Did] you get back to your unit and you [were] patched up?

DN: Yes.

RB: By March of 1942 the North African campaign was wrapping up. [General] Rommel had been defeated by that point.

DN: Yes.

HN: The FFL is the Free French movement.

RB: What does that stand for? Free French. What does the “L” stand for?

BF: Legion.

RB: Legion.

HN: Legion.

RB: Free French Legion?

HN: No. What does FFL stand for?

DN: Force Francais Libre.

RB: Oh! Liberation.

DN: France Francais Libre.

BF: France Francais Libre.

HN: Liberty is the last one.

RB: Okay, France.

DN: France Force.

RB: Oh.

HN: French Forces.

BF: French Force.

HN: To liberate.

RB: So the Force French Libre.

DN: Yes.

RB: The Liberation French Forces.

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: Okay. [Did] you travel to Algeria, then on to Morocco for a month?

HN: To pick up girls! [Laughter]

RB: Right! [Did] you finally see some girls?

DN: Yes.

RB: Who were sisters from Malta? You liked Therese [Spiterin] of the two women.

DN: Yes.

RB: [Did] you want to marry Therese?

HN: [Inaudible]

DN: Yes.

RB: She wrote you a letter that arrived while you were there. They were ambulance drivers in Algeria. Was that the last you saw Therese?

DN: Yes.

RB: Was that was the first woman you wanted to marry?

DN: Yes.

RB: You were how old when by then? Twenty-two [years old]?

DN: [I was] twenty [years old].

HN: No. Yes. 1942.

RB: [This was] in 1942. He was born in 1920, so [he was in his] early twenties. At this point the focus of the war turned to Europe. Were you attached to [General George Smith] Patton's forces in Morocco and Algeria?

DN: Yes, we were ready to [inaudible].

RB: Was [this] where you got the motorcycle?

DN: Yes.

HN: And the uniform, the toothbrush and everything else. [Laughter] [Inaudible]

BF: [Inaudible] Sorry. If he does use colorful language, I do understand. Coming from a military family it is —.

RB: So what — I missed that then. He [was] issued —.

HN: They were known as the clochard [vagabond or tramp] of de Gaulle.

DN: Le clochard of de Gaulle.

HN: Which means the homeless. They just had whatever they could put together.

RB: Right.

HN: An Arabic thing here, or a piece of a uniform there or something else. [Laughter]

RB: [Did] they finally assign him equipment? Right down to your toothbrush?

HN: Note the name on it, Therese. [Laughter]

RB: You wrote Therese [on it] for the young woman that you saw?

DN: Yes.

RB: Let us see if we can get a picture of that.

HN: [Laughter]

BF: We got it.

RB: Yes, that is good. That was nice for you to christen your Harley Davidson with a memory of Therese!

HN: He still stands to attention when he hears a Harley go by! [Laughter]

RB: Is that right? [Laughter]

HN: He loves them.

RB: That is great!

BF: Did you ever get to meet [General] Patton at all? During or at the end of the war?

DN: No. I will tell you one thing. [Inaudible] Utah Beach.

HN: That is when he saw him.

RB: You saw him at Utah Beach?

DN: Yes.

RB: From Morocco, [did] you sail to England to get ready for the invasion?

DN: Yes, yes, yes.

RB: Obviously, D-Day was in June of 1944.

BF: June 5 and 6, 1944.

RB: But you were held back from the initial D-Day landing and you landed at Utah Beach in August of 1944.

DN: Yes.

HN: That is when they let [General] Patton come in.

RB: That is when [General] Patton came in. Is that when you saw General Patton?

DN: Yes.

RB: Your regiment – is that what it is? The DB [Free France 2nd Armored Division 2nd?

DN: Yes.

RB: [They] had their position on the left flank of [General] Patton's forces.

HN: It was the Second Armored Division.

RB: Oh, the Second Armored Division.

HN: But the “DB” is French for Armored Division.

RB: Armored Division. Thank you.

HN: Sorry.

RB: You said your task was to secure the area and clean out pockets of Nazi resistance. Did you encounter some Germans?

DN: Yes.

RB: Were they still fighting you and firing at you?

DN: They tried.

HN: They tried.

DN: They tried to fight everything.

RB: But they were not very many of them by that point.

DN: No, no.

RB: You said they had moved back into the area after the initial invasion. The first battle that the FFL fought was at Sainte-Méré-Église.

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: Église.

BF: Église. Yes, Sainte-Méré-Église.

HN: It is where the [fellow] was stuck on the steeple.

BF: Of the church.

HN: He was a parachutist.

RB: [A] parachute?

HN: That was an initial —.

RB: [He] had [become] snagged by the church steeple during [the] D-Day invasion. Was [he] still on the steeple when you [came] to town?

HN: Well, the parachute was.

RB: The parachute, [but] not the man.

HN: [Laughter]

RB: Obviously, he had been rescued after that battle.

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: Yes, that is what happened.

RB: Say that again?

HN: He was stuck on the church —.

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: The paratrooper with his parachute strapped in was hanging from the steeple?

DN: Yes, yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: He [was] rescued, but his parachute was still there.

DN: [Inaudible]. We heard him scream.

HN: I do not think so. [Laughter]

RB: Yes, okay. That was great.

BF: [At] the Battle [of] Sainte-Méré-Église, did you have to save the boys of the 101 First? Or did the 101 First Airborne pull out by the time you had [come] in?

HN: They probably had pulled out by then.

BF: Yes. That is —.

HN: I do not know much about the history, but —

BF: That was just something I thought about.

HN: — they came in two months later.

BF: Yes. That is why I figured they [had] pulled out because August would be under the break out.

HN: Yes.

RB: You write here, “that the Free French were very fired up at being able to take part.” How did that feel, coming back to France, after being in Africa for two years?

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: Was that a good feeling?

DN: Yes. At that time, I [inaudible]. I did not feel nothing.

RB: You did not feel anything at that point? It was just —.

HN: He was just in it for the adventure at that point. [Laughter]

RB: Just doing it? [Laughter] From there, you continued toward Paris?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible] Alençon [France].

HN: They took Alençon first. I think it is in there some place. [Referring to the book.]

RB: I do not see it.

HN: There it is at the bottom — “Alençon and surrounding areas.” [*Memoire*, page 17.]

BF: And that is [on page] eighteen?

HN: It is [page] seventeen.

BF: Oh, [page] seventeen. [Inaudible] My [copy] is older so —.

HN: Your [copy] is older. [It is] down at the bottom.

BF: Yes.

RB: It is called Alençon.

DN: Yes.

RB: A-L-E-N-Ç-O-N.

HN: [A] “C” with a pigtail, but my printer does not do pigtails. [Laughter]

RB: It does not do that? [Laughter] From there you went to Paris?

DN: Yes.

RB: Here is: Battles at Alençon and the surrounding areas. “The forces stopped outside Paris. Word was sent to the Maqui [the underground resistance] that —” The Maquis [rural guerrilla bands of French Resistance fighters]?

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: “[Colonel] Leclerc, [General] De Gaulle, and the Free French were coming along with American forces under [General] Patton.” You went into central Paris near the Notre Dame Cathedral?

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

HN: He was on his motorcycle.

RB: You were on your motorcycle?

HN: Advance, whatever they call them.

RB: An advance [group] and then they came in.

DN: Yes.

RB: Is that when Paris was liberated?

DN: Yes.

RB: What was it like with the French in Paris? Were there a lot of happy people?

DN: Oh, yes. Many people. [Inaudible]

HN: [Laughter] And the lady [who] jumped on him. [Laughter]

RB: You had a lady [who] jumped on you, she was so happy?

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: [Laughter] The wife of a Vichy mayor. [Laughter]

RB: Oh! [Laughter]

HN: She was so glad to see the Free French. [Laughter]

RB: That she jumped on you?

HN: She hopped on his motorcycle. [Laughter]

RB: She got on your motorcycle and rode with you? [Laughter]

HN: She rode a couple of blocks. [Laughter] He was a pretty good looking fellow!

RB: Well, he was!

HN: He is not bad now!

RB: From there, [did] you move east from Paris?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible] [We] went to the Le Bourget.

RB: [Did] you encounter heavy fighting at Le Bourget, the airport?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible] Many people.

RB: You wrote [that] you suffered many casualties.

DN: Yes.

RB: Were you assigned to advance reconnaissance for your unit?

DN: Yes.

RB: You rode your motorcycle in advance of the main group to scout the countryside, then you headed east. [Did] you notice a sign for your home village of Coupray, France?

DN: Yes.

RB: [Did] you want to check the village for your parents?

DN: Yes.

RB: Had it been five years since you had seen your parents?

DN: No, [I had not].

HN: They had had no contact.

RB: You [received] permission and were told to be careful. [Did] you ride into the village on your motorcycle?

DN: Yes.

BF: That is [a] photograph, right here, of his sister [Yvette (Nevot) Merger].
[*Memoire*, page 18.5.]

RB: [Did] you find your sister in the village?

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: I am going to take a picture of that.

DN: She was on the street.

RB: She was on the street. There is a picture as she is standing next to you on your motorcycle.

DN: Yes.

RB: Was it with your American uniform on?

DN: Yes.

HN: It was kind of funny. He went into the village [and] nobody was around. He looked and this man came out. He was the mayor. He said, "Are you an American?" He said in French, "I am French!" [Laughter] "My parents are here." [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

HN: Tell what he told you about your father.

DN: [My] father was in the [French] Resistance.

RB: Your father was in the Resistance?

DN: Yes. [Inaudible].

RB: They had arrested your father. They held him at the local police station for two weeks. Fortunately, they did not find out that Mathurin had been helping the resistance.

[The *Memoire of a Free France Soldier* by Daniel P. Nevot, states that the Germans had found out that Mathurin [Nevot], Daniel's father, had been helping the Resistance and put him in jail, but they then decided he was too old to be in the Resistance and released him.

Actually, Mathurin is the name of a Third Century Saint responsible for spreading the gospel in the district of Sens. It is from the Latin Maturinus.

Added by Randall J. Bunn during editing.]

HN: That is a French form of [the name] Matthew.

RB: That is your father's name?

DN: Mathurin.

RB: “Mathurin had been helping the resistance and one of [his] sons, Pierre [Nevot], was fighting with the Resistance. They decided that [your] father was too old to be in the resistance and they released him.”

DN: Yes.

RB: “They moved quickly to Louise” — that is your mother?

DN: Yes.

RB: — [to] Louise’s [family] village, so you did not get to see your parents. [*Memoire*, page 18.]

HN: But he knew they were safe.

RB: Right. That is a [very] exciting experience to be going east and to go to your hometown.

DN: Yes.

RB: Then you [went] to Alsace-Lorraine [France] on the German border and Baccarat, [France]?

DN: Yes.

RB: [There was] more heavy fighting. Was Lieutenant Dubut killed there in that battle?

DN: Yes.

RB: Was that sad for you to see that?

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: “After the day long battle [you] continued to move eastward towards Strasbourg” and you fulfilled “the pledge of the Serment de Kufra.” [*Memoire*, page 19.]

HN: He watched the [fellow] climb up and put the flag on the steeple.

DN: Yes.

RB: [In] Strasbourg?

DN: Yes.

BF: Yes.

RB: Incredible!

BF: [While] on his motorcycle, it says “that the rear wheel hit a land mine.” [*Memoire*, page 19.]

HN: That was later on.

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

BF: [Laughter]

HN: It blew it up.

RB: [Did] it throw you thirty feet?

DN: Yes.

RB: Wow! But your only injury was a minor one to your knee.

DN: Yes.

RB: But “Therese” was gone.

DN: Yes.

HN: Totaled!

RB: [Laughter]

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: Your unit “person picked you up [and] put you in the ambulance. They patched [your] knee up at the [first] aid station.”

DN: Yes.

RB: “In a week [you] had a new motorcycle and you continued [eastward] toward Strasbourg. [Your] main objective was to liberate Strasbourg.” On November 27, 1944 that promise was kept. Right?

BF: Did you know the [fellow] personally who put up the Tricolor?

DN: Yes.

HN: All of them knew each other.

BF: I just figured it would be good to [note] for the historical record. Did you feel a sense of pride, finally, after four years of occupation?

DN: Yes, yes. [Inaudible]

HN: At that age he did not know the historical significance of that.

RB: [The] significance of that. It was just something you were doing?

DN: Yes.

RB: Part of the war effort?

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: But in retrospect, was that a significant advance in defeating [Adolf] Hitler?

DN: Yes.

RB: [Did] you go on to Munich, Germany from there?

DN: Yes.

RB: You went to the Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden, Germany, but you did not find [Adolf] Hitler there.

DN: Yes, he was already dead.

RB: He was already dead. He committed suicide in the bunker in Berlin, Germany.

HN: But they did not know that.

RB: You did not know [that], obviously, but you were trying to capture him.

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: [Inaudible] Eagle's Nest.

BF: Yes. [Inaudible]

RB: So did you actually go up onto the —.

DN: Yes.

RB: I have been there, too!

DN: I was over there.

RB: Yes. I was there in 1995 with my father-in-law who was a bomber pilot over Germany.

DN: Oh.

RB: We went up to the top of the rock and into the place where, I guess, there was a fireplace that, yes, that is all that is preserved.

HN: It was pretty well wrecked when they [arrived] there.

BF: They destroyed — just steamrolled it.

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: What is that?

HN: Run it by me again.

RB: [Adolf] Hitler was declared dead?

DN: Yes, by the time I got over there.

RB: By the time you got there?

HN: But they did not know it.

BF: It [had been] already looted at that point?

DN: Yes.

HN: Well, the 101 First said, “We got here first!” And the French said, “No. We got here first.”

BF: Yes. That is —.

HN: Actually, the French got there first. [Laughter]

RB: Is that right? [Laughter]

BF: Oh! Really, that is interesting.

HN: But it was such a huge compound. Who knows?

RB: Right.

BF: Well, you hear [of] the band of brothers, that story —.

HN: Yes.

BF: I assume, at some point, you ran into those [fellows] or perhaps not.

HN: I am sure they saw them.

DN: Yes.

RB: Then you traveled back to Paris? Actually, the war was over at that point.

DN: Yes.

RB: “[Your] division stopped in towns to rest for a day or two. People put up the soldiers in their homes and their barns; whatever [they] had.” — [*Memoire*, page 20.]

DN: Yes.

RB: In Dijon, France you met Paulette de Lorm.

DN: [Inaudible]

RB: She was to become your wife?

DN: Yes, she wanted to marry me.

RB: She wanted to marry you?

HN: Yes. They were engaged, but it did not work out. [Laughter]

RB: Oh! I see. “[You] were taken with her. [You] asked her to marry you and she consented; but after they moved on, your mother went to visit the de Lorm family. Later, when you [had] leave and returned to Dijon, Paulette said that she had changed her mind. C’est la vie!” [*Memoire*, page 20.]

HN: [Laughter]

RB: [No] Therese? No Paulette? You were still looking to find your wife.

DN: Yes.

HN: But each time he had to ask the Captain.

RB: The commanding officer's permission?

HN: Yes.

RB: [Laughter]

DN: [Laughter]

RB: Let us see.

BF: We are at Vietnam now.

RB: One part [of the division] went with General Leclerc to Vietnam and your part [of the division] stayed at Maison Lafitte].

DN: I did not go to Vietnam.

RB: You did not go. Your part [of the division] stayed at Maison Lafitte. [Daniel Nevot was at Maison Lafitte before he went to school.]

DN: [Inaudible] Madagascar.

HN: You were at Maison Lafitte.

RB: You "were put in charge of a prison that housed 300 German prisoners of war for a year" [at Maison Lafitte].

DN: Yes.

RB: "Then [you] were assigned to the honor guard at the multinational headquarters with the British, American and French forces." You went home for a visit while you were stationed there and made a trip to Nancy [France] to talk to your friend August Morgenthaller."

DN: Morgenthaller.

HN: Morgenthaller.

RB: [You were] hoping to find where Marianne [Ann Marie Morville] was. Who was Marianne?

DN: [Inaudible].

HN: His sister-in-law.

RB: Your sister-in-law?

HN: No, the sister-in-law of Morgenthaller.

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes, [but] she was not there.

RB: "She was not there. So the next time you went there, you renewed your acquaintance. She had had a terrible time during the war. She was one of the

people forcibly taken to Germany to work in the factories, then sent back to France and [came] home. You dated for awhile and then you asked to marry her. You asked Commandant Dalon a third time and he said, “Are you building a harem?”” [Memoire, page 20-21.]

HN: [Laughter]

DN: [Laughter]

RB: — to school. “You volunteered to go to Vietnam, but Commandant Dalon denied that.” He wanted you to go to school?

DN: Yes.

RB: “In November 1945 after the war, you went to Antibes, France to the military school. It was to train physical education instructors to become athletic directors, Officers es Sports, in the military.” [Memoire, page 21.]

DN: Yes.

RB: A month later, Marianne came by train and joined you there.

DN: Yes.

HN: She had a child from the German experience.

RB: Oh, she did?

HN: She and her sister escaped. They were not just sent home, they escaped.

RB: They [went] home and she took her child with her.

HN: I found that out later, yes. It is his step-daughter.

RB: Your step-daughter? What is her name?

HN: Roseanne.

RB: Oh! That is Roseanne.

HN: Yes.

DN: Rosette.

HN: Rosette. I am sorry.

RB: Rosette! I am sorry. She was the first one. “You renewed your petition to marry with the Commandant and wasted no time in going to the magistrate’s office.” [Memoire, page 21.]

DN: Yes.

RB: Finally, you [were] married!

HN: They finally made it.

RB: There she is with you. It was you, Marianne and Rosette living there at Antibes when you were at the school. Is that where you learned to fence? [*Memoire*, picture after page 21.]

DN: Yes.

RB: Had you ever done fencing before?

DN: No.

RB: That was new for you? What other sports did you learn?

DN: Judo. Yes, I have a — show him.

HN: Show him the picture of the champion. [*Memoire*, picture after page 21.]

BF: Yes. I [have] them right there.

RB: Yes. These [were in] 1951. You won a championship?

DN: Yes.

RB: Here is a picture of —. [*Memoire*, picture after page 23.]

BF: A little bit higher, just to get the wording. Okay, we are good.

RB: In this picture —.

HN: [Inaudible] [Laughter] Behind General Leclerc.

RB: Is that right? This is the trophy?

DN: Yes.

HN: Yes.

RB: Where are you?

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: [Laughter] He is holding it.

DN: I am right there.

RB: That is you, right there, holding the trophy? [*Memoire*, Daniel Nevot is sixth from the left in photo on page 23.]

DN: Yes, yes.

HN: He is one of the shortest ones there.

RB: That is right.

HN: [Laughter]

BF: Dangerous with judo.

HN: Yes.

RB: Is there also a picture of you with the other fencers?

BF: Yes, right there.

RB: Let us get this.

HN: You are quick! [Laughter]

RB: Let us hold this up.

BF: We are good.

RB: You are the second one on the left. [*Memoire*, picture after page 21.]

DN: Yes.

RB: That was in 1951? [The picture in the autobiography is titled: 1949]

DN: Yes.

RB: That is the saber class?

DN: Yes.

HN: Two others in this picture became fencing masters and came over here. One of them started the New York Athletic Club.

RB: Goodness!

HN: And the other one went to the west coast.

RB: [To] Los Angeles, California or San Francisco, California?

HN: Yes. It was Los Angeles, was it not, I do not remember.

RB: [Did] you end up going to Texas?

DN: Yes.

HN: One of his other buddies was there, too, in San Antonio, Texas. [Laughter]

RB: “Of [the] twenty-one students in your class [when you graduated], sixteen received the Maitre d’Armes [fencing master] and physical education and five received the Provost d’Armes [teacher]. These five had the option to return in six months for more training. You graduated and [received] your Brevet [diploma] and Maitre d’Armes as a fencing master.” [*Memoire*, page 23.]

DN: Yes.

RB: From there [did] you go to Madagascar?

DN: Yes.

RB: If I remember correctly, you were on your way to Vietnam.

DN: Yes.

RB: Why did you not go to Vietnam? Why did they change the orders?

DN: There was a revolt in Madagascar and they changed the orders.

BF: [There was] a revolt.

RB: They needed you more in Madagascar than [for you] to go to Vietnam.

HN: They diverted the ship.

RB: [Were] you diverted back to Africa?

DN: Yes.

RB: [Laughter]. You spent some time in Madagascar. [Was it] about three years?

DN: Yes.

RB: [Did] Rosette came with you?

HN: And Marianne.

RB: And Marianne, of course.

HN: Of course. [Laughter] His daughter was born in Madagascar.

RB: What was her name?

HN: Patricia.

RB: Patricia was your daughter. In 1952 you went back to France to Billom?

DN: Yes.

RB: [Was that] near Vichy?

DN: [Inaudible].

RB: At the École d'Enfant Troupe?

DN: [The] d'Enfant Troupe.

RB: “[The] d'Enfant Troupe had 600 students from seventh to twelfth grades. You were assigned as the Officier d'Sport.” [*Memoire*, page 24.]

DN: Yes.

RB: [Like] an athletic director?

HN: Yes.

RB: Then [you went] back to Africa, back to [Dakar], Senegal, in 1954?

DN: Yes.

BF: Did you have a good time with the students in Billom? Were they good [students] essentially?

DN: Yes.

BF: That is good to know. I assume they learned a lot from you.

DN: Yes.

RB: [You were] two years in Africa and then back to France, again to Billom?

DN: Yes.

HN: They rotated them in out and out. A couple of years down in Africa and then back.

RB: Was it the same school or a different one? L'École Militaire Prépartoire?

HN: Yes, I think it was the same school.

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: No, no. He is talking about [when he was] in Billom.

DN: Yes, yes.

HN: Was it the same school each time?

DN: Yes, yes.

RB: I see.

HN: That was his question.

RB: I see.

HN: And then back into Africa.

RB: Then [you went] back [to] Africa for four years at Brazzaville, Congo?

HN: Yes.

RB: That takes to you to the 1960s. Then you went back to Billom and retired from the Air Force at that point. Not the Air Force, the French Army. [Laughter]

HN: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

RB: Yes.

HN: [It was] the [French] Marines, actually.

RB: Is it the marines? Is that what they are called?

DN: Yes.

RB: That makes sense. Then you [came] to the United States. How did you get the job in Texas?

HN: Tell him [about] the offers. You had three different offers.

DN: I already had two people who were already on with me.

HN: No. Yes. Go ahead.

DN: A good to [inaudible].

RB: Say that again.

HN: The two [colleagues] I was telling you about.

RB: Yes, that they had gone over [to Texas]?

HN: They had gone over.

RB: You knew them?

DN: Yes, yes. They told me to come back with them. [Inaudible]

RB: They wanted you to come to the [United] States?

DN: Yes.

RB: Were you able to get a job offer at the school in Texas?

DN: Yes, yes.

RB: You stayed at that —.

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: [Inaudible]

RB: What is that?

HN: He looked in the sport magazine.

RB: Yes.

HN: They had ads for fencing masters in Egypt, Turkey and Texas.

DN: Yes.

HN: And he was such a crazy for western [movies] person! [Laughter].

DN: Yes.

RB: You wanted to go to Texas?

DN: Yes.

HN: He said Egypt was too close to the Suez Canal [and] he did not care much for Turkey.

RB: [Laughter].

HN: He decided Texas was for him. [Laughter]

RB: [Did] you end up staying at the school [for] twenty-three years?

DN: Yes, yes.

RB: [Helen], were you at the school at that time?

HN: No, I was in a fencing club in Fort Worth [Texas].

RB: [Is] that is how you met?

HN: He never stays still. He had the job at St. Marks [School of Texas in Dallas, Texas] and he taught P.E. [physical education]. Was it second through sixth [grades]?

DN: Yes.

HN: He [also] taught fencing, swimming and judo to the older [students].

DN: Yes.

HN: [But] that did not keep him satisfied. He [also] taught fencing at the Dallas Fencers' Club, our club in Fort Worth and in McKinney [Texas]. Where else?

DN: Waco [Texas].

HN: Gainesville [Texas].

RB: Oh, you were busy! [Laughter]

DN: Yes, four places.

HN: Four different places.

RB: [Laughter]

HN: Once he was managing the pool at Las Colinas Country Club, [Dallas, Texas].

DN: [At the] Las Colinas Country Club.

RB: Managing the pool where?

DN: Las Colinas. [Inaudible]

HN: It is a country club. It has this big pool and a lot of sports [equipment].

RB: [Was] that in Dallas [Texas]?

HN: Yes, it is big. [Inaudible]

DN: [I worked there] for twenty-two years.

RB: Marianne was with you. I think you wrote that Patricia went back to France. Or not?

DN: No.

RB: [Did] Rosette go?

HN: Rosette married before they came over.

DN: Yes.

RB: She did not ever come to Texas to live?

HN: No.

RB: But Paulette did?

HN: Paulette is not her [name].

RB: I am sorry, Patricia.

HN: Yes, Patricia came.

RB: She [was] married?

DN: Yes.

RB: What happened to Marianne?

HN: She is still in France.

RB: She is in France?

HN: Oh, Marianne!

RB: Marianne, your first wife? Did she pass away?

HN: She passed away.

DN: Yes. [Inaudible]

HN: Somewhere along [in] 2002 or 2003 or something like that. I do not know. It is funny, I had lost track of him. I had lost my husband. I still lived in Fort Worth and he lived here [St. George, Utah]. I did not know where he was or if he was still around or whatever.

RB: Then how did you reconnect?

HN: They had a big [event] — they were going to honor him in Dallas. Patricia insisted he come. I could not go to the official [event], but a couple [of friends] and I came over the next day and had lunch with him. Then we had correspondence back and forth because he left the next day.

RB: You were living in St. George?

DN: Yes.

RB: What brought you to St. George?

HN: Patricia and her family.

RB: Patricia is here?

HN: Yes.

RB: Okay. [Did] you teach at Dixie State [College and then Dixie State University] for awhile?

DN: Yes.

RB: [So] you came here because of your daughter and her family?

DN: Yes.

RB: You have grandchildren, I assume.

DN: Yes.

HN: [Laughter]

DN: [Laughter]

HN: [Inaudible]

RB: You went back to Texas for the award, came back here [and] the two of you reconnected [from] that visit.

HN: Yes, we corresponded.

RB: [You] corresponded afterwards and then you ended up getting married. How long ago?

HN: [We were married] in 2006. Because he had lost Marianne and I had lost Jim.

RB: What was your husband's name?

HN: Jim. He was a good friend of "Dan's." See those three little pictures up there?

RB: Yes.

HN: The top one is Jim, my husband.

RB: Was he a fencer also?

HN: Oh, yes, he was avid. [Laughter]

RB: That is [very] nice.

HN: [Then] "Dan" and then me in my better years. [Laughter]

BF: Oh, no, you still look beautiful!

HN: That is the foil that he ["Dan"] gave me lessons with.

RB: That is wonderful!

DN: [Inaudible]

HN: What?

RB: Well, this was [a very] good [interview]. Thank you so much for walking us through, once again, your quite adventurous career.

DN: Yes.

RB: In World War II and Africa?

HN: It should be a — [Laughter]

BF: [A] jaunty.

RB: Yes. That concludes our interview.

HN: Would you like to —.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]