Interview with Larry Galaske, Blasé Szwaczkowski and Stephen Brailo
April 19, 2024

Larry: July 1967-November 1968, MOS: 36K20 (Field Wireman, "pole jockey").

Ski: March 1975-June 1976. MOS: 72B, later that was changed to 72E (Teletype Operator).

Stephen: October 2019-October 2022. MOS: 25Q, later changed to 25H (Network Communication Specialist).

Both Larry and Ski served in the Regimental Communications Center (Comms Center). To get to the Comms Center, you turned right after entering the building and went to the end of the hallway. Ski's room was right next to the Comms Center; Larry's was upstairs.

Larry: I was in the comm center for about six months as a message center clerk; I was not RTT. I was not a radio operator; I was a telephone lineman. After about six months, our commo officer came in and asked if anyone was interested in working in the S-1 one as a distribution clerk. Because we had a guy in there that was a former hippie that still wanted to be one. And, of course, he's one door down from the Command Sergeant Major and two doors down from the Colonel. He wouldn't blouse his boots, he wouldn't shave, he wouldn't get a haircut. So, they were booting him out. They say don't volunteer for anything here. That was everybody's word. I asked the Lieutenant what it was about, and he told me what he thought it was. I said I'll try. I'll try it once. I went to the S-1 one and had an office and, basically, all I did was order all the forms for the Regiment and for all the squadrons plus the internal mail. As the forms came in you sent them out to the squadrons as they requested. Major Zark was the S-1. He was not West Point, he was old school. And he was about as big around as he was tall. If you heard him he had real gruff voice. If he was growling at you, you thought he was as mean as an old bear. If you did what you were supposed to do, if you were strac, you broke starch, got a haircut, polished your boots, stayed out of his way, he would take care of you. When he moved to S-2 he asked me if I knew how to run the printing machine that was in the back of my little office with two rooms that had a sink and an offset printing press. And he asked if I knew how to run it. No. He said, can you figure it out? I suppose so. I found out that the downtown in Nuremberg was the commercial office for Addressograph, which was the brand of the printing machine. I went down and talk to the Germans and they gave me some tips and I went back and played with it, I got it running. I ended up doing all the classified information that had to be printed. I printed in the back there and they ended up moving the machine to the basement and put steel bars on the doors and I had a guard that was stationed outside. I would print at night. And, of course, all the scrap had to taken out to the burn barrel in the back and burned. The burn barrel was behind the regimental headquarters and the PX. And then they assigned me as a classified courier. The Colonel's driver would drive me out to the airfield, over to Feurth and down to low Bahnhof, where I would meet the couriers coming in from Stuttgart and wherever, and we would exchange classified information. Because of that I was exempt from duty. And I had separate rations, because a lot of times I would miss chow. My best time in the Army was in the Regiment and it's something to

remember. I didn't realize at the time, or for years later, how prestigious the Regiment is until you start looking at history and the things that have gone on and how the Regiment has performed. But it was an honor.

Ski: I was gonna mention that when I went in at the end of Vietnam we guys who had been given the option to either go into the Army or go to jail. We had a lot of those. We had a lot of draftees, guys who did not want to be there and they acted like it. You were talking about that burn barrel. Our burn barrel was behind the laundromat by the back gate. We had to tie up all the ticker tape from the teletype machine and close up in a bow into a big stack and put the other hard copies in another stack. I think it was the first of the month when we had to go out there and burn everything.

Larry: Well, you know, that may have still been true when I was there. But I wasn't part of that because I was working out of S-1 and S-2. Ours was back in behind the regiment. There was a little green space back there on our side of the fence between the backside of regiment. That building was L-shaped, I can't even tell you how I got back there anymore. I would take a bag full of the material with a guard would escort me out and I would do my deal.

Tim: Stephen, Larry and Ski were in Nurnberg and you were in VilseckThey both obviously had connections to the comm Center at one point. So where did you fit in? What was that like for you?

Stephen: I was at Vilseck and Graf, Rose Barracks and Tower Barracks with the regimental engineering squadron. The commo troop supported the Regiment and also the RES (the Regimental Engineer Squadron) with their communication assets across Europe.

Ski: I remember in the comm center, the old brass switchboard, the SB 22, we actually had to plug in stuff. We worked shift work. If the switchboard operator had to leave we had to learn how to run it, which wasn't that difficult, because we only had about eight holes the plug in.

Tim: How was your comms with everybody in that regard, Steven?

Stephen: It's a lot different now compared to that. A lot of its automated, we have modern equipment. For example, we have the gator ball, which is essentially a blow-up satellite dish. You can bring communication equipment wherever you need to long as you have a form of power; so all you need is an electrical outlet or generator. And you can provide the voice in the fight, telephones, just about anything.

Ski: You don't get ticker tape anymore.

Stephen: No, no ticker tape. I don't want to say ancient history, but it's part of Army history.

Larry: Stephen, did you still have the will the KY7s, the crypto boxes?

Stephen: We don't have those, we have Kick 13s (KYK-13), SKLs and RKL, more automated and new equipment.

Larry: At the end of my tour in the Regiment I was assigned as the crypto clerk. I was back over in the comm center. Every night I had to go into the safe and access the codebook and then take it into the RTT room. I think we had a four teletype set up, I can't remember what was on the network. It had a crypto box, that you had to open a cover on and it had so many plugs and so many wires.

Ski: 26 letters and 26 numbers.

Larry: I thought it was like 28 plugs.

Ski: It could have been.

Larry: It was an odd number. At 0100 hours, you shut the net down, you pull the covers off the boxes and pull all the plugs. Then you would hand the codebook to the operators, and they would plug the wires back in to the new setup according to the codebook. In '68 when Russia invaded Czechoslovakia, I wasn't allowed to hand the operators the codebook anymore. I had to stand there and read the code off for the wire locations to each one of them. And I was confined to barracks. I wasn't allowed to leave because I had access to the codes. It was a big deal when the Russians invaded. Their tanks were facing our border, pulled right up on the border. And our PIO specialist had commandeered heli, and they were out flying along the border and actually strayed about a mile into Czech territory across the border. I don't think it was ever reported, but it was like an aw shit moment.

Tim: Larry and Ski, you guys were in HHT regimental headquarters troop. Yes. And who did you did you belong to Steve?

Stephen: We were attached to Regimental Headquarters but were assigned to the Regimental Engineer Squadron.

Larry: I was Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, which was a separate troop but we were attached to regimental headquarters.

Ski: Larry, you're like me, and I was here for two REFORGER years. But somebody always had to be in the comm center. I never went on a REFORGER; I never saw a tank. I never left headquarters quarters.

Larry: Correct. I went to Graf when I was probably there a month or two. We ended up going to Graf as the forward party to set up tents for the for the rest of the Regiment to show up. I was there again one other time, it must have been just after I got into distribution for the S-1. After I became a classified courier I stayed back because I was supporting other things. It was bad enough. Of course, Graf wasn't the most pleasant place, especially in the winter. The last one I did was in October. They had brand 16-man tents, waterproof, you know that's a wax compound or whatever. We were set up with the two-piece potbelly furnaces that were being fed using this really cheap German coal. One of the guys from New Jersey, Auggie was his name, got up about one o'clock in the morning and the stove was evidently he thought the stove had gone out. So he went out in his shorts to one of the vehicles and brought back a five gallon gas can. He drug the can back to the entrance of the tent. He poured gas into a C-Rat can, spilling gas all over the place. He then goes back into the tent, opens the top of the stove and pours some gas in. Well, it didn't do anything because it was just embers until it vaporized and then all of a sudden it went up. It singed the hair off the front of his head and his eyebrows and and chased out the door of the tent out to where the gas was and caught the whole front of the tent on fire. That wax treated canvas went up like a candle. They yell fire. Everybody gets out of that tent. I'm in the next tent over and this is one or two o'clock in the morning. I'm running around barefoot in my underwear trying to find a fire extinguisher and it's got to be about 38 degrees in a sleeting snow. Finally they got it under control. That tent was practically destroyed. Luckily, the others didn't catch fire because you know how closely they were placed. You look back and it was not funny at the time but it was comical to see everybody running around in their underwear trying to find fire extinguishers or something to put this thing out.

Tim: When you guys were in the regimental comm center, you had connectivity with the National Military Command Center in DC via teletype Is that correct? Right. Steve, did you guys have that kind of connectivity?

Stephen No, not that I'm aware of. If they did, that's probably above my knowledge, probably through 7th ATC. I know 7th ATC they have their main area where they can communicate with whoever they need to. because they have I forget who it was. During COVID I remember they have a meeting area within the headquarters where they can contact DC. But from my knowledge of the headquarters in Vilseck I'm not sure they did.

Larry: Ski, did you guys run the 26 Delta rigs, the rat rigs?

Ski: The other guys did, I never had any part with that.

Larry: I was in the comm center and I didn't pay any attention. They were a Deuce and a half with a box on the back, which was the 26 Delta. I talked to one guy every once in a while. Evidently, there was one that was set up outside the comm center so cables could be run into the comm center. When we were in the field such as Hohenfels one of those rigs would be set up. I remember they had room for two guys with a couple of chairs and were just full of, of equipment.

Ski: I remember that being set up. And like if you were looking from the outside of the comm center was on the corner, it was sitting right there.

Tim: And that was just a deuce and a half full of communications gear.

Ski: Right.

Larry: Correct. They had they had an RTT they had two radios and at least one RTT in there. I didn't have anything to do with them. I had no idea what they were doing who they were communicating with. They ran seven days a week, just like we did.

Tim: When you guys deployed, Steve, what did comms look like, what kind of mobility did you guys have?

Stephen: We have the TCN light [TCN-L] so everything's on a back of a Humvee. We just run our stacks into the TOC. Once we get onto the network with the satellite operators and our configurations and our tunnels through the TCN for different SIFER access. It's like bells and whistles and you just hear the TOC phone ringing all the time with radios going up and down. Its like clockwork.

Tim: The TOC for us was a 577. What does it talk look like now?

Stephen: A lot smaller from my foxhole when we're there, because we ran everything out of the back of one of the expando vans. Everything was an element of an expando van.

Ski: When I got there, there were some women in the regiment. In fact, we had three teletypists. I think in 75 they told the women that they had to go. That really threw a wrench into things because we were short three teletype operators. I think there was only four of us. So that's when

we get our shifts changed and our shifts changing, 12 hours on, 12 hours off. When the women left and could be replaced, we were working nonstop. Did you still have women?

Larry: No. We had no no women in our unit. They had not integrated yet.

Tim: John, did you have women?

John: I think there was one woman at regimental headquarters when Wagner took over and I think he booted her out.

Tim: I don't remember any when I was there in the eighties.

Larry: Ski you were talking about the misfits coming in. I get on a couple of the websites for Merrell barracks and others and they used to call it the Gangster Hotel because there was booze and drugs and everything all over the place. That was that was disheartening to be because we didn't have that kind of stuff.

Ski:
I drank, but I never did any drugs. But there were guys that would get in trouble. In fact, we used to get messages, periodically, about so and so was arrested for drugs for this song, so was booted out for drugs. I don't know how it was back then but our first message every day after we plugged in all those wires was called the piss call. Just call. And the first message was whoever had to go take a urine test that day. That was based on the last four of the security numbers. That was our first message every day.

Tim: Stephen, do they still piss you guys.

Stephen: Every month.

Ski: Stephen, do they do everybody or is it random like when I was there.

Stephen: It's random. You'll have the random one. I think it's 10%, if I'm not mistaken, every month. Then, typically you'll do the 100% after a block leave. The holiday block leave in December is typically 100%. But it varies depending on what the commander and the command dictate if they feel the need, they need to do more your analysis and they can.

Larry: I have forgotten about that. It seemed like it was random for me. Because I had a top secret clearance and I was working with the guys in S-2 to they would just randomly call me and

I had to be there within like 10 or 15 minutes or something of that sort. I've forgotten all about that sort of thing, but you weren't

John: Were you doing NRAS, nuclear release, Larry?

Larry: No, at that point. I was in S-1. I was working with the major that had moved to the S-2. They were the ones that were disseminating all the information to the squadrons, including all of the classified stuff.

Tim: How about Ski, did you have any NRAS stuff?

Ski: No. My security clearance was only up to secret. The top secret stuff was handled over in the S-1 so I didn't handle any of that.

Tim: How was that for you, Stephen?

Stephen: No, I haven't seen any of any of that. My clearance is only secret. So that's probably at a different element, probably not at Graf or Vilseck, but probably somewhere up north probably near K-town.

John: It actually wasn't as highly classified as you as you'd think it was SFRD. secret, formerly restricted, as I recall.

Tim: Ski I know you had some other questions.

Ski: I had a bunch. Larry, this may have more to do with you than Stephen. When I was there guys that worked in the comm center, mainly the teletype operators and the switchboard never had to stand in formation, or do PT, or anything.

Larry: Correct.

Ski: We just were in the comm center. There were times, especially when you were working. second shift and third shift consecutively, we didn't show dress all the time. I remember there was about a two week stretch for some reason we all said we're not going to shave. So, we all grew beards. Then one morning, our captain was Captain Packer, he came in and took a look and said, "What the fuck are you guys doing?" Well, we got into a little bit of hot water because none of us had shaved. Was that how it was when you there? You know, when it was not, shall we say disciplined?

Larry: No, we still had to break starch even in the comm center. You were talking about the odd shift. In the comm center I worked 12 on and 24 off. You still have to show up clean shaven with a haircut. And then when I went to regimental headquarters that was an everyday, you had to make sure you were Strac. It was no big deal. We may have had different uniforms. Did you still have the OG 107. Did you have the perma press ones?

Ski: No, we just had the BDUs.

Larry: Yeah, they came in with permanent press long after I was out. You know, as heavily as starched them, the thread would start to break in the creases. So, you'd have to go over to clothing sales and use your allowance to pick up new fatigues.

Tim: Stephen why was the comms out of the regimental engineer the support squadron. I don't understand why you guys were part of the engineer group.

Stephen: I think that's just how the Department of Defense for the Army with their strategy for most communication companies and troops, they would put them into engineering squadrons. But the Army dictated that those companies and troops would be attached to the engineering squadrons.

Ski: Larry, I know that the separate rations we got, especially if we wanted to eat second shift and, the mess hall was closed, did not cover the cost of a meal. Our platoon sergeant actually gave everybody a card to get into the mess hall so that we could save all that money. When we were on the midnight and second shift we had to buy food that cost more than our allowance. Did you guys do that?

Larry: No, my separate rations covered our cost because the German economy when I was there was four marks to the dollar.

Ski: Oh, my.

Larry: You could you go down to the wienerwald and pick up half a chicken and a bottle of wine for a mark and a half.

Tim: It was like Monopoly money.

Stephen: I wish I had that, oh my goodness.

Tim: Stephen, did you have a 24-hour com center.

Stephen: We did; it was in Landstuhl.

Tim: But the Regiment isn't 24 hours?

Stephen: No. Landstuhl is the main communications hub for satellite communications for Europe, the Balkans, and I think the Middle East as well as parts of Africa. There are different hubs used around the world for satellite communication. Landstuhl is just one of them.

Tim: I'm just trying to compare and contrast because Larry and Ski were both in a communication center that operated around the clock. Part of that was because of the Regiment's border, which was not the mission that you guys had. But if somebody needed to get hold of Regiment in the middle of night, how'd they do that?

Stephen: From my knowledge, the Regiment had the RS6, providing them a command center in the headquarters. When the Russian and Ukraine conflict occurred, they ran the operations from actual headquarters. They had shift work. We sent out our team to Romania to support what NATO and 5th Corp had us do at the time. The Regiment ran operations through that with 24/7 operations.

Ski: I got a question for you guys. I remember at Ft. Gordon going through training, and learning about different crypto devices, There was one big box that I think required 72 operations to turn it on. Do you guys remember that big box?

Larry: I didn't go through Gordon. I went to Fort Dix, New Jersey for lineman school. I got to climb telephone poles in February with ice on them.

Larry: Does anybody remember Jim Croce? I was his squad leader in combat support training. He bunked right across from me; brought his guitar. He knew all kinds of Old English drinking songs which were pretty risque. We got a big laugh, he was a good entertainment.

Ski: He got killed in a plane crash in '73. I was Ft. Gordon.

Larry: I had one of his demo records that he brought back at Christmastime. He had gone someplace with his wife, Ingrid and they had produced a record of 500 copies. There were at least half a dozen of us that bought a copy off him, and he signed them. I passed the record on to my son. I was going to send it to Jim's wife, Ingrid, who owns two restaurants out in San Diego. She did not have that album. My son told me he wanted to sell and he ended selling it to some

guy because of the signature. I told him it was his. I told him to take a picture of it and make a poster and hang it on the wall.

Larry: There were a lot of times you thought, well, this sucks, especially if you're going to Graf. I never got to Vilseck; I had no clue that there was anything in Vilseck. I don't know what else is there now.

Stephen: They have the reed Museum. They have a nice PX. They're building new housing there for the soldiers and their families. I got there in 2019. They're really trying to build up as much as they possibly can. The quality, in my opinion, is looking a lot better than what it was back in 2019.

Tim: The entire regiment is there, Larry at Vilseck and Rose barracks. While we were strung out all over Bavaria in different locations the entire regiment is located at Vilseck.

Larry: I guess ours was because of border support.

Tim: Yeah, they no longer have that mission.

Larry: Tim, were you ever at Merrell?

Tim: I was. I didn't spend much time there.

Larry: Ski, do you remember all the behind the scenes stuff since Merrell was a Nazi kaserne? Were you ever up in the chapel?

Ski: Yes.

Larry: If you pulled the carpet back, there were swastikas inlaid in the floor. That was supposedly Hitler's office and that was over the archway as you came in.

Ski: Yeah, I remember that.

Larry: Did you ever get to see his bomb shelter?

Ski: No.

Larry: Our mailroom was in the in the archway.

Ski: Right.

Larry: Well, if you went downstairs from there towards the mess hall to the boiler rooms was a bomb shelter. The Germans had a beer machine down there. So we would kind of just wander down there once in a while instead of going all the way over to the EM club, especially if it was late at night. We'd go down and buy the Germans a beer and they let you use the beer machine. They showed us Hitler's bomb shelter. Unfortunately, I didn't take any pictures. There were no lights in there at all, wiring was just hanging, all disconnected. There was two rooms and there were great big, heavy arches that were cast into the rooms for the ceilings to support everything. In the second room there was a mural that must have been probably 20 feet wide. And there was a big mural of a SS Trooper kicking a dog in the in the butt and his ears are flapping and the slogan was kicking the American dog out in German. I didn't have a camera, and we never got to get in there again. But it was like a hatchway, it looked like something on a ship. Do you know anything about all the tunnels and the other basements that were below the first sub-basement?

Ski: They told us that there was actually four stories underground.

Larry: Yes.

Ski: But they flooded all of them.

Larry. Yes. We assumed that the basement that we used was the that was the first and then there were three below us. There was supposed to be German equipment from World War Two equipment in there, including a measurement Messerschmitt 262, the jet. The center parade field when I was there was a parking lot that was paved. I talked to a warrant officer when I was in Nam that knew more about it. He said that originally that was a big grass field because Merrill barracks was never bombed because they assumed it was a housing complex. The center parade field was all grass and the whole thing was lifted up on big jacks. There was the motor pool underneath.

Ski: Oh, I never heard that.

Larry: Supposedly there was a tunnel that ran from the parade field that was big enough for an airplane to go down that ran to the barracks. supposedly from from underbarrel barracks all the way over to the parade sealed, because there was a landing strip over there. Apparently, if Hitler were to visit he could land his plane there and taxi to the building underground. We used to do all kinds of snooping around trying to get down into the lower levels. It was said that there was still poison gas down there. Supposedly in the late '50s somebody was sent down to explore and they never came back. Somebody else was then sent down and they heard an explosion because it was

supposedly booby trapped and they never came back. So everything was sealed. But supposedly every regimental commander was given a tour of as far as you could get in and the entryways.

Tim: I've heard the rumor that all the regimental chaplains had a map of all of Merrell Barracks.

Larry: All of that could be true. We had to run wires, we'd run wire for antennas and that sort of thing. We had to get into the attic of the main barracks, the three story that was next to the mess hall to do so and it was all concrete. The buildings weren't bomb proof, but they were pretty well reinforced. If you went all the way down to the far end of the barracks on the south wall there was a huge gear that was inset into the wall. There was a gear and a set of pulleys that ran down someplace. If you went down to the third floor there was nothing there, just wall. We couldn't get into the basement because the Germans ran the boilers and wouldn't allow it. We have no idea what that was for. Rumor was that it was part of some kind of flood gate. That would have been the logical place for it.

Tim: Stephen, did you guys chase a lot of rumors about the Germans? Does that still persist over there?

Stephen: It does. I mean, there's a lot of rumors that you hear, but not as prominent as the ones that you just spoke about. One of the things that my buddy told me that I didn't even realize it is that some of the barracks on Tower Barracks actually have a symbol of a helmet, a German helmet, and behind the helmet is actually a swastika. I never realized that until he told me about it and there's only certain areas in Germany that actually have the Nazi symbol still on the buildings. I learned something new every day when I was over there But here's definitely a lot of rumors still.

Larry: On the front of the building, I don't know whether that was still there when you guys were there, but the front of the building had a lot of potholes in it.

John: Yes.

Larry: And that was from 50 caliber machine gun strafing. Aircraft strafing, supposedly, and the Germans wouldn't let us fix it because they said it was a reminder, that was the rumor I'd heard. I understood that there was an entry under the bowling alley to get into the tunnels

Tim: Do you have any questions for these two guys?

Stephen: From your time in the Regiment, what shines the most, to this day, like what moment in your time in the regiment that you can remember that is one of the most prominent moments in your life that you can recall.

Ski: I'll tell you one of mine. I had just joined the regiment. I go into comm center, I'm a Spec 4 and they show me this and that and this way you got to do if anybody comes in. There was a little window in the door. If people came to get messages or if they wanted to come in, there was a sheet of paper with their name on it. They had to be approved and show their ID. I remember Major Sylar was the head guy. He really stressed don't let anybody in here unless they were on that sheet. I don't care who they say they are. So I'm listening. One day the switchboard operator went to chow so I'm doing two jobs. I'm sitting at the switchboard with my back to the door and I hear this kickin, and I turned around, some guy is standing there. He looked like an old grizzled guy. I said, "can I help you?" He says, "let me in here." I stood up from my chair and said, "You have to be on the sheet. I don't know who you are." He says, "I'm Colonel Zip, I run this place." And like an asshole I walked up and I said, "well, your name's not on this sheet". He's banging on the door and Major Sauer comes running out. "Jesus Christ," he says, and he opens the door and takes Colonel Zip in there. About five minutes later, Sauer comes out and he says, "You did the right thing, Ski, but I've got to get pictures of Colonel Zip and Colonel Hudachek in case they ever show up here again." That's one thing that stands out in my mind memory

Larry: There was a couple of things. One was the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia and the fact that everything got shut down; we went on full alert. They said that VII Corps was split so they would have two headquarters. They told us that our life expectancy was about 30 seconds if the Germans came across. I remember talking about the 84th engineers who were assigned to us. They were nuclear capable, the nuclear demolitions were off site. I remember them talking about surveying bridges because the big bridges were chambered for explosives. So, they knew where to put the charges to at least slow the Russians up.

Tim: Stephen, what stands out most in your mind? Your memory is probably a little bit clearer.

Stephen: Maybe a little bit. I think from my standpoint, just the people I worked with, back in my troop. I'm lucky enough to have my old platoon sergeant over here now at Fort Eisenhower as my boss again. He really shaped me to the NCO that I am today, and really believed in me. To be honest, if I didn't go to Germany and be a part of the 2CR, I probably would have got out of the army after my first contract. When my reenlistment hit up, while I was deployed in Kosovo, they said you have the opportunity to go to Germany. And my dad was like, yeah, you better take it because I never got the chance, and you do. If you don't take it, then I'm going to call you stupid. And I'm like, well, I can't be called stupid. I took the chance. The Regiment has been

amazing to me. I mean, the work it does suck. But besides the work, the camaraderie with the personnel that I met is amazing.

Tim: So, Stephen, you served under #81 and #82.

Stephen: Yes.

Tim: And ski you were there for Hudachek?

Ski: Hudachek was he was the only one when I was there.

Tim: How about you, Larry?

Larry: Colonel Clark and Colonel Baldwin. Our Command Sergeant Major was Foglio [#2]. At the time Dunaway was Sergeant Major of the Army. Supposedly Foglio and him were good friends. They both had same time and grade rank so Foglio would never make Sergeant Major of the Army. That guy would come in with white hair, he was super strac. He was like Major Zark: if you did what you supposed to do and you kept your nose clean, he treated you decent and you didn't have any worries. Three of my buddies and I went to Monaco to the Grand Prix. This was in ‘68 and the French were in a general strike. We were gonna go to Spain where the nude beaches were after Monaco. We got into France and we can't get into gas. We were driving a little Renault Delphine, as they called them back then instead of Renault. We got into Salon France and we were stuck. We couldn't make it back to Italy. I called the American Embassy and they said to call the regiment because they couldn't do anything for us. I called back and got a hold of Major Zark, and he was on the phone with Foglio. They said, if you don't get back, you'll AWOL, we can't do anything about that. But if you need money, let us know what you want and we'll send you what you need, we'll help however we can. The other guys didn't know them nearly as well as me and they thought why are you gonna call them they're just gonna get us in trouble. Anyway, we made it out with no problem. It was nice that they had our back.

Tim: Ski, how was who to Hudachek received?

Ski: To be honest, I never met him or saw him. But again, I was on back shift so often and there were a lot of guys in my platoon that I would only see periodically. We were talking about other women or if we're gonna go that night to Cafe Schmidt or whatever. I never heard anybody really bitching about him.

Larry: Ski was Leopolds the bar in downtown still open?

Ski: Yeah, I think it was. We hung out at Café Schmidt (rock). Do you remember Mario's?

Larry: Yes. Cafe Schmidt no. Okay. Leopold's was a GI bar. The Polizei would come in, because the guys would get into arguments and break up stuff. Usually they paid for it. But a lot of the Germans were Polizei from WWII. Nazi police. They basically had a hard on for all of his GIS anyway. They would they grab a couple of drunks and take them back in the alleys and beat the hell out of them. There was a lot of that stuff that went on; some of the taxi drivers were were former Nazis and they would give you a hard time.

Tim: Stephen, I know you were much more mature and behaved. And these two were,

Stephen: I would hope so.

Ski: It's so different. I can't even conceive of getting email when I was in the Regiment or talking like this (on Teams). We had to wait till we went and got our mail. And we never made phone calls to anyone.

Tim: Think about when you had a picture developed. You had the 35 millimeter roll of film, and we had to send it back to United States to get it developed.

Larry: You could go through the PX but we also we had a Photoshop upstairs in the barracks, it by the chapel. You could go in and develop your own pictures. They had all the film processing and the dryer so that you could print your own photos. Did you know that there was a rifle range in the attic one of the buildings?

Ski: I had heard that.

Larry: I had a lieutenant who up around Columbus (Ohio). He contacted me one time, probably 20 years ago. We were talking and he said, “Did you ever get to go over to the rifle range up in the attic?” I said. “ I have no clue what you're talking about.” Evidently, officers could sign out a 22 rifle from the arms room go up and shoot on the range.

Ski: Wow.

Ski: Larry, when you were there was there a German guy that used to come on kaserne and go to each company and sell souvenirs? They called him Gypsy Joe? Do you remember him?

Larry: I don't know whether that was him. But there was a woman that came in to the Regiment and sold doughnuts in the morning and pretzels in the afternoon. Her husband was a junk man.

Anything over 100 years old over there as junk. He would salvage old grandfather clocks and wall clocks and fix them and the guys were buying them and sending them home because they were 100 to 150 years old. That was her husband that did that. I don't know whether it was the same guy or not. Our taylor, he may have been gone. His name was Bruno. He had a room right next to the comm center. When you walk down the hallway it was on the right-hand side just before you got to the comm center. If you needed patches sewn on or whatever, you'dto take them down to Bruno.

Ski: See that room you're talking about was right across from my room. That rom was for storage.

Larry: Well that is to the tailor shop and you used to be able to buy suits there. You would go in and he would measure you. I don't know whether he made them or whether he sent them out, but you get handmade suits.

Tim: How was the relationship with the Germans for you guys?

Stephen: Oh, it was amazing. Our 1SG Carter, first named Christopher, he re-kindled the relationship with our sister company in the Bundeswehr. Without him, we would have not got that relationship back. And to be honest, ISG Carter is probably one of the best NCOs I've ever met in my career so far. He made it just 1000 times better once he came in and took the change of responsibility for the C Troop. He made the relationship with the Germans a lot better. We sent some of our soldiers over there to tour their facilities, see the equipment that they use, and they got their Schultzenschnur. They did their marksmanship qualification. They got to chase traditional German food while they were there. The Germans came down and did a spur ride with us. It was just thanks to him. If 1SG Carter wasn't there, then we wouldn't have that relationship.

Ski: Steven, since you have a security clearance, are you prohibited from going to any countries? When I was there I was not allowed to go to any Soviet bloc country?

Stephen: Correct. The S-2 has a list of countries that were not able to travel to. If you try to put in leave for Russia, for example, then obviously they're gonna be like, well sorry you can't go there.

Larry: We had no connection, at least at my level with any of the German army. But civilians hated us. They liked her money. You know that it was only 20-25 years or so after the war. We Two or three of us went downtown; we were on the strass. The strass came down and went underground in front of the barracks.

Ski: Right.

Larry: And then there was a stop there where it came back up. Supposedly, the reason it went underground is because it would keep Hitler awake at night. So they put it underground for the noise, but it also had tunnels. If you watched as you went through the tunnel going back into town, you can see doorways that went someplace and they said those were tunnels where the Germans would move troops in and out of the barracks on to a streetcar or train. We were on the streetcar one night heading downtown, an old German lady and her husband came in, sat down and sat across from us and he had a wooden hand. Looked like it was made out of walnut. He was shaking his hand at us cussing at us in German and his wife is elbowing on him and telling him to shut up. Evidently, he was a casualty of war. We just shrugged it off. You would go downtown and go into some of the buildings and if you looked out the back window you would see the ruins of bombed out sections that were still there. We were not allowed to go to some discoteques that we weren't allowed to go into. I had a couple of German friends that would take me and they just said keep your mouth shut. We'd go in this alley and up on the second floor and there would be a really nice discoteque. all German. They didn't associate with us.

Ski, do you remember we used to have to watch for the Soviet spies.

Tim: The "smell 'em (SMLM).

Ski: Yeah.

Larry: They had their vehicles with a special license plate. We were told that they weren't supposed to be within so many blocks are so many miles and kilometers of the concern. But you were not allowed to stop them. You just had to report if you saw them.

Ski: I do remember. that now.

Tim: This is a "smell 'em" card.

Larry: I remember that.

Ski: Yeah.

Tim: On the back of this were instructions on what you were supposed to do when you encountered a "smell 'em." We all carried that card around. When we saw a "smell 'em" we were supposed to report them.

Stephen: Wow.

Larry: Report what you saw.

Stephen: Yeah. We didn't have that. whole different world. So

Larry: A whole different world. \

Ski: We didn't have any TV. We got one radio station the Armed Forces Network. That was the only network. I remember they would play different blocks; they'd play country music or rhythm and blues. And I remember that in the middle of the night they would play old radio shows. Did you ever listen to that Larry, like the Bob Hope Show or Jack Benny.

Larry: I had bought an old helicopter radio; it wasn't old at the time. It was AM/FM shortwave. I had a hard time receiving stuff in the barracks where I was at because the one room I was in didn't have a window. But if you ran a wire out, it would help. But you sat and listened to music. There was no TV. The only TV was German and you couldn't understand. It wasn't anything we were interested in anyway. Just a side note: when I was in Nam, we had two AFN network TV stations. I had a little nine or 10 inch black and white television and I put an antenna on the hooch. I watched Armstrong walked on the moon live in 1969. seemed crazy.

Tim: Stephen, these guys were both shaped by Vietnam and the veterans of that war. How was your time in the regiment shaped by the War on Terror veterans?

Stephen: I really think when people say that the Regiment is the cradle of leadership, it really is. And it shows. From my time, when I was there from 2019 to 2022, it was always go, go, go, go. From what I saw from other units compared to the 2CR I felt like, at the time, it was sporadic and unplanned. But when I look back, it actually was planned a lot better than what I saw from my previous units and where I'm currently at. I do kind of miss it, because of how the information was passed down and how thorough they were with just about everything. I felt like it was shaped to where it needed to be. You can really tell from the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who've been through that where their mindset was when it came to battle operations and battle rhythm.

Tim: Well, guys, we've been at this for an hour. Any final comments?

Ski: I just curious if Stephen knows any of the younger people that have come to our reunions.

Stephen: I have to go and see who attends the reunion.

Tim: We've got one coming up next year in Nashville.

Larry: I went to one reunion for the company I was in in Vietnam. I was 71st Assault Helicopter Company. Of course, I was part of the ground crew. I was an avionics NCO. Which is weird because I went from telephone linemen to working on helicopters. It's just wire and everything else was plug and play. We were 50% officers in that company with warrants and commissioned officers; the flight crews all stuck to themselves. I went to a reunion and there wasn't probably a handful were ground crew, and they really didn't have anything to do with us. That kind of soured me on going to any reunions. I don't know what you think, Tim, as far as including everyone in the reunions?

Tim: The Association, which has been in business since 1899, has been doing reunions post-WWII since the 1950s every other year and hasn't missed a beat.

Ski: How many have we been to together, buddy?

Ski: Well, I was just talking to Marsha the other day. Nashville will be our 10th or 11th. Reunion.

Tim: I've been going to him since 2011. How about you, John?

John: I've been going since 2015. So I would argue that it's pretty inclusive.

Tim: I think our reunions keep getting better. Larry, this is directly to your point, our challenge is to not be as officer centric as an association as we might have been in the past. I think we're making a lot of strides to be more inclusive. The very first two people that we inducted into our Hall of Fame or what we call the Honor Roll, were enlisted. Ned Devereaux, who was a command sergeant major years ago. Ned was an outstanding American. Dave Gettman, who enjoyed being a PFC, is just a phenomenal source of information on the Regiment. I could talk the rest of the day on what the information he's collected. As an example, he has spent 15 years going through ancestry.com. He's got a record of every trooper to serve in the Regiment from 1836 to the 1880s. His spreadsheet of troopers is phenomenal. Larry, to your point, we are always challenged to include everyone and we're trying very hard to get better at that. I'll let you comment on that Ski.

Ski: Let me add something here. When I first went, I think 2005 was my first reunion in DC. The first two we went to there were definitely enlisted men there. To be honest with you, it was mostly. I did feel it was nothing that you guys did but you feel disconnected because I did not

have any common ground with the officers. Let's put it that way. And then I went to the reunion in Gettysburg.

Tim: I was there, I ran that reunion.

Ski: Remember when we went golfing. It felt like it was 20 degrees.We went back to the hotel and got together. It was at that reunion that I really became comfortable talking with all the guys. And I'll tell you why, Larry. All the guys have just made me feel so welcome. My wife feels the same about all the guys' wives. I would not hesitate to say that some of these guys are better friends than friends I've known for 60 years.

Larry: I guess it's a it's time for me to look at the reunion dates and see about planning on doing that.

Tim: We have a good time, don't we Ski?

Ski: I love it. I can't wait for it. I wish there were more of them.

Tim: Guys, this has been great. I hope we hope to get some other people in person doing the same thing. And Steven, I know this is a pain for you to take out of the middle of your day when you're fighting the battle because the rest of us don't have those responsibilities. Thank you for doing this with us today.

Stephen: Thank you. And gentlemen, thank you so much for hearing your side as well.

Ski: Very nice meeting you Steve. And I hope to see you and Larry at the next Reunion.

Larry: Its very nice to meet you, Steve. It's interesting to know what the new technologies are and to know how far we've come from basically a little bit better than tin cans in the string.

Ski: It's unbelievable.

Tim: But you made it work somehow. John, you got anything you want to add, buddy?

John: I just gonna say when Larry and Steve come to the next reunion bring enough money because you're gonna have to buy regimental tie for yourself and you're gonna have to buy a regimental scarf for your wife.

Tim: That's it, guys. Thank you!