

CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

ERIC BRUNT ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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INTERVIEWEE: Joseph Vogelgesang

INTERVIEWER: Eric Brunt

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Joseph Vogelgesang

Interviewed 12 September 2022

Eric Brunt (00:00):

So where did you stay? Were you stationed in Germany?

Joseph Vogelgesang (00:02):

Yes. I was stationed in the North Sea, in Emden and Orrick,

(00:08):

And I had 11 guys and myself. We were in charge of the railway station and the shipping docks. The last day I was there, we were still taking prisoners because the prisoners didn't want to surrender because most of them asked, why did you wait so long to surrender? Well, we heard that the allies were shooting all the prisoners, so we didn't want to surrender with, so they kind of faded into the communities and like that. But once they found out that it was a good way to go is to surrender, they started coming in, especially the last six months I was there. We had more than the first six months, although the first two or three months was quite large after the war.

Eric Brunt (01:11):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:12):

After surrender, they surrendered.

Eric Brunt (01:14):

Was it a nice part of the country where you were?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:17):

Well, nothing was nice of the war. Yeah, there's lots of nice places there. But yeah,

Eric Brunt (01:26):

It was all in ruins, I guess. Eh, rubble.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:29):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:30):

I went to Frankfurt. I went to the museum there, and they have on display the, well, you go to Frankfurt and it is a modern city like this. Built up, but they have on display in the museum what the city looked like before, and then 1945, and there is just nothing left. A few churches here and there, and pretty much nothing else. It's crazy to see.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:58):

I was just looking since I spoke to you on the telephone. I don't know what I did with it, but I have a collection of pictures that I have when I was like, we had trucks go to Belgium from where we were stationed and went into Belgium to the docks to pick stuff up, and we were there for a few hours a day and then went right back to our location. And anyway, when we were covering,

Eric Brunt (02:39):

We're covering the destruction of houses.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:41):

Yeah. And wherever there was a bomb landed, you'd see a sewer pipe, three stories high standing there, or a chimney or a church tower or something. In some cities. That's all there was there. Even most of the bridges, they'd blow them up before we, so we couldn't get out of it where we were or in, yeah, it was terrible. Really?

Eric Brunt (03:14):

Yeah. Oh my gosh.

Joseph Vogelgesang (03:15):

And I had some pictures of some of the locations when we landed with Calgary Highlanders. We were a few days before we hit Caen, and Caen was just absolutely nothing, but sewer pipes and chimneys and streets were just all the brick in the middle of the road. There was no roads. You couldn't tell one way or the other. But can you imagine the civilians, they were the ones that were taking the brunt of that,

Eric Brunt (03:51):

Yes,

Joseph Vogelgesang (03:53):

We could protect yourself or know where we were going, and had enough knowledge as to where the enemy was and so on. But the civilians didn't, so they didn't have a hope in surviving. Some of them, maybe they never realized that it was that dangerous.

Eric Brunt (04:11):

And maybe they're also don't know whether the allied forces are going to be friendly or what they're going to. There's probably a lot of fear there as well.

Joseph Vogelgesang (04:20):

Well, we did not hit that even in Germany afterwards. We had a lot of people there that, thank God that was their answer.

Eric Brunt (04:36):

Wow, good.

Joseph Vogelgesang (04:37):

Yeah,

Eric Brunt (04:38):

I understand that the Dutch were extremely appreciative.

Joseph Vogelgesang (04:41):

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

(04:46):

France was the one. We really had less contact, but the Calgary Highlanders didn't have much going in France because we were moved in. We also went from Caen, and then we relieved the British in Dunkirk because they were in there that was surrounded by Allies, and the Germans were, as you probably heard in your travels, what that was all about. And they wanted to give the British few days off. They hadn't any days off and two or three years. So anyway, the Calgary Highlanders, we went in there and they had taken a prisoner. Kurt Meyer was the prisoner there. We guarded them and all the ERs that were in there. And we were there for about three weeks. And then the British came back, and we then went back to the front line, and that would've been in Belgium just before we went into Holland when they landed all the artillery or machine guns and Jeeps and trucks and like that by air. And then 90% of 'em got shot down before they came out of the air. You probably got that story somewhere. Did you?

Eric Brunt (06:24):

I don't know if I've heard that one.

Joseph Vogelgesang (06:25):

Yeah. Well, all they had maybe eight or 10 men in the gliders, and they were destined to go one place, and the Germans got word of it and shot most of 'em down before they came out of the air. But a lot of 'em survived, but a lot of 'em.

Eric Brunt (06:51):

Was that closer to the Rhine when that happened?

Joseph Vogelgesang (06:54):

No, that was in Belgium and just before he got to Holland. But we went from right from there to, they landed ahead of us. I just forget now what months that would've been.

Eric Brunt (07:14):

Maybe that wasn't Operation Market Garden, was it? Was that what?

Joseph Vogelgesang (07:21):

That I don't recall, but we didn't get a lot of the information that they had. We didn't need it.

Eric Brunt (07:32):

And I guess when you're in the war, you don't really know what's

Joseph Vogelgesang (07:36):

No, don't where you

Eric Brunt (07:36):

Are or what's happening,

Joseph Vogelgesang (07:38):

What's going on the other side of the dike.

Eric Brunt (07:40):

Totally.

Joseph Vogelgesang (07:41):

You get into Holland and get all the dikes and the water that was there, and they'd blow off a dike, and you better get out of that hole and get up on top of the dike. And then you were targets.

Eric Brunt (08:02):

Joe, do you mind if I move the clock just for the interview? So just going back, I guess the ways you've told me now twice, but what was the village? Where were you born?

Joseph Vogelgesang (08:14):

Watrous. It was a town, not a village at that time, Watrous, Saskatchewan.

Eric Brunt (08:22):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (08:24):

12 miles out of Watrous, Saskatchewan.

Eric Brunt (08:29):

Is that where you grew up?

Joseph Vogelgesang (08:30):

No, no. They moved to north of Colonsay, Saskatchewan, which is about 50, 60 miles east of Saskatoon on Highway 16. And then we moved to north of Saskatchewan on a farm about eight and a half miles out of town. So that was where we lived until the late in the thirties whereas you probably know, what happened to Saskatchewan in the thirties, dust storms and dry seasons, and we never had a crop for a number of years. So my parents lost the farm, and it was a struggle for them afterwards. So I went on my own at 15 years of age and didn't get a lot of education. Ended up with self-supporting at 15, and my parents never didn't go back farming again after that.

(09:15):

And then I decided that, well, I'm still not able to get a solid place to live or a place to hang my hat. So I joined the military at 17. I actually got my call from the government because they were calling the young people at 17, so that by the time they got to be 18 or whenever, then they would be able to be conscripted. So I'd already got my note. I was in Regina joining up when I got my notice at home. So yeah, I ended up, I said, I'll volunteer, then I can make a choice is what I want to do.

Eric Brunt (10:34):

Exactly.

Joseph Vogelgesang (10:35):

Yeah. So that's what happened.

Eric Brunt (10:37):

So back in those days, in the thirties, do you remember being, I guess, a young teenager and the crops not growing or?

Joseph Vogelgesang (10:44):

Oh, yes. I remember that two o'clock in the afternoon, a dust storm that if you had a light, which was just an old coal oil light with a wick in it, that was the only thing. And we used to have to light that in our home to be able to see the storms were so bad and make sure that the cattle tried to be calm because the storm would scare them.

Eric Brunt (11:15):

It was such bad timing too, because already people were so economically deprived because of the depression. And then this comes along

Joseph Vogelgesang (11:24):

Because my father said when he first went up to that farm, he ended up getting the best crop he ever grew with. The first two years they were on that farm.

Eric Brunt (11:35):

Is that right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (11:36):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (11:37):

What kind of crops did they grow?

Joseph Vogelgesang (11:39):

Mostly grain.

Eric Brunt (11:40):

Mostly grain? Yeah. Yeah. I'm just going to fix one little thing with your wire. My grandmother, her farm was, like I say, more north. They weren't affected by that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (11:54):

Oh, yes.

Eric Brunt (11:55):

Yeah,

Joseph Vogelgesang (11:55):

They would've been.

Eric Brunt (11:56):

They would've. Oh, really?

Joseph Vogelgesang (11:57):

Yes, but not as severe as where we were. But that didn't just run in Canada. It ran all the way down to the states, down in, right up to Texas. That dry spell. In fact, the southern part of the states was worse off than we were. You go by up north in Saskatchewan to Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, and they never had a dust storm. And that was a couple of hundred miles north of where we lived northwest.

Eric Brunt (12:31):

So what did your family do after they had to, did they sell the farm?

Joseph Vogelgesang (12:34):

Well, my father, no, he lost the farm. He didn't sell it. I think he owed the heck, was it? I think he said he owed somewhere around 200 and some dollars on the farm. And the owner lived in Ontario, and the guy in Ontario said, well, you still got a chance to buy it. Give me \$200 by the end of whatever month they said. And dad said, where am I going to get it? I can't get it from the bank. I can't sell anything. Nothing is being purchased because it's terrible. So he said, I'll certainly try, but he never got \$200. He couldn't scrape it up anywhere, lost it. So the big move is on where'd he go back to another farm. But there was lots of farms you could move on because there was a lot of people that just left it, which were worse off than he was. So no, he never did go back. So he ended up being a bit of a carpenter, which was always a handyman anyway.

Eric Brunt (13:50):

And where did you go?

Joseph Vogelgesang (13:52):

I went out and worked wherever I could just to hang my hat and put my head on night. And I even worked a couple of years just for my room and board in the wintertime. And I worked from sunup until sundown, which just thank God they were short hours in the wintertime. It was a tough life. And then I start reading books and this and that, and I've always got a book puzzles or something, so I kind of self-educated.

Eric Brunt (14:31):

You got a lot of real life experience. Quite young.

Joseph Vogelgesang (14:34):

Yeah, I did.

Eric Brunt (14:35):

A different, maybe even a better kind of education than we would've gotten a school in a school.

Joseph Vogelgesang (14:40):

Well, at that time, school was something that was a novelty and a rarity. It really was. And we were living five and a half miles from school.

Eric Brunt (14:56):

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Joseph Vogelgesang (14:58):

Yeah, there was 10 of us in our family, and I was the second oldest. I had a sister that's a year and a half older than I, and she just passed away here a month ago.

Eric Brunt (15:12):

Sorry.

Joseph Vogelgesang (15:13):

She lived in Saskatoon. She was 80, 98. No, 99. 99, yeah.

Eric Brunt (15:21):

What was her name?

Joseph Vogelgesang (15:22):

Ann Mitchell. In fact, I got a picture of her husband the day I landed in Saskatoon after I came back from Europe.

Eric Brunt (15:31):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (15:32):

But I don't know where I did with it.

Eric Brunt (15:35):

That's okay. No worries.

Joseph Vogelgesang (15:36):

I think I left it on the table.

Eric Brunt (15:38):

Okay. And when you were off on your own doing these jobs, were you just by yourself or were

Joseph Vogelgesang (15:46):

No, I was by myself.

Eric Brunt (15:47):

Yeah,

Joseph Vogelgesang (15:48):

I was alone all the time. Yeah. I was alone basically from 15 years old, and then until I got married, which I was 26 when I got married. So I spent 11 years totally by myself. Wow. That's when I met my wife. And she's in a care home, by the way.

Eric Brunt (16:08):

Oh, she still Okay. Oh, I didn't know that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (16:11):

Yeah. And she's 92. She was 92 in July.

Eric Brunt (16:18):

Is the care home nearby?

Joseph Vogelgesang (16:20):

Yeah, it's in here in Abbotsford.

Eric Brunt (16:22):

Oh, nice.

Joseph Vogelgesang (16:23):

But she's doing a lot of sleeping lately, so there isn't much connection there anymore. I was up the other day, and I never woke her up. I'd wake her and then she'd just go right back to sleep. But that's a terrible disease. That

Eric Brunt (16:40):

Dementia.

Joseph Vogelgesang (16:40):

Dementia.

Eric Brunt (16:42):

My grandfather got that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (16:43):

Yeah,

Eric Brunt (16:44):

It was hard, but it was, thankfully it was an Alzheimer's, because I think Alzheimer's is when they forget who you are, and maybe does your wife remember who you are?

Joseph Vogelgesang (16:54):

Yes.

Eric Brunt (16:54):

Okay, good. Same as my grandfather. He always remembered who we were, but he just didn't know. He couldn't make any new memories, so he didn't know where he was. We had him in a care home as well, but it's hard.

Joseph Vogelgesang (17:06):

Yeah. Yeah. My father was the same way. He ended up with dementia,

Eric Brunt (17:12):

Is that right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (17:12):

Yeah,

Eric Brunt (17:13):

But not you. You're very

Joseph Vogelgesang (17:15):

Well, they tell me that some of the guys that are 10 and 12, 14 years younger, we go for coffee once in a while, and they're all at least 10 or more years younger than I am, and they say, we got an answer. If we ask you a question, you could have asked me that question. The guy said, I wouldn't have had an answer. And I'm 10 years younger than you are, so their memory is not as good as mine. And mine is, there's periods when I fail.

Eric Brunt (17:48):

Yeah. It's the reading. I bet you that helps.

Joseph Vogelgesang (17:52):

I would think so. Yeah. And if I don't do that, there's a good documentary on, I'll watch a documentary. If that doesn't work, I turn it off and go to that table and play solitary for a few hours. I get a sore bum. I sit so much. So I come back and do word search or puzzles or whatever.

Eric Brunt (18:18):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (18:18):

I always go to the store and buy myself books.

Eric Brunt (18:23):

It's good to keep the mind sharp that way.

Joseph Vogelgesang (18:24):

Yeah. And I always read if it's his book, Trump.

Eric Brunt (18:33):

Oh, Trump. Nice about him.

Joseph Vogelgesang (18:36):

His niece wrote that. I read some of his books when he was publishing his soft back books, and they were interesting enough so that I would, some of 'em, I'd open up, start reading 'em, and never put it down until I was finished, which would take me sometimes as much as eight hours. And I thought he was a pretty good operator at that time. And this is years ago. All of a sudden, his niece comes out and says, never enough. Too much of, no, never enough. Too much, but never enough. That's what she titled it.

Eric Brunt (19:20):

Was it a good book?

Joseph Vogelgesang (19:21):

I haven't completed it yet, but he was a crook.

Eric Brunt (19:24):

Was he?

Joseph Vogelgesang (19:25):

Oh, his father taught him how to be a crook.

Eric Brunt (19:30):

His father had a hotel, or his grandfather had a hotel in the Yukon, right? Or something like that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (19:34):

Well, they actually had bounty houses in New York to start with. His father did and his uncle. It's a good start, I suppose.

Eric Brunt (19:48):

Got to start somewhere.

Joseph Vogelgesang (19:49):

You got to start.

Eric Brunt (19:50):

What was the title? Never enough. Not too much or something.

Joseph Vogelgesang (19:54):

Yeah. Never. No,

Eric Brunt (19:58):

It says there. It says,

Joseph Vogelgesang (20:01):

Yeah, that's the one.

Eric Brunt (20:02):

Too much and never enough.

Joseph Vogelgesang (20:03):

That's it.

Eric Brunt (20:07):

That's funny. But going a bit back to your story. So you turned 17 and you decided I'm going to join.

Joseph Vogelgesang (20:15):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (20:16):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (20:17):

And I wasn't 18 until the March, and this was in January. So I ended up, well, started training in February. In March. I turned 18. By that time I was already in Brandon, Manitoba and took my basic training there, and then went to Shiloh and my infantry training in Brandon. Then went to Shiloh, and because I wanted to be a field artillery man, so ended up there.

Eric Brunt (20:55):

Why did you want to be a field artillery man?

Joseph Vogelgesang (20:57):

Well, I just felt that it was something that I needed to know. I didn't, and yeah, they were training him there. That's why I ended up training. So that's kind of what drew me there, was the fact that there was artillery already there and training people. So I actually made up my mind while I was in Brandon because I was looking to see where I would go and what I would cover, and that's where they'd be transferring me if they needed the men to be trained there. So I took my full training there in the artillery and landed in England as a field artillery man with infantry training, which all the soldiers have or should have anyway. I would think they would.

Eric Brunt (21:52):

What'd you think of England?

Joseph Vogelgesang (21:55):

I enjoyed England as much as I was there. I spent a few hours when I'd be on leave sometimes, went to see St. Paul's Cathedral in London, got on the underground and went the wrong direction. When I got up the other side, there was a come out, my God, the sun is in the north. Where should I be in the south? So I walked around the corner and ran into a cockney. I don't know whether you've ever heard of a cockney. I wasn't any wiser when I got through talking to him than I was before. Anyway, I ended up on the wrong end of town because I was meeting some of my buddies there. And when I got back to where we met that night, they were back already when I got back. But I had toured on my own, but I got lost. So I got back there and they said "Where the hell were you?" I said, "well, I got lost. I went out and running into town to see, but they were at the place, and I never got there." So yeah,

Eric Brunt (23:10):

Big city.

Joseph Vogelgesang (23:12):

Oh yeah. And first time I was ever in London, and that very night went downtown to, what the heck were we going to do? Anyway, we didn't all stay together for some reason or other. And we had bombing going on London in the underground, we go the shelters that they had built, and that thing was packed like a sardine can. There wasn't any room to move so many people in there, but it was a safe place to be. But there was no fresh air in there. Too many people using up all the oxygen. Yeah. All those experiences come they never expected, but

Eric Brunt (24:08):

Quite an introduction to London.

Joseph Vogelgesang (24:10):

Yeah. Well, that was not the first time I was there in London, but they had these little buzz bombs. You probably heard of those. They're the ones that were creating the problems. There was no airplanes flying at night. It was usually in the daytime. And Germany did send a lot of airplanes over London because they had an air force, and we didn't, well, not to speak of anyway.

Eric Brunt (24:43):

Were you in London when any of those buzz drops, any of those buzz bombs came?

Joseph Vogelgesang (24:45):

Oh, yes. Yeah. And as long as you could hear 'em that you were safe. But if you just heard it very faintly, it was coming. And if it stopped as it got louder and it stopped, now it's going to maybe go another two miles or less and then it'll drop. It was either out of fuel and usually it was out fuel, and they had set it so that they would only go so many miles, and it should hit the middle of London or wherever. They even bombed the palace where the queen and king were.

Eric Brunt (25:33):

I didn't know that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (25:34):

Yeah, that was done. Yeah, only one part of it. I think it was only hit twice or three times, something like that.

Eric Brunt (25:43):

So you spent a few times down below in the underground?

Joseph Vogelgesang (25:46):

Only that once.

Eric Brunt (25:47):

Only that once,

Joseph Vogelgesang (25:48):

Okay. Okay.

Eric Brunt (25:49):

Yeah,

Joseph Vogelgesang (25:50):

Because what I used to do is do a lot of exploring, and we were only on 48 hours leave too, because I crossed the English Channel four times just to get back and forth while I was in Europe. Some of it was on a leave of, what did we get? 10 days? I think it was 10 days. So many traveled in seven days on a holiday.

Eric Brunt (26:19):

Wow, okay. So yeah, just the one time you had to go underground,

Joseph Vogelgesang (26:24):

That's all.

Eric Brunt (26:24):

That's good. Yeah. Where did you do your training in England? Do you remember?

Joseph Vogelgesang (26:29):

We did no training in England at all. We were there only there a short time. We took that refresher course before we went over to landed in France.

Eric Brunt (26:37):

I understand.

Joseph Vogelgesang (26:38):

Yeah. But no, we didn't do any training in England.

Eric Brunt (26:42):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (26:43):

Well, it had to have been there two or three years before that to get any training there. Some of 'em had to get their finished training depending on what they were doing, but not us.

Eric Brunt (26:53):

Got it.

Joseph Vogelgesang (26:54):

I guess they figured that being a field artillery man, you get all the training you need.

Eric Brunt (27:02):

Were you in England when D-Day happened?

Joseph Vogelgesang (27:04):

Yes. Yeah.

Eric Brunt (27:07):

That must've been interesting.

Joseph Vogelgesang (27:08):

Yeah. Everything was hush hush, but you could tell if you were in England and South Hampton and all those places where they were launching the ships and boats and stuff like that, you knew that it was big. But they gathered there for many months too, on a gradual basis before they really pushed, and it was delayed. Well, you knew that too,

Eric Brunt (27:41):

The weather, right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (27:42):

Yeah, that's right. So it was I think two or three days that after D-Day that we joined them. I was trying to look for my book and I can't find it.

Eric Brunt (27:59):

No worries. How was the voyage across?

Joseph Vogelgesang (28:03):

Oh, rough. Yeah, but it didn't bother me, but some of the guys were green by the time we get to the other side. Yeah, because English Channel is always rough. Never a smooth ride. It's just a little rougher. That's all. And I don't recall where we were stationed. I just can't recall that. I was trying to think of that yesterday.

Eric Brunt (28:41):

No worries.

Joseph Vogelgesang (28:43):

Anyway,

Eric Brunt (28:45):

Do you remember landing on the beach?

Joseph Vogelgesang (28:48):

Well, yeah. There was actually, they had put a, by this time, the Germans had been basically defeated the ones that were on the beach there. But there were like ducks sitting out there when they first landed, because when that old gate dropped on the boats where the soldiers were in it, half of 'em didn't even get down at the end of the ramp before they got picked off. And they were just floating in water, and the water wasn't clear. It was red still when we landed, you could tell it was discolored, but it eventually drops. But that, and the first night I was there, they used tracer shells through the air, the enemy, and no, I'm volunteer guy. That young buck from the prairies ended up in France with all this bloody metal flying through the air. And some of it is tracer bullets. You can see them follow 'em through the air and lots of noise because they were sending 80 eights, which is a shell that goes over in the air and then explodes, and you get all that going. And I said to myself, my God, what the hell did I do by volunteering into this situation? I volunteered once in Saskatchewan and once in London to a different organization. Tell me.

(30:32):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (30:33):

So you volunteered in London to be part of the Calgary Highlanders?

Joseph Vogelgesang (30:36):

They wanted volunteers for the infantry, not knowing that it was going to be the Calgary Highlanders, but we ended up with the Calgary Highlanders.

Eric Brunt (30:47):

And you told me earlier that you and a few others volunteered you and a few of every buddies

Joseph Vogelgesang (30:53):

That were in the artillery, seven of us. And we ended up all in the Calgary Hound.

Eric Brunt (31:00):

All seven of you were all seven of you friends.

Joseph Vogelgesang (31:04):

Well, we made friends, yes, as coming over on the ship. And El de France was the ship that we came over on and also came home on it too.

Eric Brunt (30:17):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (31:19):

But anyway, we are all kind of buddies, and we all went to the Calgary Hounds. I became a platoon leader, and my best buddy in this seven group was also a platoon leader, and the other guys were machine gunners and like that. And we stayed together until it was a guy from Saskatoon that went first. He was a little older than the rest of us. We were all in our eighteens or nineteens. And when that happened, and he was in his 22 or 20 threes, we lost him first. He was on the machine gun. Anyway, I wouldn't want to do that again. No,

Eric Brunt (32:06):

Of course not.

Joseph Vogelgesang (32:08):

Anyway,

Eric Brunt (32:09):

So after the first night, these tracers are going over you and you're saying, why the heck did I volunteer for this? And then I guess was the first big push, I guess, going to Khan, was that the kind of the

Joseph Vogelgesang (32:26):

Yeah. Well, they were already pushing Caen when we joined them, and we didn't get to Caen, and there was nothing there. It was just a shelled-out city. And then from there, we went to the front line again and carried on. And that shortly after that, we went to Dunkirk to relieve the British, and they went home just across the channel. From there, they were right on the channel. And then two or three weeks after they came back, we went back out. And by that time we were in Belgium, came out of France into Belgium, and we weren't in Belgium very long. I know we were, I don't know, maybe 10 days, maybe a little less. I don't recall. And then we made a push toward Holland, and that's when those floaters came over with all the equipment in their gliders. And yeah, we went, picked up a few guys that were still alive and had to have medical care and

stuff like that. And then we, from there on, we were in the front line pretty well solid right through until we got to the Ryan River all the way through Holland. We get caught on a bridge. So help me, God, you're sitting out on a steel bridge with a two-lane road and maybe a sidewalk and maybe no protection whatsoever, and they're just hammering you.

(34:19):

And I never got wounded once, as long as we were on those bridges, I got shrapnel in my foot and had to pull it out with, cut my boot off and pull the shrapnel. It went into my foot. They had to take the boot off to get the shrapnel out. Well, when they got the shrapnel out, they treated it and gave me a new pair of socks. Thank God you never had too many socks. And I thought, okay, I'm going to get a rest. And then the medic said, well, you're ready to go. I said, yeah, where am I going? He said, back to the front line. I thought I was going back to the reserve somewhere to let this foot heal. And he said, no, you're better to walk on that, he said than to heal it. And if it did start healing from the outside, he said, you'd have more problems than enough. You would probably amputate your leg eventually in six months. I said, well, I better walk on it. So I did that, and it did heal within a month and a half. But I walked on it continuously. They did give me some extra socks and medication, and then the other one had shrapnel in this hand.

(35:49):

I thought, oh, they bandaged it up, and I'm not right-handed or left-handed with my eye. I can't see very well with that eye. Can you imagine a soldier with a can't see in the right eye? Very good. I used my left, so this wasn't hindering me. I didn't have to hold the gun out. This was just the trigger. So the next time we were in Holland, in the middle of winter in trenches, or was it just in the edge of Belgium? Somewhere in there. And we'd dig trenches and dig a trench and then dig a hole into the wall, put our ground sheets in there. So there'd be two of us in each trench. And the guy that was on the watch would be standing up in the trench. The other guy would be sleeping. We'd sleep two hours at a time and wake each other up.

(37:03):

And I said, what happens if you get one through the forehead? Am I going to sleep all night? Anyway, he said, I'm not going to get that. He said, anyway, so when this happens now, and the daytime, the frost would come and it would thaw the walls of the trench, and now you're getting your uniform all full of dirt and water, and it would freeze, and it's not very comfortable. So we used to hang his or my ground sheet on the wall where we're standing against it with our machine guns on top, and the other ground sheet would be inside where we're sleeping.

(37:47):

And to pin that sheet to the frozen wall with where it had almost ice, we'd take a 303 rifle shot bullet and use a bayonet to make a hole in the wall and then push the shell in to hold ground sheet because the ground sheet has holes in it around the edge. So engineers anyway, and the last bullet I put in there was the hole wasn't big enough. So I went to reach my rifle and I thought, well, maybe I can push this shell in. So I'm pushing the shell into the wall and end up with this thing not going in all the way. So I take my bayonet and try to make the hole bigger. Well, the bayonet should have been bigger than the shell, but for some reason, rather I couldn't, I dunno

what we're doing this all in the dark now. You get no flashlights or lights or anything. His is in the dark. So I decided to take it three oh and take my bayonet and tap this bullet in so it would go in and it went off and I was hanging on. So I got my hand wounded again. I didn't report it, a self-inflicted wound heal up.

(39:24):

So that's the only thing that I got. And I was in the front line all that year, all the way through to the end of the war.

Eric Brunt (39:35):

And why do you think you got so lucky with not getting injured more?

Joseph Vogelgesang (39:39):

Oh, I don't know. Just damn fortunate. We were crossing a field one day, and I was still on the machine gun, the 303 shells in it, the same as a rifle. And I felt kind of odd. I was bringing up the rear and I turned around and I felt something. And there's a German sitting in behind a brush right at the corner of a fence with a machine gun, and he didn't use it on anybody. And I hollered at two or three of the guys ahead of me that hauled guys, guys, and give him a code that said, if you spot something, we're supposed to give him a certain code. And we did this amongst ourselves that was not part of the army.

(40:45):

And what's his name? Lyle turned around and he had just as 20 rounds of ammunition left and his rifle, because he didn't, we only had one machine gun to each platoon. And he turned around and I said, there's a guy in the corner there, and he is got a machine gun. So he just turned around and took his grenade and threw it toward the guy. And the guy never fired a shell, but he didn't get killed either. He just surrendered. He was ready to surrender, but he didn't do it early enough. So he was lucky to come out alive, but I suppose we'd, half of us would've been gone if he'd have really, because he was all alone. Whoever was there before they were injured or dead.

Eric Brunt (41:41):

And you had a feeling that he was there.

Joseph Vogelgesang (41:43):

I just felt something chill. Why? I don't know

Eric Brunt (41:50):

What happened to your foot? How did you get shrapnel on your foot?

Joseph Vogelgesang (41:54):

Well, you don't stand up when you start getting shelled. You dive into a hole or lay on the ground; you get less chance of something flying across. And it hit the bottom of my foot when I was down. And lucky enough, they also carried boots and stuff like that. How do you get one

foot the right foot has got, and the other one's got a big hole in it. That's funny now, but it was not funny at the time. But anyway, I found that common sense and use your noggin and be alert at all times, but you never know when a shell was coming over and where it was it going to explode, and that that was something that, and they could, now we get to the hawk, wall forest, and we were there and it started to rain, and we ended up with seven days and we couldn't get out and nobody could get in.

(43:15):

We ordered some tanks to come in and help us clean up the enemy that was surrounded our, because the encampment that we were in was an old German encampment right in the forest. And when they send over shell, it hit the top of the trees and explode. Then there'd be branches and metal and everything coming down. So we try to be underground in this underground protection that they had already made. Now, we were there for seven days. After the third day or fourth day, we ran out of water. We didn't have any water. We never had any food in those three days. We kept saying what we had and that heart attack that you would have, and the tanks that were coming down mudded down before they got there, they never got there. But anyway, the Germans decided that they better get out of there after so many days.

(44:24):

And we ended up coming out of there and we ended up with ticks and they'd wash us down. You ever see a hard bristles brush that they used to scrub the floor with? There's a miniature size and a full size. They'd give you a miniature one of those with some blue ointment made in the water. And if you couldn't pick the tick out, you use this bristle brush and use this blue ointment water and scrub it until it come out. Some of 'em. But there was two or three in my back that the medic had to take out because I couldn't. But we were just covered with ticks in the forest, and that's natural place for these ticks to be. And with the bombing, if there was any up in the tree, they were coming down. So we had lots of enemies, including the ticks. We never had too much trouble with the Germans because they were just holding us there and then scattered out, and we couldn't go anywhere anyway.

Eric Brunt (45:32):

You must have been pretty hungry when you got out of those woods.

Joseph Vogelgesang (45:34):

Well, yeah, we were. And what they'd give you was maybe a half a cup of milk or a quarter of a cup of milk. That's all. Because now you have gone without food for so many days and you'd eat, it's like being thirsty in a forest or in a desert. You don't drink too much water when you get it, even though you've been out of it for three or four days, take it moderately.

Eric Brunt (46:04):

I interviewed another veteran who was in the Hawk Wall forest, and he complained about it, he says, you're in a slit trench and you have water up to here.

Joseph Vogelgesang (46:12):

That's right. Yeah. Yeah. You'd be sitting in water all night long. Yeah.

Eric Brunt (46:21):

Are you even able to sleep like that, or how do you do?

Joseph Vogelgesang (46:25):

Well, you'd have to, whatever. Sometimes you wouldn't be sleeping for hours, and you get so fatigued that if you found a warm and a flat place, you'd sleep. In fact, you'd sleep too long sometimes if somebody wouldn't wake you. But we'd have to do that because we were all in the same boat. And now who can sleep, go without sleep for the next two hours and start that way. But we were always in twos. You never get less than two the time we had the odd guy that would end up with three guys, or Emma being alone. That doesn't work all the time.

Eric Brunt (47:09):

Was it usually the same person that you were always with?

Joseph Vogelgesang (47:12):

Not necessarily. No.

Eric Brunt (47:13):

No,

Joseph Vogelgesang (47:14):

No. Because we were always rotating sometimes and we were always getting, somebody was taking time out for a break. You can drive yourself nuts being in the front line too many hours at a time or days at a time. And it was days at a time,

Eric Brunt (47:36):

Especially if you're not getting much sleep.

Joseph Vogelgesang (47:39):

But when we got to Holland after that push, and we got into Holland, and then they came in with the Battle of the Bulge. We were on the other side of the Bulge, and they come up between us and the Americans, but they never got there. You probably got that story too.

Eric Brunt (48:02):

Yeah. Not so much. I think it was mostly the Americans that were,

Joseph Vogelgesang (48:05):

Well, it was mostly the Americans. Yeah. Well, the Americans were the ones that they were really after. They were going after the American supply of gas and oil, but they never made it to

the, because the Americans started rolling the barrels down toward where they were coming and setting 'em on fire.

Eric Brunt (48:25):

Is that right? Yeah. I don't know too much about that battle only yet, just because, like you say, there weren't very many Canadians in that area. It was all the Americans that were in that area.

Joseph Vogelgesang (48:33):

Right?

Eric Brunt (48:34):

That's right.

Joseph Vogelgesang (48:35):

Yeah. And then we ended up going into Holland then, and we started going into Holland, and we ended up at Dietrich and Den. What's the other

Eric Brunt (48:57):

Rotterdam?

Joseph Vogelgesang (48:59):

I didn't hit Rotterdam. I had Nijmegen.

Eric Brunt (49:10):

Oh, okay.

Joseph Vogelgesang (49:12):

Yeah. Anyway, we had all those little places, and we were having coffee one day here in town in McDonald's, and this woman and her husband were sitting at the next table, and I could hear the accent. I could tell that they were from Dutch descent. I said, okay, what part of Holland do you come from, Nijmegen? So it said, where were you on this day in Europe when the war was on? We were in Nijmegen. I said, so we compared situations for a little bit here, right here. You never run across anybody like that.

Eric Brunt (50:12):

Crazy.

Joseph Vogelgesang (50:13):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (50:13):

Well, my great uncles buried outside of Nijmegen.

Joseph Vogelgesang (50:16):

Is he?

Eric Brunt (50:17):

Yeah, that's where he died was Nijmegen. Yeah, or I guess outside of it. And so they put him in a cemetery, but they called them a Can loan officer. So he was a Canadian on loan to the British, which I think was a pretty dangerous job to have, because I think they gave them pretty rough roles, rough duties when he died October 44.

Joseph Vogelgesang (50:42):

And so we would've been in, oh God, we would've been in Holland at that time.

Eric Brunt (50:58):

You might've been in similar areas.

Joseph Vogelgesang (51:03):

Yeah, we were even in the shelter, which is right on the ocean.

Eric Brunt (51:09):

I understand. That was a difficult battle.

Joseph Vogelgesang (51:11):

Yes, it was. Yeah, because it was an island, and the military head was to blame for all our losses at that time. We still say that. And

Eric Brunt (51:23):

Why's that?

Joseph Vogelgesang (51:25):

Well, they could have reached that island from the ocean. They could have walked in. That water's not that deep, but he wanted us to come in and take the causeway, which leads from the mainland to the island. And that causeway was full of trenches every so many feet. There was trenches, there was a railway and a road. All the trenches they had 'em tuned into. There was a gun on every trench, so you didn't have, and a machine gun on the top of the hill and a heavy artillery at the other end on the approach off the mainland. And we get in there, and we had the heck, was it a number of men, but we came out with 11 guys.

(52:23):

We lost so many guys on that causeway and some of the shells that landed in there. And because there's causeways on the way out to the island, there's water in the trenches. So when they start shooting at you, you jump in the trench. It doesn't matter whether there's water in it or not. And a lot of these shell would end up hitting directly into a trench, didn't have a safe place to go. It was

terrible. And the Black Watch actually took most of their brunt of their shot on that beginning in that causeway, because the Black Watch and Calgary, Hals and the Amazing Eves were all in the same division. And we ended up with supporting the Black Watch, and they took an awful licking on that too. We didn't do too well, but we did better than they did

Eric Brunt (53:39):

The quite a famous regiment. You hear a lot about the Black Watch.

Joseph Vogelgesang (53:42):

Yeah, yeah. We were all in the same division three, the French, you probably heard about them too. Did you?

Eric Brunt (53:52):

Yeah. They were the French Canadians, right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (53:54):

That's right. Yep.

Eric Brunt (53:57):

Were you able to talk to them much?

Joseph Vogelgesang (53:58):

Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. We had two of them transferred to the Calgary Highlanders, the brothers. He said, why did you transfer from the Maisoneuves to the Calgary ERs? Well, we have to speak English. We want to learn how to speak English. I said, okay, that's a good way to learn. They were good guys.

Eric Brunt (54:28):

No better time to learn English than in a war.

Joseph Vogelgesang (54:31):

Well, yeah. Yeah. Well, I'm sure they were not completely dummies when it came to English.

Eric Brunt (54:37):

Yeah, they knew a bit where it was coming from.

Joseph Vogelgesang (54:41):

And you can understand some French, but I can't answer you in it.

Eric Brunt (54:44):

Right.

Joseph Vogelgesang (54:45):

Yeah. So it makes a difference.

Eric Brunt (54:47):

Yeah. Yeah. I interviewed two Maisoneuve veterans. One was English and one was in French,

Joseph Vogelgesang (54:54):

So

Eric Brunt (54:54):

I had to have someone doing the translation. So it was you three that were together, you three regiments?

Joseph Vogelgesang (55:02):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (55:05):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (55:06):

Yeah, we'd always have somebody in reserve, Calgary Highlanders, and the amazing Evans would be up in front and the black watch would be back and then switch. But we never expected to go on that causeway because the black watch were detailed to go in there first. But they could have went in by, they could have walked in silently from the ocean. And the locals told him that the underground told him that, and they'd already planned on coming in on the causeway, which was a total mistake. Or maybe they didn't believe that the way to come from the ocean. They weren't prepared or something. I don't know. Who knows.

Eric Brunt (55:52):

And so then you and the Maisonneuves had to come to support them on the causeway?

Joseph Vogelgesang (55:56):

No, the Maisonneuves did not come at that time. They were in reserve at that. Got it.

Eric Brunt (56:02):

I understand.

Joseph Vogelgesang (56:03):

The black watch were first, and then they took a pretty good licking, and then we took over from the Black Watch, and then they have to reinforce their bring in reinforcements to build up their company again. And so did we. And then the Maison Eves would go in,

Eric Brunt (56:30):

And so did it take a long time to get this causeway, or a couple days or weeks?

Joseph Vogelgesang (56:36):

It actually took a couple of days

(56:39):

When it first started, and then Ford was all settled. Then after that, we worked toward ourselves from the shelter there toward Germany, toward the Rhine River, and we were on this side of the Rhine, and that was quite an experience. We didn't hit any heavy fighting by this time. We're getting close to the end of the war. We didn't do any resistance, hardly at all. And we were taking some prisoners, not as many as we thought we should have been taking, but there were nobody there. Anyway, we'll be able to get across that bridge tomorrow. Somebody suggested, and I said, well, maybe we'll be across tonight.

(57:43):

And the Germans blew it up. The British were prepared to build a bridge across there in a hurry. You know what they did? They got these float pontoons. Now the engineers take the measurement from that side of the Rhine to this side of the Rhine. We need this many platoons. Put one out, tie another one together, hook it up together, tie the third one fourth, and all get enough platoons on there. Because they can't use the bridge now. They only have to blow one end up. We still can't get across. So they send up all these platoons, and they got it measured out so that these platoons are, and they build it against the flow of the river so that they get, okay, you've got enough now. So it'll end up being on the other side. Then they release, I don't know who these guys are on that lead pontoon or what they've got there, but they release it, and then the flow of the water will take it around and land it on the other side of the river, just like that. So you got this much of a river, and you've got pontoons that stretch from here to here when they're floated. And the minute that thing starts to float, the equipment's already moving across.

(59:17):

I was amazed when that happened.

Eric Brunt (59:20):

That is amazing.

Joseph Vogelgesang (59:23):

And the last we see of the guy, and they're all engineers and did a great job,

Eric Brunt (59:30):

But the Canadians didn't have that kind of

Joseph Vogelgesang (59:32):

No, we were Canadians. We were just pups when it comes to the Americans. And the English. And the English were really quite, we had more to do with English than the Americans because we were really commanded by England, the English forces, what's his name?

Eric Brunt (59:55):

Montgomery.

Joseph Vogelgesang (59:56):

Montgomery. And his sidekick. What was his sidekick? Anyway, it doesn't matter. Not now. It doesn't, I don't think.

Eric Brunt (01:00:08):

How did you get across the river then? Because your bridge got

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:00:13):

On the same thing.

Eric Brunt (01:00:13):

Oh, used the British.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:00:15):

Well, it was for everybody.

Eric Brunt (01:00:18):

I see.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:00:20):

It was there to get equipment across, however needed it, and of course it would be under control by whoever, and no doubt it was English. And then we went across the river, and about two days after, it was, we were getting close to the end of the war. And I remember getting out on the parade square when he called us out on, and we were in a private home, by the way, and the people that had a big house there, and they said, okay, guys, and these are German people that own the place. The house is yours. And our platoon and a few of the others all ended up in this house. The next morning, the commanding officer came around and called us all up on the parade, out in the yard. We hardly fit into the yard and on the roadway. And he said, the war is over. And I said, you and I jumped about that high screaming, like he said, corporal, you're under my command and you cannot do that. He says, I know how you feel, but you cannot do that. So I calmed down and realized that, oh God, thank God it's over.

Eric Brunt (01:01:47):

I can't even begin to imagine the feeling that must've been to,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:01:50):

Oh, what a thrill. Well, we knew it was coming, but it should have happened a long time before that. But I guess whoever's in command of the German army wouldn't allow it or something. I don't know.

Eric Brunt (01:02:05):

So how did you guys celebrate that evening? Was there a way to celebrate?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:02:09):

Oh, yeah. There was a way to celebrate. We had captured some distillery products when we in Holland, and we got, it's not made in Holland. We just have a distributing point. And we had 12 cases of vodka in our Bren gun carrier. Even our commanding officer didn't know it was there, because it's supposed to be just for ammunition and stuff like that. And we got into it. All I remember is dancing on the middle room of the dining room table, and I hit my head on the chandelier, and I fell off the chandelier, ducked the front chandelier fell off the table, and I never woke up until next morning. Oh, that was the end of the war. I had such a headache. Oh, I'm not a vodka drinker. I don't know what I was drinking. I thought it was, we didn't have any mix either. Anyway, that was the last day that we were in the frontline

Eric Brunt (01:03:29):

In Germany.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:03:31):

But we stayed in Germany, of course, in the occupation force. And we were stationed then in Emden, and which is on the North Sea, which is a railway station and a dock, shipping dock. Mostly stuff that came in from Denmark, mostly eggs and some vegetables and stuff like that for our supplies and cognac. We never touched the cognac.

Eric Brunt (01:04:10):

Where'd your lesson with the vodka?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:04:13):

I haven't had vodka since. I never drank vodka since.

Eric Brunt (01:04:19):

How did you find the Germans work towards you guys? Or did you guys not mix with them at all?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:04:25):

We were not allowed to mix with the German people at all. But we also had a young fellow who was in our company that went to our commanding officer and said, first he went to Wheeler, Sergeant Wheeler who came from Borden and said to Mr. Wheeler, I'd sure like to go and see my grandma. Well, he said, what are you going to do? Go and see your grandma. You can't do that. We haven't got no way of getting you out of here. No, you can't go. Well, he said, she doesn't

live far from here. And I said, good God, where does she live? I said to him, he didn't say anything. And then Sergeant Wheeler said, you want to go and see your grandma? Where does she live? And he said, well, I forgot the name of the town, but she's just down not far from here where we were.

(01:05:29):

We came back off the Orion and he wanted to go and see her. We were going to the north end of Germany, so we were going further away from there. So Sergeant Wheeler got a hold of the commanding officer and all that and got the timing all done, and the answer came back and said, yes, he can go and see his grandmother, but only for 24 hours. So he went to see his grandmother, and his grandmother, he said, was so surprised that I, because all she had was never met the kid in her life, only by pictures. So she knew who he was when he got there. Funny story.

Eric Brunt (01:06:09):

Incredible.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:06:09):

Yeah. So he came back, and he was just this happiest kid. And he was only 18 at the time too. He was the happiest, and he was a little small on the smaller side, not as big as some of us.

Eric Brunt (01:06:27):

What was your rank? By the time of the war was over,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:06:29):

I had a confirmed rank of corporal.

Eric Brunt (01:06:33):

Corporal.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:06:33):

I had a given rank of sergeant, which I would've been, if I'd have stayed there a little longer, I'd have got it. But I also got into a little bit of trouble one night in the pub and created a stink. And I was not allowed the third stripe then, but I didn't care. It meant that I would be going to another position and all that sort of stuff.

Eric Brunt (01:07:04):

Was this in Germany that you got into a bit of a,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:07:07):

I would've had to go to confirm my corporal stripes. I had to go and take a bit of a course, but this was in the middle of somewhere in Belgium when that happened and during

Eric Brunt (01:07:23):

War,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:07:24):

Right out of the front line, I was taken out for a few. And they give you a test and make sure that you're qualified for that rank. And yeah, I got all my ranks while I was in the front line, and I would've probably got my sergeant plus if I'd have stayed longer.

Eric Brunt (01:07:50):

So how do your duties change when you're a corporal? Do you,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:07:53):

Well, you're in charge of this section of your company. You got so many platoons in the company and so many companies in the division and all that.

Eric Brunt (01:08:08):

I see. So when you become,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:08:09):

But you could also end up taking a responsibility like Sergeant Wheeler, he wasn't only responsible for our platoon or the other platoon. He had maybe six platoons, and they felt that I was the kind of character that I could have handled all that, or they wouldn't have been giving me the promotions.

Eric Brunt (01:08:35):

It's a big promotion.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:08:37):

Well, starting right. From nothing to, yeah, and lots of guys that stayed in the services after ended up becoming officers. They just kept advancing.

Eric Brunt (01:08:54):

What was it like being a platoon leader?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:08:57):

Well, you kind of have to know what the next move could be or should be. And you're not always right. You're under fire. But the biggest thing is to make a decision. If you're pinned down now, what do you do? You take your most senior guy that's in your platoon and decide. And also, you're always like to be in touch with the other platoon, which is maybe so many yards ahead of your, yeah. And the decision has to be made as to what do we do next? We, but the Sergeant Wheeler would also have a command, which would come from a higher up to him that you don't make a move. Be prepared, but don't make a move. You couldn't move within hours, or

you could move within days or minutes, and we'd always synchronize your watches. You can't win a battle, not being on time. Military man should always be on time.

Eric Brunt (01:10:07):

How many men in a platoon, typically?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:10:09):

Seven.

Eric Brunt (01:10:09):

Seven.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:10:10):

Well, we could have had more, but

Eric Brunt (01:10:13):

There were no reinforcements.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:10:14):

We didn't have the mountain power.

Eric Brunt (01:10:16):

Would you get reinforcements often, or was it pretty rare?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:10:20):

Well, there was always a holding with reinforcements. It had to be, and they had to be close by. They couldn't be over in England or in Canada. They had to be on the continent somewhere. I don't know the whole history of how that worked, because I was not there, but I know that, and there was days when we would go with three or four guys short, and then we'd end up making short of one platoon or getting some supplies from the other Mason Eves or Calgary Black Watch. But that didn't happen very often.

Eric Brunt (01:11:09):

Those seven guys that you volunteered with were some of them in your platoon with you or

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:11:15):

No.

Eric Brunt (01:11:16):

Okay. They were,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:11:17):

Yeah. Well, there was one guy that was in the same platoon, but the others all went to different places.

Eric Brunt (01:11:23):

Who was the one guy with you?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:11:25):

Guy from Pentech and Lyle? We did everything together as much as we could, but being platooned, two different platoons, we weren't together that much, although we were always in the same battle it seemed.

Eric Brunt (01:11:42):

Did Lyle survive the war?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:11:44):

Yeah. Yeah, but I don't, Lyle ended up coming to Saskatoon. He lived in Penticton, BC. He came to Saskatoon a couple of times to visit me, and we were down to his place a couple of times. I took my two youngest children with me. I had a holiday trailer, and we went down there to see them, and I parked by his house with the trailer, and he lived on property where he had a little creek. Oh, it wasn't any wider than this room, not even that wide, coming down from the mountains, running right down through his yard, and he had garden and all that around there. What a beautiful place to live. And I said, did you plan this? And he said, "Nope, I haven't got time to do that." I said, "Who looks after it?" He said, "My wife." I said, "what do you do?" He said, "I look after my business." And he got into the air conditioning business, which was very rare at that time. And that's years ago. That's my God.

Eric Brunt (01:12:58):

Wow. He's no longer with us.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:13:00):

No, no. He disappeared. Oh, nobody knows where he went, but he had a real problem in his life after he got back. And I think it took the toll, mentally took a toll on him, and I don't know what he did. I came out to see him and his wife was there, and she had no idea where he was or where he went or why or anything. We never did find out to this day as to what happened. And I don't know where she is anymore because she's maybe not living anymore either because she'd be close to my age or a lot of people who don't live over 85.

Eric Brunt (01:13:47):

That's true.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:13:51):

How old's your grandmother?

Eric Brunt (01:13:53):

She's passed now.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:13:54):

Oh, she's passed?

Eric Brunt (01:13:54):

Yeah, but she sadly didn't live very long. I think she passed away in her seventies.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:13:59):

My goodness.

Eric Brunt (01:14:00):

Her birthday was 1927, so she was a bit younger than you. But my grandfather, he married her and she was Ukrainian, and he died when he was 95. But he had dementia. He still had a long life,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:14:16):

Which was good. Yeah. Did he have a good life or,

Eric Brunt (01:14:23):

He had a good life, but he was very sad when his wife died.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:14:29):

Oh, yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:14:29):

He would've spent 20 years without her, and I think he started drinking a bit when she died. And I think he actually, he might've even seen someone and then it got better after seeing somebody. But I think she was like the love of his life and not having her anymore was just too hard for him.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:14:46):

And your parents. They're together

Eric Brunt (01:14:49):

Still. Yeah,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:14:50):

But no. But your parents, was it on your mother's side?

Eric Brunt (01:14:54):

Oh, it was on my father's side.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:14:55):

Okay.

Eric Brunt (01:14:55):

Yeah. And my mother's side is, they're both dead now too, but they were a bit younger, so I have no grandparents left.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:02):

Oh, I see.

Eric Brunt (01:15:03):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:04):

And no parents.

Eric Brunt (01:15:05):

My parents are alive.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:06):

Okay.

Eric Brunt (01:15:06):

They live in Victoria still.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:08):

Oh, they still live here.

Eric Brunt (01:15:09):

Yeah. Yeah. And they're still quite young. 60 and 61.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:14):

Oh,

Eric Brunt (01:15:15):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:16):

So they're same age. Your mother is the same age as my youngest daughter.

Eric Brunt (01:15:22):

Is that right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:22):

Yeah, she's 61.

Eric Brunt (01:15:24):

Wow. Yeah,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:15:25):

She was 62 in December.

Eric Brunt (01:15:26):

Wow. So out of, I guess with those, well, it's interesting because I've heard some stories with the Italian campaign, and they barely ever got reinforcements because I guess most of them are being sent to where you guys were. And so they told me these yeah. Crazy stories of having to, the platoon would be like three men, and that would be it for a couple weeks because they didn't have any other support. But what was your company, do you remember what company you were in?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:16:16):

Seed Company.

Eric Brunt (01:16:17):

Seed company. I understand.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:16:20):

Yep.

Eric Brunt (01:16:21):

How many platoons would there be in C company? Do you have any idea or hard to say.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:16:26):

Yeah, sometimes. Often wonder, the number three would always be the, but the only reason why we never had a full, I don't think we ever went across anywhere that we had the total men that we should have had. There was so much shortage and every day, well, you're in the front line, you're hunks of metal coming across the sky. You don't know how many guys have been picked off before the end of the day, and they all got every be replaced. So yeah, I don't really remember how many we should have had or would've had and all that. It never crossed my mind, actually, but I know we didn't have the supply that we should have had at times.

Eric Brunt (01:17:14):

Right. And when you became a corporal, how many platoons were you kind of looking after?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:17:19):

One.

Eric Brunt (01:17:20):

Just one? Okay.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:17:20):

Oh, yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:17:21):

Got it.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:17:22):

Yeah. Unless you were automatically given up to act a sergeant, then you'd be in charge of maybe three platoons or whatever.

Eric Brunt (01:17:32):

Oh, interesting. Yeah, the sergeant would be in charge of the three. Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:17:36):

Because Sergeant Wheeler, he was the calmest guy that I ever known. Really? Yeah. You'd never know. He was in the front frontline. He never changed like a poker player. Never changed his expression.

Eric Brunt (01:17:53):

Was he a good sergeant?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:17:54):

Yes, he was very military man, but good. Also a little bit of a German in there, Wheeler. But his family grew up in a community of Borden, man, not Borden,

Eric Brunt (01:18:19):

Outside of Borden?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:18:25):

Yeah. It was Borden. No,

Eric Brunt (01:18:31):

Kitchener?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:18:32):

No, it was in Saskatchewan.

Eric Brunt (01:18:34):

Oh, Saskatchewan.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:18:38):

Because my first son-in-law came from the same town as Wheeler.

Eric Brunt (01:18:43):

Oh, interesting.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:18:45):

Anyway,

Eric Brunt (01:18:45):

Small world.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:18:46):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:18:47):

But Wheeler was good. Yeah. And Wheeler survived.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:18:51):

Yes, he did. He didn't live very long after he came back. He was not a young man anymore, and he probably ended up with some stupid disease cancer, mostly likely.

Eric Brunt (01:19:06):

When you were in battle, did you see anybody ever suffer from shell shock or anything like that?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:19:11):

Well, the shell shock never did show up when you were in the front line, not knowingly, but wounded people. Yes. And it's a bad thing. It's a depressing thing. I recall getting sidetracked and I was all by myself for some reason or other. We were in a battle and was none of my platoon was around and all that and all I see this guy sitting under his tree and a tree was about that size, and you couldn't hardly see his body because his uniform was almost the same color as the bark on the tree. And I see him over there.

(01:20:07):

Oh, I could hear him, and I help you. I go over there, and he's got both legs blown off, and he's got turnkeys on his legs and he's sitting there. He said, well, yeah, I can't seem to, my toes really hurt. He said he didn't have any toes there, but the nerve was telling him he's got a sore toe. I said, "Can I help you?" And I said, "I see him. There's a medical truck or Jeep just down the way." I said, "they'll probably pick you up because I can't stay. I've got to go. But somebody had already looked after him, so they were waiting for the medic to pick him up."

(01:20:57):

That type of thing really depresses you or a guy that gets shot, like one of those French boys that came from the MAs got a shell in his head and it went down the side and it started coming out the back and it stopped there. Well, his brother decided that he's going to take on the German army all by himself. When they shoot my brother like that, those BA surgery, he said they're going to shoot them. So he grabbed somebody's machine gun and went, started walking right across the field, and he's going to shoot every German he sees. He didn't make it halfway across the field. He got shocked, but he never got killed, but he didn't get very far either.

(01:21:47):

So those kinds of things really. Or we had within days before the war ended, the Germans had a lot of the young people, 14, 15, 16-year-olds that were out in the front line with officers who don't back away. And this one kid got some explosive how or what, I think the guy was trying to tell me that he held his grenade, his potato masher, they call him explosive with a handle on it. You've probably heard about that from some of the people that you interviewed. And I guess he didn't let it go soon enough. And it kind of mashed his hand pretty good. And we were just capturing that group of, and this S.S. officer was in command of 'em all. I took him in and I got somebody to address this kid's time, and the officer said, why don't you shoot him, shoot him. He's never going to live that way. Anyway, I said, there's only one guy that's going to get shot if, and that's you if you don't keep quiet. I said, he needs help. He doesn't need to be shot.

(01:23:13):

And then when we sent all the prisoners away, I said to the guy that was taking the prisoners back, I said, watch him. He's trouble. And he had perfect in English. So I find out later that I talked to the guy that usually picked up the prisoners and took him back. He said he was trouble. He was not going to surrender. He wasn't going to do this. So hang on to your firing equipment and make sure he doesn't get that and all that. So yeah, he said he was trouble, but can you imagine that kid was in his command, under his command and he's going to shoot him. He got a bad hand. Yeah. Little things like that don't help

Eric Brunt (01:24:19):

The most horrible sides of war seeing stuff like that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:24:23):

Yeah. There was good funny days too when we ran across the farm. You wouldn't believe this in Holland and one of our buddies were down beside a haystack, and usually the haystacks and the manure pile are all in the backyard and then the barn and the house and everything's all

connected. You can smell the barn all the way from the living room. Anyway, we see these two Germans that were, I don't know where they came from, but they were going back to where their company was and they were ahead of us and they came to this farmyard and they were going to go into the yard, into the farm. And then they spotted us, and they went around the building, and the last time I saw anybody, I saw him going up this manure pile, and I thought, oh. I said to the guy that was with me, I said, go around that side.

(01:25:30):

I said, this guy went over top of the manure pile. He could be coming out the other side. And I said, I'll go up on top and make sure I can see further. Well, you get into the middle and all it is that's not solid. I go right up to above my knees in this juice. What a hell of a feeling that is. And I have to live with this. I'm in the front line. I'm not going to get cleaned up too quickly. I thought, my God, I'll never go over another manure pile in my life. It could have killed me if that would've been, there was no way you could get out of that without climbing that dirty old wall.

Eric Brunt (01:26:15):

Did you find the German?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:26:17):

No, they cut away. We were taking a shortcut and we never got there. But anyway, I just ended up taking my trousers off and washing them, and I took my socks and rinsed them out and my boots out, but I didn't put any socks on. I put my boots back on. My tunic was fine. I didn't do anything to my other than when I was trying to get out of the hole. My rifle never got wet. And the other experience I had was we were going into a small town in Holland and we're walking down cobblestone street, not a German, around no place. And they were not there. They were sitting out of town, but they were watching us because what they did was start firing rockers at once. All of our company got in there, or platoon or whatever happened that day. And I am now carrying the machine gun 50 rounds of ammunition over my shoulder, a couple of grenades in my pouches, and they start putting mortars over on top of us. Well, once they start doing that, I'm going to jump over this hedge. And that hedge is about this high just off the cobblestone road and a canal running in behind it. Not a very deep canal, thank God. So when they started doing that, the closest shelter to go was over this hedge and into the canal.

(01:28:18):

Good. But I didn't quite make it over the hedge, and it was a thorn hedge, and it got my trousers and took them and tore them right up to my waist belt. Anyway, I ended up jumping in there, holding my rifle up here, and I finally got up enough strength to straighten my legs and get up out of the water and get some decent breath and then get out. And as I got out, no more mortars, no more Germans fighting because I guess some other company spotted them and they were taking 'em out or whatever, and this woman came over and she said, oh my God, look at your pants pretty good English. She was a Dutch woman. I said, yeah, and I haven't got a pair spare. She said, can you give 'em to me? I'll fix 'em. I said, not right now. I said, if we happen to be in town for a while, I said, you can fix 'em. She went home, got her husband's pair of pants, gave them to me and said, here, go and put these on and give me your pants and I'll fix 'em. She did,

but I don't know how the hell they were not quite fitting right after she did it, but there was not a hole there. Little experiences like that, you never think it should happen.

Eric Brunt (01:29:54):

She gave you new pants in the front line.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:29:58):

They were not new, but a replacement.

Eric Brunt (01:30:03):

Wow. Was there a time when you got to spend a bit of time in one of those Dutch towns and got to meet the people?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:30:10):

No, I never did. No, because we went from, from that situation over into Germany and across the Rhine. Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:30:25):

So you never got to experience a lot of those guys.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:30:28):

I know a lot of the guys that go over there, and they've experienced it before the war was, or just right after the war was over because they were there when the war was over. But we were some of the first Canadians to get into Holland and go through and these other guys would follow us. And so yeah, we were kind of breaking the trail.

Eric Brunt (01:30:53):

One of the more dangerous.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:30:55):

Yeah, they did all the cleanup of mines, and it was not, they were still in danger all the time. There was enough prisoners left amongst the residents that you never know they were enemy.

Eric Brunt (01:31:13):

Did you ever have to encounter mines?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:31:16):

No. Oh, you mean Yes, we did. Because this French chap that I was talking about that was going to go across the way, he was running across a minefield and he never hit a mine. So everybody thought there was no mines there. And some of 'em started across and a lot of 'em hit the mine. So we avoided that field because it was loaded with mines. And yet he went out there and yeah,

Eric Brunt (01:31:53):

He was a crazy guy.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:31:54):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:31:55):

Do you remember his name or no?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:31:56):

Well, Lee was one of the French boys.

Eric Brunt (01:31:57):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:31:58):

Remember I said was fine.

Eric Brunt (01:31:59):

Yeah, from the Zanu?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:32:00):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:32:01):

Do you remember his name or no longer?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:32:04):

No,

Eric Brunt (01:32:05):

That's okay. No worries. Names are hard. I guess your best buddy was your best friend, that guy from

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:32:16):

Penington,

Eric Brunt (01:32:16):

And his name was Lyle.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:32:18):

Lyle,

Eric Brunt (01:32:18):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:32:19):

Lyle.

Eric Brunt (01:32:20):

Did you have any other really close friends you can remember their names of?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:32:23):

Yeah, Johnson who came from out here and Tommy Thompson came from Prince Edward Island actually. And he was in the Calgary Highlanders because he took his training in

Eric Brunt (01:32:37):

Alberta?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:32:38):

No, in Manitoba. Shiloh, because he wanted to be a field artillery man. He could have been in Ontario, but he ended up, yeah, and he's the guy that went back to England and stayed there. He made his living on working for the English railway. And I often wondered, I said to Lyle Ricker, who came from Penticton, I said, do you ever hear from Tommy? And he said, no. He said, I tried to get ahold of Tommy and I got ahold of some of his family and they didn't want to get ahold. I think Tommy had a wife in Canada, and he said he had a girlfriend in England and that's why he went back to England. He said, but nobody tells me that. He said, so I can't confirm it. He said, but I have a feeling. So I don't know whether he did have a wife here or family or whatever.

Eric Brunt (01:33:42):

Who was Johnson

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:33:44):

Johnson? He

Eric Brunt (01:33:46):

Was from here?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:33:46):

Yeah, he was from BC Chilliwack. I think it was Chilliwack. Oh God, I can't,

Eric Brunt (01:34:12):

Can't remember. That's okay.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:34:17):

It's funny. I'd remember the first names on some of 'em and others, but nobody knows how to say my name.

Eric Brunt (01:34:25):

How do you say your name?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:34:26):

Vogelsang Sang. Don't pronounce the Ge Vogelsang and the interpretation. Have you got the spelling of my name somewhere?

Eric Brunt (01:34:41):

Yeah. I'll make sure I have it right after

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:34:43):

The GE is silent in the middle. But interpretation is, what did they say? Oh, gel is pronounced Fogle. Fogle and Fogle in German or Austrian is a bird. Song is a song, and it's pronounced song and sang is how it should have been pronounced with an A in it. And the GE says Gay. Gay. That's how it's pronounced. So it should be Fogle gay song. Singing Bird is interpreted as that means. Fogle song or singing bird or a bird that sang. That's

Eric Brunt (01:35:57):

Nice.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:35:57):

Yeah. And some woman in Kelowna, and she was indigenous, and she was a cashier in one of the stores of restaurants. How in the hell do you say that funny name? She said, "I said, well, it is funny, isn't it?" She said, "Yes. How do you say that? So I told her, not in English like we pronounce it, but the way the pronunciation is in Austrian, a singing bird, well-being, she's indigenous singing Bird is a beautiful name. Holy Moses. She said, but she didn't know my first name. It was just Jay. Just Jay. So

Eric Brunt (01:36:53):

Did you have a nickname during the Army? Did they give you a nickname?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:36:56):

Yeah, bogie. Yeah,

Eric Brunt (01:37:01):

That's a good one.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:37:01):

Yeah,

Eric Brunt (01:37:02):

Bogie

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:37:03):

And this woman in the restaurant, she said, well, you've got Jay. And she said, now I know how to say their last name. She said, what does Jay stand for? I said, Joseph, and I said, you've been calling me John. Well, she said, yeah, I don't, well, I said, I'm a Joe, not a John. Well, you look like a John to me. I said, thanks a lot.

Eric Brunt (01:37:36):

She sounds like she was a character.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:37:38):

Oh, she was.

Eric Brunt (01:37:38):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:37:40):

You look like a John to me.

Eric Brunt (01:37:42):

Were there any indigenous soldiers in your EL office?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:37:45):

Yes. We even had a guy come from Eskimo boy, and we had quite an experience in Brandon, Manitoba with him. He liked to, but he couldn't handle it, and he never knew what a dollar was for really? They never had a lot of money, any, so he's payday, holy Hannah, everybody's going to the pub. All the boys that are in the Army are going for a drink. So he goes too. And my God, he just liked the beer. He liked it. He must've had it before. Anyway, he gets his paycheck out and he gets the old liquor flowing and everybody that was near his table, he'd buy him a drink before night's over. He hasn't got a dollar left in his pocket.

(01:38:48):

So the next day we're going to go after our training, we're going to go back for a drink. I can't go. He said, why? I haven't got any money. Well, you just got paid yesterday. What'd you do? Well, I bought beer. And I said, well, you surely you didn't buy that much for yourself. He said, no, I bought it all for the guys that were sitting close to my table. I said, you don't do that? No, no, no, no. I said, well, he said, if I had two or three drinks, I wouldn't know what the hell I was doing

anyway. He said, because I can't handle it all. I said, then you shouldn't be drinking. Anyway, he gets back and the next payday we say, listen, take all of that money accepting \$10 and put it in the bank under your name. And I said, when you buy beer, you only got this much to buy beer with.

(01:39:49):

The rest is in the bank, and that's for tomorrow and next week and next month. Good idea. Now next payday, he does exactly that, puts so much in his pocket and the rest goes to the bank. Came back and he went to the bank before he came to the pub to do this. And he said, I went to the bank. He's got his bank book in his hand, and the change that in the other hand, he said, I'm going to have a couple of beer. Well, by 11 o'clock that night, he's out of money because he's been buying somebody beer. And he came over to my bunk and he said, you sure screwed me. I said, what do you mean? He didn't say, screw it. He knew what he said. Well, he said, you told me to put this money in the bank and I can't get it.

(01:40:52):

Why? Well, I went over to the bank to get the money and it's locked. They can't get in a damn place. He said, well, I said, they're shut down for so many hours a day. I said, they're not open until tomorrow. Well, I want the money now. I can't wait until tomorrow. So he was really upset. I said, that money will be there tomorrow. I said, don't worry, and you shouldn't have any more beer. Anyway. Anyway, he finally got to know, hey, he learned whether he ever kept it or not, I don't know. And I don't know where he went or why or how.

Eric Brunt (01:41:32):

Did he go with the Calgary Highlanders with you or

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:41:34):

Oh no, no. I don't know where he went.

Eric Brunt (01:41:36):

Dunno where he went.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:41:37):

No, because he wasn't taking the, this is in Brandon now, which we're not taking our final course, which was field artillery, and he didn't go to the field artillery. So where he went, I don't know.

Eric Brunt (01:41:51):

That's so interesting. He was from such a different culture that he just couldn't wrap his head around the bank and the hours and the money. So all those concepts were so foreign.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:42:02):

It's like somebody that's never ran a computer or something and you give him the computer and say, here.

Eric Brunt (01:42:06):

Exactly.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:42:07):

You don't know how to run it or

Eric Brunt (01:42:08):

Or someone from the Amazon coming into civilization.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:42:11):

Yeah, that's right.

Eric Brunt (01:42:13):

Wow. But you had some other indigenous men in the Calgary Highlanders or nobody in there?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:42:19):

Calgary Highlanders were only one, and he was a tough one. He joined and just to have two meals a day and that type of thing. He was, and we had a lot of guys who were really crooks. We found some of 'em all as early as in Shiloh, Manitoba, where they get the training and then not show up for X number or do something drastically wrong. And the Army Corps would take him out and punish him for what he'd done because he was found guilty of doing whatever he did. And they had a sidewalk that was about that wide. It looked like somebody was ready to pour a sidewalk. That's what it looked like when I first saw it. I thought, what the hell are they doing? Going to lay a sidewalk here in the military camp?

(01:43:20):

And you know what it is? It's actually a punishment that they run these crooks on. The guys had broken the law in the army and it's full of soft sand and it's not watered, so there's any surface. You go into it and you just walk. As you're walking through it, you keep sinking. The foot that you pulled out puts all the weight on this one. It goes in further. So they run him up and down this, that's where they run it up and down. They said they ran him up there a hundred times and the guy finally collapsed, but he wouldn't give in. That's the kind of a character he was when he never made it out of camp. He just was kicked out of camp.

Eric Brunt (01:44:11):

He was a crook. This guy.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:44:12):

Well, he was a shady character, let's put it that way. I don't know what kind of trouble he could get in, but he was not a, and some of 'em got through.

Eric Brunt (01:44:23):

Right? Were there some in your highlanders?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:44:28):

No,

Eric Brunt (01:44:29):

No,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:44:29):

No. They never got that far.

Eric Brunt (01:44:31):

You have to be pretty level two.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:44:33):

Well, yeah, and it gets so that we used to walk from Shiloh, Manitoba to, you remember that airplane that ran short of a place to land in Manitoba was short of that fuel. The Air Force was based there during the war and trained there. We used to have an outing from all the way from Shiloh all the way up to that airport, and we would run half of the way and walk half of the way. First time we did it, we'd only walk a quarter of the mile and just increase it and run. By the time we get done, we were running three quarters of the way. Now. We were totally fit to go to the front line. When you get done all this exercises and different things that you have to do to get yourself into a condition. Yeah, we were top shape.

Eric Brunt (01:45:34):

Wow. I bet some guys just can't do that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:45:36):

No, and we also had the paratroopers trained in shallow. You knew that?

Eric Brunt (01:45:43):

Yeah. I interviewed a few of those guys.

(01:45:46):

Did you guys get to see that happen or?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:45:48):

Oh, yes.

Eric Brunt (01:45:49):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:45:49):

And a lot of guys have broke their ankles if they didn't wear the right gear or something, and they should have been wearing the right gear. But even if they were wearing the right gear and they landed on the, yeah, they'd break their ankle. But we had the Air Force, the military infantry, the field artillery, the Air Force, and we used to have days that we would do all this training together, including the Air Force. They even had some tanks there, and it would be a good plan as that's a war when you get all those military people in there and actions.

(01:46:34):

We were training for our final lay of field artillery before we graduate. We're out there and there's three young officers. He gets four men there, four men here, and four men there. Each guy's got three officers. No, he's got to lay his gun. So it lays lands over on the other, and if you ever were in Shiloh Manitoba, all it is is sand dunes. That's what it is. It's a desert in the middle of the prairie, and he's supposed to lay it down so that he goes and just gets, before he gets to the top of that bridge up there. So he lays his gun out and this guy has to lay his gun out and go as a Howitzer and go all the way over the top and come down on the other side. The other guy has to do straight landing or whatever.

(01:47:33):

So the guy in the middle is supposed to be at Howitzer to land on the other side of the sand dune, and he gets over on the other side of the sand dune. He can't get there because he's hitting the top of the sand dune, and he keeps doing it. And the officer that was in command of these three young officers who are taking their final exam, set your guns properly, you're not setting your gun properly. He doesn't understand that he's, he can't lay his guns to go over that ridge. So he got two of his guys to take a shovel and go up there and take some of that. Damn. It's obvious that he didn't graduate. All they had to do is change it to a house or so it would No, he never made it. He was probably starting all over again.

Eric Brunt (01:48:38):

He was really trying though, with those.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:48:40):

Oh yeah, absolutely. He's going to get there somehow.

Eric Brunt (01:48:42):

Yeah. When you guys were over in Europe, how would you get in between places? Would you guys mostly just walk or would there be

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:48:50):

Well, if you were in the front line, we rode trucks when we rode from Dunkirk and went through Belgium or we were on that damn truck, maybe eight hours or more, going from one spot to where we were going to land instead of, well, we couldn't walk there. It would take us a month,

but if we were on the ground, there was no way we were going to get from this front line to that front line unless you were walking.

Eric Brunt (01:49:25):

And what was Dunkirk like? Was there much of a battle there or no?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:49:29):

No. There was no battle there anymore. No. It was just all the time. It was, the Germans were inside. They hadn't surrendered, and I don't know why it was like that, but it was like that for a number of years before it actually happened. The first invasion, you remember the first invasion? Not D-Day, but the one before that?

Eric Brunt (01:49:50):

The one ep, or no?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:49:55):

Well, it was at Dunkirk.

Eric Brunt (01:49:57):

Yeah, there was Dunkirk.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:49:58):

Yeah. And that was in

Eric Brunt (01:50:00):

40?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:50:01):

Yes. Yeah. Well, that had been there since 40. Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:50:08):

Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:50:09):

Anyway,

Eric Brunt (01:50:10):

It's interesting. I think the regiment that you were with, they were actually at, oh, no, they weren't at Dunkirk. Sorry, your regimen was at dap.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:50:18):

That's right.

Eric Brunt (01:50:19):

In 42. And it was a raid, and I think a lot of men lost their lives then, but maybe by the time you joined, those guys were all gone.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:50:28):

Yeah,

Eric Brunt (01:50:29):

Maybe.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:50:30):

Anyway, yeah. So from there on, it was just on the ground for us.

Eric Brunt (01:50:37):

Yeah, walking foot. Yeah. I guess would you have had to go on patrol

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:50:46):

At night?

Eric Brunt (01:50:46):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:50:46):

Night patrol, yes. And they picked me so many times. I thought somebody hates me. And we were as close from here to the kitchen counter over there in front of a tank, German tank before. And the only reason, and it was dark, there was four of us in the patrol. I was leading the patrol, and I could hear them talking, but they were on the other side of the tank, but it's pitched dark and they didn't see us, and I didn't see them, but I heard them. And then finally one guy lit a cigarette, then I could see that it was German. We were trying to contact the Maison Eves who were in a little community, and they had captured that community, which was three quarters of a mile from where these tanks were, and we had to make contact with the mazens. That's why I was in this patrol, to contact them.

(01:51:45):

Well, the first trench we came to, all you could hear was snoring, and to go to the next trench and it's empty, go to the next trench, and so go back to the first trench and ask the guys, where in the hell is everybody? Well, I think they're down in the church basement. They're in the church in the basement. I said, they're supposed to be in their trenches. Oh, no, there's no enemies around. I said, yeah, the German tanks are only a quarter of a mile down the road, and you guys are sitting

here snoring. They were supposed to be on patrol and watching. Some of the guys were supposed to be sleeping, but not everybody. So it's no wonder that our office couldn't get ahold of them.

Eric Brunt (01:52:34):

That must've been pretty, I imagine nerve wracking going on patrol at night.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:52:39):

Oh, it was terrible. You have to study your map before you leave. And what do you do? You follow the fences, you can't, or telephone lines. Well, hell, there was no telephone lines to follow. So you follow the fences, and you can't rely on a road, but you also didn't know whether it was mined or not. So all these things take,

Eric Brunt (01:53:12):

Or maybe you're going to run into a German patrol that could maybe happen.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:53:18):

Yeah. So many things that enter a picture in a front line, especially then today it's different.

Eric Brunt (01:53:28):

Of course,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:53:29):

You don't know where the hell your enemy is today.

Eric Brunt (01:53:31):

It's all buttons and remotes.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:53:32):

Not only that, but you don't know where your enemy is, or who your enemy is because you're right. All buttons and yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:53:41):

So would you ever have to worry about snipers?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:53:47):

Yes, definitely. And we had snipers as well, and they were usually ahead of us, and they picked the bad spots sometimes, and then we'd know, not always, but we'd know. But that wasn't our biggest enemy. Our biggest enemy was the artillery that they had, and they had some vicious stuff. Moaning minis, they called them, or what did the English call them?

Eric Brunt (01:54:31):

The V-2, is it or the

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:54:33):

No, that's the V-2 is the buzz bomb.

Eric Brunt (01:54:36):

Oh, okay.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:54:38):

The moaning mini is an artillery shell that goes through the air, and it's got so many seconds on the shell as it's flow, and then it explodes in the air. Well, it'll cover a football field when it explodes or close to it. So if it flies over an enemy pocket, it can take a lot of people out.

Eric Brunt (01:55:01):

And that was your biggest enemy,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:55:03):

One of the biggest enemies. And then the direct hits of, what the hell was that shell?

Eric Brunt (01:55:11):

The 88?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:55:12):

Yeah, the 88. How did you know that?

Eric Brunt (01:55:16):

Because this is not my first,

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:55:17):

Oh, you're right.

Eric Brunt (01:55:21):

Not my first rodeo.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:55:22):

Yeah. Righto.

Eric Brunt (01:55:24):

The 88 though, right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:55:25):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (01:55:27):

And I guess when you mean a direct hit, they know where you guys are and they've shot it, and it goes in your line and hits somewhere. Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:55:41):

I had a cousin that got killed by, not enemy fire, but local fire

Eric Brunt (01:55:50):

Friendly fire

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:55:51):

Friendly fire just outside of, no, it was in France. Yeah. No. Oh, God. It's just a little community. And they were advanced too far and couldn't let the artillery know. So the artillery was firing where the Germans should have been, and the Germans had already gone because these guys had defeated them out of there, and they were there and couldn't tell the artillery to hold fire. So a lot of 'em got killed by friendly fire.

Eric Brunt (01:56:34):

I know there was a big one called the filet gap, where I think the Air Force bombed. Were you involved in there, or

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:56:44):

No

Eric Brunt (01:56:50):

I guess while you're advancing, was it often, not hand to hand, but just you'd actually be firing at people, and they'd be firing at you? Was that would happen?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:57:00):

Oh, yeah. That's the front line.

Eric Brunt (01:57:02):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:57:03):

But the biggest problem was you couldn't find them where they were shooting from. Now, when we're crossing a bridge, they've got us as sitting ducks. We don't know where they are. There's buildings on the other side. Is it over here? Over there or down there, or behind us or wherever. You don't always know. You will eventually spot where it's coming from, even though it may be in the middle of the day where you can't see a flesh.

Eric Brunt (01:57:33):

And I understand when you come into a new town, you have to sort of clear the town. Is that kind of what have to happen or what happened there if it came into a new town?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:57:42):

Well, it seemed to be that we've always had a place to go into town, but it was never new. It would be one end of town or the other. We would think we were going through the one end of town, and we were on our way through and we finally find out there's still enemy over here, so we can't leave town yet. The other thing with cleaning a town, especially toward the end of the war where kids would be in apartment blocks or never in a house. The house, they seemed to, we never had any fire go into a house. But in apartment blocks where you're coming down the street and the enemy's here somewhere, and there's some guys that are already clearing the ground levels, and all of a sudden the curtain opens up in the third level or the fourth level, you're not going to ask who the hell it is. You'll let 'em have it. And it's usually children, they can't stand to see what's not going on. They want to know, even though, or the parents were not with them, or, yeah, you never know. Those are the sad situations, really, that'll upset you for a while.

Eric Brunt (01:59:10):

And a lot of them were maybe Hitler youth as well, do you think?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:59:13):

No, no, no. This would be non-enemy.

Eric Brunt (01:59:16):

Non enemy. Oh, okay.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:59:19):

That'd be all

Eric Brunt (01:59:21):

I see.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:59:21):

Yeah. No, it wouldn't.

Eric Brunt (01:59:26):

You just couldn't take a chance if you saw the curtain move, you had to.

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:59:30):

Well, you couldn't always identify, even though they were visible, depending on the condition, there's always smoke or haze or something. It's like down here, only it's not as clear as it was here this morning. There's always some smoke in the air or town is burning or something. And it's hard to say,

Eric Brunt (01:59:51):

Right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (01:59:51):

There's so many things that happen that if you're not there, you don't realize it or you can't recall it if you weren't there. See, there's lots of things that happened to some of my buddies, and I never encountered such a thing. Yeah.

Eric Brunt (02:00:11):

The other Calgary Highlander I interviewed, he told me, yeah, he told me a story. I guess where they, I think maybe it was in, was Hitler Youth. They took a bunch of Hitler youth, and I guess they looked so young. They were like 14,

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:00:30):

15

Eric Brunt (02:03:31):

Years old. And I guess one of the Hitler youth kids still had a gun on him. And one of the Calgary Highlanders tried to get him to go somewhere, and he pulled out the gun and shot him just like that. And it was sad. They thought that they'd already had surrendered, and they were already prisoners, but still,

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:00:53):

They hadn't been searched properly. They

Eric Brunt (02:00:54):

Hadn't been searched properly, but I think as a result, they killed the Hitler youth kid.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:01:00):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (02:01:01):

I think someone was there, the gun and was before he shot anyone else kind of thing.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:01:08):

But we had also had an SS officer that speak perfectly English, and he was quite proud of it. So we asked him, how do you learn to speak such good English and an accent too? I said, well, he said, I went to college in England. Oh, yeah. He said, I took all my education in England. Well, how come you're in the German army? Well, he said, my mother's German. And when the war broke out, we left England and came back to Germany, and he put on a uniform.

Eric Brunt (02:01:52):

Was this that SS officer that was really nasty

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:01:54):

No, this was not an SS officer. That was a different, I didn't even know he could. I think he was a sergeant or whatever he was. Was not an SS officer. But he was still in the German army,

Eric Brunt (02:02:08):

Right? Yes. And it was the SS officer that was the one with the kid.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:02:13):

That's right. With the bad hand. Yeah. Yeah.

Eric Brunt (02:02:15):

Did you guys take many prisoners?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:02:17):

Oh, lots. Talking about lots of prisoners. This is something, maybe I shouldn't say. If we didn't get the regular guy that was taking the prisoners back, and when we captured prisoners and had too many of 'em, we'd have to get somebody within our platoon who would be the best guy to return these prisoners through the echelon where they would be held in captivity. Anyway, so we took one of the Maisonneuves one time. They were just going to be relieving us. So they said, well, we'll get one of the Maisonneuves to take him back. So we get one of the MAs and Eves taken back. Now you got 13 guys here. Be careful. He said, "Are you able to take these? Oh, I know how he said, I know how. He said, "I make sure that they don't get away." He said, "I've taken them back lots of times, and he's quite confident in himself that he's not going to.

(02:03:33):

Anyway, we find out from Echelon that he didn't bring all the prisoners. What's happened? So when we get told, our commanding officer and the Maisonneuves got interviewed, who is the person that took those number of prisoners? They caught the guy and the guy interviewed him and said, what did you do with the other guy? Where'd he go? I shot him. I showed the bastard. He said, I shoot the bastard. Well, you can't do that. So they charged him. I don't know what they charged him with, but he was not taking prisoners back anymore. But normally he would've been in the front line, but he had enough hate built into him so that he's going to kill this guy. He'd make a wrong move. I'm going to kill him. Or it doesn't matter who it is. He just hated them. That's all. Same as the Americans. Americans would do that, had a couple of cousins that were in the American Army.

Eric Brunt (02:04:39):

Oh, really?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:04:40):

And they said it happened quite often, and they wouldn't surrender to the Americans when they did start surrendering after the war.

Eric Brunt (02:04:48):

Really?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:04:49):

They wanted to surrender to the English or the Canadians. They were more human than the Americans. But that story goes around pretty fast when it gets

Eric Brunt (02:05:02):

Gets out.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:05:03):

Yeah, when it gets out. And how it gets out is beyond me.

Eric Brunt (02:05:07):

Yeah, right. Well, you mentioned earlier that Kurt Meyer guy, he's the guy that shot those, the Canadians, right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:05:14):

Yeah. Yeah. Anyway, it's crazy.

Eric Brunt (02:05:20):

It is crazy.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:05:22):

And we ever thought we'd never fight another one. Now we got one like that in Russia and Ukraine, and Ukraine is pushing the Russians back. You heard that today?

Eric Brunt (02:05:35):

Is that today?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:05:36):

Yesterday.

Eric Brunt (02:05:37):

Oh, wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:05:38):

Yeah, they pushed in one place. They pushed him right back to the Russian border with all the help that they're getting from the allies in the West. Wow. But Russia will just open up with something more fierce, hopefully not an atomic bomb or something. And they're having trouble with that center got, they blew it up yesterday or the day before, just punched a hole in the, didn't hit any of the towers anyway.

Eric Brunt (02:06:21):

The nuclear plant.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:06:22):

Yeah, the nuclear plant. I'm trying to think of

Eric Brunt (02:06:27):

Not Chernobyl.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:06:27):

And they're watering. The guys are there with water hoses, hosing down to keep it cool until they get it repaired.

Eric Brunt (02:06:36):

Oh, really?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:06:36):

Yeah. I don't know whether I saw it this morning on this morning's news or yesterday's news. I don't remember. Anyway, the nuclear towers didn't do that, but just outside, and there's a little bit of a problem that it might ignite, and so they're watering it down with hoses, and they don't have a lot of water on there either, because in a war, the water usually gets a line cut. Well, now you're without water, and I'm sure the civilians there don't have any water,

Eric Brunt (02:07:11):

Right? Probably not.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:07:12):

No.

Eric Brunt (02:07:14):

So out of those seven guys that you volunteered with to be in the Islanders, how many of you guys made it through the war?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:07:24):

Well, we didn't all end up seeing one another at all, but Lyle Ricker and I, oh, I know what the other guy's name was. Humphreys, but he came from Saskatchewan, Southern Saskatchewan, and when he came back, he ended up at the jail In

Eric Brunt (02:07:54):

Melville?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:07:57):

No, in Alberta.

Eric Brunt (02:08:04):

Okay.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:08:05):

Southern Alberta in where the dinosaurs are and all.

Eric Brunt (02:08:09):

Oh, yeah. John Heller.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:08:13):

That's it.

Eric Brunt (02:08:14):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:08:17):

He ended up there in the prison. He ended up there as a guard. And the last time I talked to him; he was about six foot six. He was the tallest man I ever knew. And he was in the army, and I was a little over. You're

Eric Brunt (02:08:36):

Pretty tall too.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:08:37):

I was a little over just about 262. But I've shrunk. I'm under six, way under six now. I'm only five foot nine and three quarters or something, just under 10 or somewhere. So I've lost, what, three or four inches? Every space in the bone hinge, every joint has shrunk. I used to weigh over 200 pounds. I only weigh 180 now, but I've been sick. Look at my arms. There's nothing there. Yeah,

Eric Brunt (02:09:07):

You look thin. Yeah,

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:09):

I'm all bones.

Eric Brunt (02:09:10):

Yeah. Wow.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:14):

I ended up in the hospital with pneumonia and covid.

Eric Brunt (02:09:19):

Oh, shoot.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:20):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (02:09:20):

Sorry to hear that.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:21):

Both at the same time. But this was in March.

Eric Brunt (02:09:24):

Shoot, but you made it.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:26):

Oh, I didn't think for a while I was making it, but I also got diabetes and a few other things. I'm not the healthiest guy in the world, but they tell me I look healthy.

Eric Brunt (02:09:40):

You look very healthy, and you have an amazing memory.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:43):

Well, it's not all where it should be,

Eric Brunt (02:09:47):

But it's great because I do a lot of these interviews, and you have one of the strongest memories for sure.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:53):

Is that right?

Eric Brunt (02:09:54):

Yeah. Honestly.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:09:56):

Wow.

Eric Brunt (02:09:56):

Yeah, so that's pretty incredible.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:10:02):

I would like to tell you a story about how can I cut this off so that we don't record it? Yeah,

Eric Brunt (02:10:07):

I can cut it off right here.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:10:08):

Scotland for a holiday. I love dancing even though I can't do it anymore. And I was out, and I don't know whether it was Lyle or somebody else. We happened to be on holidays at the same time, and he's the guy that introduced me to this dance hall in downtown, not far from the Edinburgh castle. Next day we walked to the Edinburgh castle, toured the castle, went up the ramp, and so we could see outside over the, my God, that's a long way up on the defense side of that castle. I don't know whether you've ever seen it.

Eric Brunt (02:10:55):

No.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:10:56):

It's probably a couple of hundred feet from the valley down below to the viewing window in the castle. Anyway, he showed me where this dancehall was, and he said, it's built on horse here. I said, you're kidding me? And he said, no. He said, you come from Saskatchewan. Do you realize you got one in Saskatchewan? It's built on horse hair. I said, what do you mean it's built on horse here? He said, the floor, there's no joists in the floor. It's all on horse hair. The horse hair down below this floor, and that horse hair is, it gives, it's so easy to dance on. And I had never danced on a floor. And he said, there's one in Saskatchewan. And I said, well, what is this built in? This was the only one I thought was built on horse hair. And he said, no, they're all over the world.

(02:11:58):

But he said, there's only one in Saskatchewan, and that's at walrus. And I said, oh, okay. So I went dancing and he danced as well. He liked his dancing too, and danced, oh God, maybe an hour and a half or two. And then the announcer came up and said, we're having a dance off tomorrow night. Can some of you people register and come? Well, I had no sooner heard the announcement in this. Somebody grabbed my arm like that. There was a woman behind me,

grabbed my arm. She said, are you coming tomorrow night? I said, what do you mean if, am I coming tomorrow night? Well, they're going to have a dance off and I'd like you to be my partner. And I said, you don't know how I dance? Yes, I do. She said, I've been watching you. So we took first prize, and first prize was a knitted sweater that they knit in Scotland.

Eric Brunt (02:13:01):

So you were a good dancer.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:13:03):

What?

Eric Brunt (02:13:04):

So you must've been a good dancer.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:13:05):

Yes.

Eric Brunt (02:13:06):

And

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:13:06):

She's picked it up.

Eric Brunt (02:13:08):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:13:09):

So when I went home, I said to mother, this is a sweater that I won in Scotland for dancing. Well, she said, you always were a good dancer. And I said, how come I was always a good dancer? Well, I taught you. And I said, no, you didn't. She said, yes, I did. Before you could walk properly, you wanted to dance because you watched your older sister dance, and she was only a year and a half older than you. She said, so I taught you how to dance and not only one dance, but lots of dances. And she said, yeah, you did it well. And her and my sister and I used to go with my dad once in a while when we were nine and 10 years old. He played a musical instrument and he'd play the accordion. So he'd play for the dance at the schoolyard, a country school, and he'd take us along and we would dance, and that would gather a crowd because the Vogel sang, kids are going to be dancing. So that's when I learned how to dance. But I couldn't remember how old I was at the time, and I'd love to dance. I'd go drive 20 miles to go to a dance at night if I had a way of getting there. Driving was usually the way.

Eric Brunt (02:14:31):

Would there be any dances in Germany after the war was

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:14:34):

Oh no.

Eric Brunt (02:14:34):

No,

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:14:34):

No, no. We couldn't fraternize with the German people at all. Could not do that. But we used to do lots of things. Like when we were stationed in Orrick, we used to get regular meals and we'd have get a detailed somebody to go to the kitchen and get these meals. And we learned that there was a little old lady, just a short distance from where we were stationed or occupying a part of a building. And he said, I hear there's a little old lady there that really doesn't have anything to eat. She's alone. She doesn't, she was hoping that her son would be coming around, but maybe he's not alive anymore and all that sort of stuff. And she's really in bad shape. So we told the cook in the kitchen, there's a little old lady over there, what can we do for her?

(02:15:48):

He said, well, how old a lady is? She got her false teeth. And I said, well, we don't know that. I said, why don't you make something that's decent to eat and flavorful? I said, if you're going to give it to her, he said, yeah, I can do that. He said, well, surely to God, we can feed an extra person. So we took, what the hell was his name? He could speak German. Not very good, but he could speak it. I couldn't, even though my nationality should have said I couldn't speak German. Anyway, ended up giving this her this meal. Well, the tears started to flow, and she was so thankful that she overjoyed with tears, and we'd just continued giving her a meal a day as long as we were there. And I said, don't thank us. Thank the cook in the kitchen. Anyway, she was so thrilled that these enemy guys would feed her, and she enjoyed it until the day we left.

Eric Brunt (02:17:01):

Wow. It must've been difficult not to fraternize with the

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:17:06):

Yeah, and we were doing it. We were doing it under a command that said no fraternizing, and we were breaking that law.

Eric Brunt (02:17:18):

I also imagine a bunch of guys in their early twenties, and there's German girls around. You probably wanted to talk to them, but you can't right?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:17:27):

No. Well, the parents also, some of the parents wouldn't allow their kids to go out at that time anyway. There was nothing happening on the street or anything like that if you went to England or places like that where there was not totally demolished. Yeah, there was activity going on all the time, whether there was a war or not,

Eric Brunt (02:17:54):

But not in these German areas.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:17:56):

Pardon?

Eric Brunt (02:17:57):

But not in these German areas.

Joseph Vogelgesang (12:17:57):

No, not in there. No. Even in Belgium and hauling the places like that, the activity took a little while to get going. The average guy in Holland would've been, no guys there anyway. A lot of these girls were pregnant with the German army being there. And the ones that weren't pregnant were definitely, so when the Canadians left, a lot of guys probably stayed there, and a lot of 'em brought their wives over anyway, just like the English did the same thing.

Eric Brunt (02:18:37):

Maybe some guys also just left as well.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:18:42):

But there was lots of illegitimate children after the war.

Eric Brunt (02:18:46):

I bet

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:18:47):

In all the countries,

Eric Brunt (02:18:48):

All the countries

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:18:50):

In Germanic or English or French or you name it. But that was the case, just like Japan. Japan is full of half breeds Americans, not any other nationality, just Americans.

Eric Brunt (02:19:09):

Not Canadian. We weren't over there.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:19:13):

Were you over there?

Eric Brunt (02:19:14):

No, I was never over there.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:19:15):

No, we

Eric Brunt (02:19:15):

Were saying the Canadians were never over there.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:19:17):

No, no.

Eric Brunt (02:19:18):

Yeah. I guess when you finally came back to Canada, was it hard to adjust back to?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:19:25):

Yes. I was having, my biggest problem was I ended up and I was staying at my mother's, and she didn't have an extra bedroom because my two youngest brothers were still going to school. So I slept on the Chesterfield until I went on them. Anyway, I think the question was what

Eric Brunt (02:19:56):

Was the adjustment like back to

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:19:57):

Oh, the adjustment. Yeah. So I was sleeping on the Chesterfield, and I was quite comfortable, and my brother, who is about four or five years younger than me, him and his friend came home and his friend, oh, he said, there's Joe. I got to go and talk to him. He lent me some money when I was 14 years old, and I haven't repaid him, and I want to repay him. So he's up there pounding me on the chest, and the first thing that came to my nightmare was that I got shot or got shrapnel in because he was hitting me so hard, and he didn't realize he was doing it well. I jumped up and I scared him, and I said, don't do that. I said, I just had a damn hard feeling that I was wounded. I said, I'm having enough of these bad dreams without happening. Well, he said, I just wanted to repay your money. And I said, well, you could have kept the damn things. I said, until some day when we were both awake. Anyway, he apologized all over the place.

Eric Brunt (02:21:13):

So you had nightmares for a long time?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:21:16):

A couple of years. And I also had a problem with concussions, and it took me a little while. It took me years to get over that, and I didn't realize what was the matter, but the adjustment took

me years. I think it was 10 or 12 years before, I really didn't somehow have a bad dream about something. No, it didn't.

Eric Brunt (02:21:51):

Do you still get them nowadays or

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:21:53):

No, but I get other dreams, but never about the war. Thank God for that. I got some bad dreams, but they're not good dreams, but they're

Eric Brunt (02:22:06):

Not war.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:22:07):

And the last couple of three years, they're the ones that are really bad and they're all about dead people. And I mentioned that to and at the mental home. I said, this is what's happening. She said, yeah, that's a senior mind. You've had all these funerals and there's all left a mark on your recall somewhere, and so you're dreaming about them.

Eric Brunt (02:22:38):

Makes sense.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:22:39):

Yeah.

Eric Brunt (02:22:40):

I can't imagine at your age how many people that you've probably seen pass away and well,

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:22:45):

Yeah. Yeah. I've got four brothers and sisters that are gone.

Eric Brunt (02:22:52):

And people during the war as well.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:22:54):

Yeah, absolutely.

Eric Brunt (02:22:58):

You mentioned there was one person who lost their life out of that group of seven. Were there any others that group of seven that you volunteered with?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:23:08):

Well, he lost it during the war. Yeah, at the front line.

Eric Brunt (02:23:11):

Oh, right. But was he the only one out of the seven that died?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:23:14):

That I know of,

Eric Brunt (02:23:15):

Yeah.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:23:16):

And others were in different outfits.

Eric Brunt (02:23:19):

Right.

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:23:19):

So I don't know the history of the rest of,

Eric Brunt (02:23:22):

And what was his name, the one that lost his life, do you remember? Or

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:23:28):

Johnny Busick. He came from Saskatoon.

Eric Brunt (02:23:33):

And were you there when he lost his life?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:23:35):

No, no. Yeah, and he was a family man too. I met his wife and some of his children, Saskatoon, because I was not from Saskatoon when I joined the Army, I was country boy. But when I came home, I made Saskatoon my home, which was only a few miles, 60 miles, less than 60 miles away from where I was educated and lived.

Eric Brunt (02:24:13):

And why did you never go back to Europe? Was that a conscious choice or just never happened?

Joseph Vogelgesang (02:24:17):

Well, I had a tough time financially. That's one of the reasons why I didn't get back. And then when I was 26, I got married and started raising a family. Now I got a commitment and I can't

spend it on tur tour to Europe, so I didn't go. I didn't ever go. My sister did, who was also in the Canadian Army, and I.

TRANSCRIPTION ENDS