

Transcription  
Peter Pelletier  
- Interviewed by: Don McLean -  
November 15, 1988

Don: You're an old artillery man Peter.

Peter: Yeah.

Don: What infantry were you in?

Peter: Well I started with 64th U-Battery from Yorkton and Kamsack - 24th \_\_\_\_\_. But then when we went overseas in 43, they broke us up for reinforcements. And then I ended up with the 23rd ST regiment.

Don: South Qu'Appelle.

Peter: South Qu'Appelle.

Don: 25 pounders.

Peter: Yeah, 25 pounders.

Don: Were you married before you joined up?

Peter: No.

Don: How old were you when you joined.

Peter: 17.

Don: 17? Had to fib a little bit to get in.

Peter: They didn't worry too much about it.

Don: Yeah, they were looking for men anyways pretty bad. So were you living here in the Fort?

Peter: No, I was living down at Katepwa. At the end of the lakes.

Don: What was the work situation like then Peter?

Peter: Oh, it was fairly hard then.

Don: To get a job?

Peter: Oh yeah.

Don: A lot of unemployment?

Peter: Oh yeah.

Don: That was the dirty 30's.

Peter: End of the dirty 30's. Started getting better in 39 and 40, 41. I joined up in 41, October 9, 1941.

Don: October 9, 1941.

Peter: Yeah.

Don: Age 17, just turning 18. Were you living with your folks then?

Peter: I was living, yeah, my father was dead then.

Don: With your mom?

Peter: Yeah mother.

Don: Did you have brothers and sisters at home?

Peter: Oh yes, there was still 4 of us at home then I guess.

Don: What made you decide to go?

Peter: Oh, my oldest brother was gone, and

Don: He joined up earlier eh?

Peter: Oh yeah, they were gone for a year before that.

Don: What outfit was he in?

Peter: The oldest brother joined the 14th Fuel Engineers and I think they moved from around Lumsden area, and my second brother John joined the 6076 Battery from Indian Head. They eventually

Don: 6076 was that a medium battery?

Peter: No, field. 25 pounders.

Don: Did they all come back okay?

Peter: No, John was killed in Montitino. 21st of May 1944.

Don: 44. And you were overseas then yourself?

Peter: No, no. I didn't go overseas till 40. Yes, I was overseas then.

Don: You would be in England then?

Peter: Yes, in England.

Don: Just before the D-day invasion.

Peter: Just before D-day, yeah.

Don: So you joined up and your older brothers were already there?

Peter: Well I was in Indian Head Saturday night and the captain was catching everybody, and asking them to join, and sure why not.

Don: What were your feelings that day, Peter. Can you remember?

Peter: Kind of hard to think. Quite a while ago.

Don: I know my brother, the old man didn't want him to join up. Because the old man was in World War I. And so he sort of lied to the old man and said I'm just going down to Swan to see about the harvest excursion. So he went on a harvest excursion alright. And I remember him sitting around thinking about it, talking about it, but did you join up because you believed it had to be done or was it a more personal matter?

Peter: Well for that, I think probably was just adventure I think.

Don: And then there wasn't much work?

Peter: Just around there then it was just farm work. Worked on farms.

Don: Any notion for joining up, for as odd as it may sound, security of a steady job? Some job it turned out to be?

Peter: Well I don't know. As far as I can tell you it was just a spur of the moment idea.

Don: Most young guys did it for those reasons. Didn't really know what they were getting into.

Peter: No, we didn't really know. I think there was 5 of us from around Indian Head area, 5-6 of us all went through the same outfit.

Don: Did you join up right in Indian Head?

Peter: Yeah, well no, not really. They just took our names. They knew we had to have our medicals at Indian Head.

Don: And then you head into Regina?

Peter: Then we had to go to Regina yes, to the armies in Regina.

Don: So your regimental number would have an L in it?

Peter: I had an L, yeah. L59783. Was a batteries number like.

Don: So tell me about what happened after you joined Pete? Where did you go?

Peter: After I joined we stayed there with 3 different batteries. The 65th anti-tank and the 101st \_\_\_\_\_ from Mooseman.

Don: That would be the 40 mm beaufors?

Peter: I imagine so, yes.

Don: Where were you stationed at?

Peter: Well we all stayed right there in, I can't even remember that

Don: Shilo?

Peter: No, no. Regina.

Don: Oh, right in Regina.

Peter: Basic training centre first in Regina.

Don: Oh you took your basic training in Regina. What was that, 2 months?

Peter: Yeah I think so, about 2 months or 6 weeks.

Don: And you got your Laniard?

Peter: No, not yet. You didn't get that until after you finished your basic in Regina, the 65th and 64th were sent to Brandon, and the 101st went to Winnipeg, advanced training.

Don: So what was life like in Regina those days. Did it seem kind of glamorous to be in the army?

Peter: Well, to us I think I was in Regina once before that all my life. So it was kind of different eh, from a small town.

Don: Kind of exciting?

Peter: Didn't really bother me that much, because I was more interested in the training, and I hardly ever went downtown anyways. We were stationed by the exhibition grounds there.

Don: How did you find the training? Did you think it was tough or not to bad?

Peter: Well, some of it was tough. I kind of enjoyed it.

Don: What about the discipline?

Peter: Well that, got use to that. Took some time to get use to that. Some didn't. But I kind of enjoyed it really.

Don: Never got into any trouble?

Peter: No.

Don: I got into a little trouble when I joined up with discipline. Took awhile. So it's pretty well just basic training in Regina?

Peter: Yeah, just basic training.

Don: 3 odd, 3 end field. Parade square drill.

Peter: Infantry training.

Don: Took infantry training. Bren gun, sten gun?

Peter: Yeah, well I don't remember if we had a bren gun, had the looze.

Don: Did you have the looze gun?

Peter: Oh yes.

Don: Well for gosh sakes.

Peter: I don't think they had the sten gun. Did they have them then in 41?

Don: Well I don't know about 41. I know they had them by the time D-day rolled around.

Peter: Oh yeah.

Don: And they say cost something like \$8 to make.

Peter: That's about right. I don't think we got them until we went east or overseas, because on the west coast after we finished. When we finished advanced training, we were put on draft to overseas in March.

Don: March 44?

Peter: No, 42.

Don: 42.

Peter: March 42 when we finished advanced training all of us.

Don: Now the advanced training that would be on the 2 pounds.

Peter: Yeah, artillery and that.

Don: Did you take anything besides the 25 pounders?

Peter: Well yeah, when we started out we had 18 pounders to start out.

Don: They were a 90 tank.

Peter: No, no that was the field. That was from first World War.

Don: Oh yeah, because I've never heard of them before. 25 pounder was an old stand by. What was the 18 pounder like. Pretty good for a gun or was it pretty cumbersome?

Peter: Well, it was very cumbersome because they didn't have rubber tires.

Don: Steel.

Peter: They had them all steel tires on.

Don: Where there other guys from Indian Head that you stuck with all the way through?

Peter: No. We were

Don: All wound up on your own?

Peter: Like I said when we were finished advanced training, we were put on draft to go overseas, and I think it was first part of March or something. And when I got to the last doctor in line he says, cough. Cough again. He says you're not going anywhere. I had a hernia on this side, on the left side.

Don: So that kept you out for awhile.

Peter: So then that put me back.

Don: Might have saved your life in the long run.

Peter: Well, probably, maybe.

Don: If a person who wants to look at it in those days.

Peter: I could have ended up with some other infantry regiment or something worse. So then I spent then after the operation, I spent 34 days in the hospital. Brandon. A little hospital there.

Don: So what unit did you go back too?

Peter: Well that's when I came back off of, then I came home for 30 days leave, sick leave. And then I went back to Brandon and then there were 2 other chums from up north of Kamsack, around Kamsack and Yorkton. They were caught for being too

young. Back to the barracks. So then our regiment was in training at Shilo when I came back off leave. The other two were still in Brandon. So when I got back there, they shipped us, the three of us back out to Shilo to our regiment. And when we finished there we went to Nanaimo. Out to the island.

Don: Oh did you?

Peter: Yeah, we were there for about 11 months I guess

Don: How did you like the west coast?

Peter: Oh I loved the island a lot.

Don: They called those boys zombies then, didn't they?

Peter: Yes, we did. Most of them. We did have lots of them too.

Don: Did you have the general service stamp on you?

Peter: Yes. And after we went back to Nanaimo where the base I guess you would call it, home base. But then after that we would go to different areas on the island for patrol. We'd go for 6 weeks and then we'd come back for a week and clean up and then we'd go again. We, our battery had two places at Sukes and Jordan River.

Don: Now what kind of guns, they'd be coastal would they out there Pete?

Peter: No, we had our 25 pounders.

Don: 25 pounders? But there was coastal artillery there?

Peter: Well I imagine there was coastal artillery out there somewhere, but we

Don: The Japs apparently sailed up there a couple of times.

Peter: That's what they say.

Don: You didn't get any of that stuff did you?

Peter: No. More than once we'd get a rush call to go to a certain place, along the highway between Victoria and the places where we were stationed at.



Don: How did you like Victoria? Were they friendly out there, or where they?

Peter: Well Victoria, another thing I never seen much of it.

Don: No. Never saw much of the town like?

Peter: No.

Don: Not even in Nanaimo?

Peter: Well, Nanaimo I seen weekends and evenings a little.

Don: Nanaimo use to have a bar on every corner they say.

Peter: They did have, oh God I forget how many they did have.

Don: So were you in, with any other Metis fellows, or were they mainly white, so called white or does it matter a damn?

Peter: Well like I said, when they broke us up for, to go with reinforcements in March, they were going to ship us, all them guys went then. Oh yes, there was Metis and Indian from up, \_\_\_\_\_ reserve and Kamsack.

Don: So who did you chum with, just anybody?

Peter: Just anybody.

Don: You must have had a few special buddies?

Peter: I had one special guy but he was killed \_\_\_\_\_ just after we captured \_\_\_\_\_.

Don: So they would take artillery men when an infantry regiment needed them. They'd just be gone. So he was taken right out of the artillery into the argyles?

Peter: Yes, when we broke up for reinforcements, our 21st field regiment, he ended up with the infantry. And I was lucky. I ended up back with artillery.

Don: Where did he get killed?

Peter: Just after we crossed Custon Canal.

Don: In Holland?

Peter: Holland, yeah. I think it was Holland.

Don: So, what unit did you go over with and when did you leave? That would be Halifax, eh?

Peter: Well that's when we left Nanaimo in May 43 for overseas like. Another, I forget what they call them, zombies anyways. We sent them to a different regiment. Then we went to a re-training at Camp Padewall. Cause I remember that, we went through Moose Jaw on the 24th of May in 1943 on our way to Padewall.

Don: \_\_\_\_\_ way back in the wilderness then?

Peter: About the same as Shilo or Dundurn, San. But then I think we were only 10 miles from Pembroke. So that's where we use to go on the weekends to

Don: That was a rough town.

Peter: I guess so.

Don: Didn't bother you eh. Well I was at Padewall too for a while and Pembroke was full of lumberjacks and soldiers, and it was a pretty wild town. Cops use to take us and we were in having a few beers and they'd run us in one end of the jail and take \$14 off us and let us out of the other end. But that was from 1950-53.

Peter: Then there would be quite different from when we were there.

Don: So you went from Padewall then overseas.

Peter: Yeah, then we went to Debert I think.

Don: Nova Scotia.

Peter: We were there for maybe 2 weeks or so waiting, and then we went overseas.

Don: What ship did you leave on?

Peter: Oh I went on the old Queen Mary.

Don: Oh you did eh. Well if you're going over, you might as well go over in class.

Peter: Oh, we did. I had a very good place. I was one of the gunners on the top of her, on what would you call that, guard I guess or something.

Don: What kind of guns would they have. 40 mm?

Peter: No, this one we had, I think it was 3 inch.

Don: 3.7?

Peter: No, I think it was 3.

Don: Is that right. They didn't have the same

Peter: No, no, they were no near, they were just short like a \_\_\_\_\_ gun. They weren't big long burrows like the 3.7.

Don: So any trouble getting over? Any submarine attacks?

Peter: Oh no, it was beautiful. We went about the middle of September I think it was.

Don: Good weather?

Peter: Oh, lovely weather.

Don: Where did you land?

Peter: Up in Scotland, and what is that

Don: Oh, you landed up in Scotland. Up in the highlands?

Peter: I don't know. What's the name of that big fort?

Don: Oh I know where it is, there's a submarine base there now. But anyways, you landed up there, then what did you do, take some more training up there?

Peter: No, no, we were sent right down to England by train. We didn't stay long in Scotland at all.

Don: Then you were trained, did you hit the beaches on Normandy, did you?

Peter: No, no. 4th Armour. We were the 4th armour. We didn't go to any place around the 12th of July before we

Don: 12th of July, 44.

Peter: Yeah.

Don: That's when you guys

Peter: We were suppose to go on D-day plus seven, but things didn't go according to plan. So it was about the middle of July before they stuck us

Don: So when you went from England, what did you do? Did you travel across on those landing crafts, or did you go on a big ship and disembark or what?

Peter: I think I went on a big ship and they had the docks and everything up already.

Don: Did you dock in France?

Peter: Yeah, where they landed, where the Canadians landed there at that Malberry they called it.

Don: Was there any sign of the action left? What were your impressions when you hit France?

Peter: It looked pretty bombed. We just landed, they just took Conn a day or two before we got there, because it was still smoking and everything.

Don: And Conn was pretty heavy action.

Peter: It was I guess. I guess that was the holdup for the armour to get in.

Don: And so, when you hit, when you were in Conn now, you had the SP's?

Peter: Oh yes we had our SP's.

Don: So your motorized artillery? What were your feelings when you were going through Kline? You were going up the line now with your buddies. Excitement? Fear? Both?

Peter: Kind of both I guess. Now I forget what

Don: So where did you first get into action?

Peter: I should get that book out. Could we just stop for a minute?

Don: Going a little to fast. But your memory though, is it a case with a lot of return men who seen heavy action that when it comes right to the time when you first saw action, you forget because you put it out of your mind.

Peter: Well. \_\_\_\_\_.

Don: I was wondering about questions of excitement and fear and I'm trying to put myself into that position, and sometimes your memory?

Peter: I don't know, actually there wasn't much fear because we were back so far most of the time, not very often we were up very close. So we sat there when we first went in for 2 weeks just shelling here and there.

Don: So you were doing all the shooting and you weren't getting fired on?

Peter: Oh yeah, we were getting the odd firing on.

Don: You were getting fired on. 88.

Peter: Mostly 88's.

Don: Well they're pretty scary, weren't they?

Peter: Oh, they were.

Don: You heard the bang before you heard the whistle.

Peter: All you heard was a crack, bang.

Don: They were faster than sound. What about mortars, did you get any?

Peter: We got a few mortars in.

Don: You can hear them coming.

Peter: Oh yeah, you can hear them coming, but you don't know where they're going to go. We were at a Fort there for 2 weeks until that drive started, the 7th I think, the 7th of August or so when they started to hit for close to the Fallays gap eh.

Don: Were you supporting the annex there?

Peter: Oh yes, we

Don: Was that pretty heavy action too?

Peter: Yeah, that was pretty heavy action.

Don: Did you lose anybody?

Peter: For that I'll have to open the book. Yeah, I think we did. Something like 40 casualties and stuff. But like we kind of got into the wrong place, captain made a little bit of a mistake, and we got pretty well right up in the front of the infantry. That's where we were getting mortars.

Don: They nailed a few of the boys?

Peter: Yes, there were a few casualties. But I can't remember right now

Don: Now the Falleys gap, that would be the winter of 44, wouldn't it?

Peter: No, that was the summer. That was August. It started that August. That's when we

Don: Oh, I thinking of that big offensive the Germans put on that following winter. It wasn't Falleys that was

Peter: That was all the same winter. Same year. That was just before Christmas

Don: You're talking about August at Falleys, June, July, August, September, October, November about when the Germans started through the American lines.

Peter: That was the R-dens.

Don: R-dens yeah.

Peter: We were on our way to there on just before Christmas, I forget what town

Don: You were in France then when the Germans pushed through the R-dens? Or were you in Holland?

Peter: Oh, no, we were way up in Holland then. We were way up in Holland.

Don: What infantry outfit were you in support of?

Peter: Well we had Argyles, Sutherland, the Lake Soups, the Lincoln Wellingtons. They had different machine guns, what was that one, the New Brunswick Rangers or something like that.

Don: Now the Argyles and Sutherlands were from?

Peter: They're from around Thunder Bay there somewheres I think.

Don: And the Wellingtons?

Peter: I think they're from Ontario somewhere.

Don: So you were mainly supporting Ontario regiments?

Peter: Yeah.

Don: But yet you guys were mainly Westerners in the artillery?

Peter: Oh no, this was an Eastern outfit that I ended up with. I fought with them, I went overseas with

Don: Now what was the battery again?

Peter: That was the 31st, field battery. The 23rd, P regiment. I went into action with them.

Don: 23rd regiment and 31st battery.

Peter: That's who I went and fought with see.

Don: See, in the 50's us guys knew exactly who we were supporting. Of course it was a smaller outfit. And my outfit was 205 battery and it supported the Vandube. And the PPCLI when they relieved the Vandube. So we always knew exactly, but I imagine in Europe. It would be a lot more chaotic. Did you lose any close buddies in the artillery?

Peter: No, not really.

Don: What were you a gunner? Were you a gunner, I don't mean rank, I mean in terms of

Peter: Yeah, I was number 3 all the time.

Don: Number 3 that's the

Peter: That's the guy that did fighting and everything.

Don: You were the gunlayer.

Peter: Yeah.

Don: Number 3 I forget. I thought that was number 2. Sergeant is number 1.

Peter: Sergeant is number 1. Number 2 is on the lower.

Don: Number 2 is on the breach. And number 3 is the gunlayer. And then there's 4 and 5 and they're ammo.

Peter: Yeah, they're the ammo. Then we had a radio man and a driver.

Don: Did you get into any anti-tank action with 25's?

Peter: No, no. Never got, but they did shoot over our sights once, but that was in March.

Don: I've often wondered how they'd be in an anti-tank. Look like they would be kind of awkward. They'd jab against it?

Peter: You'd have to have a supercharge.

Don: Charge superfluz incre\_\_\_\_\_.

Woman: Here he is at 18 years old.

Don: Good looking man. So that's what you looked like eh. You're a bombedeer?

Peter: I was a bombedeer until I went to the other regiment.

Don: Once you become a bombedeer you'd be number 1 on the gun?

Peter: No.



Don: Were you still gunlayer?

Peter: Stayed number 3. But when I went to the other regiments, the stripes went too. Quite a few of us went there, even up to sergeants.

Don: You mean you kept your stripes?

Peter: No, they went off.

Don: They went off. Took your hooks off.

Peter: Took them away from you. About a week or two after you got to the regiment, they'd come in and ask you to sign a paper to reverse

Don: Save yourself, 50 cents a day. Save themselves two bits a day.

Peter: I think that was all. I think we only got \$1.30 for a bombdeer. About \$1.10 to start with.

Don: Where were you when the war ended Pete?

Peter: We were up in

Don: Did you cross the Rhine?

Peter: Oh yeah, I thought I was going to stay there. You were just asking about shooting anti-tank, well the only time we shot over open sights, I was on holiday leave in Scotland, and they were shooting \_\_\_\_\_ in sight about 150 yards. The tank got a little too close to them.

Don: Panzers. Were they \_\_\_\_\_ panzers. Or just another artillery?

Peter: Infantry and stuff. Hitting the ground with a counter attack.

Don: Did they go after the infantry with the open sights?

Peter: Oh yeah. Like I said when I come back they said you missed the best part.

Don: Do you remember what they used HE119 charge 3. Was that the big one?

Peter: I just can't remember now.

Don: Anti-tank was charged super.

Peter: Super if you did any anti-tank. That's one thing I never had the pleasure shooting with that supercharge. I always got around practice with just charge 3. I guess it was too hard on the burrows.

Don: Too hard on the equipment. Didn't want to use that unless they had too.

Peter: Then after that we ended up in

Don: Well you'd be in the lines then of about 10 months to a year before you got any time back in Scotland?

Peter: Oh no. We were in there until July. I think it was March, we spent about 2 weeks over there on the other side, before we were going across the Rhine sitting behind smokescreens and stuff eh, getting ready to cross it. And I went on leave before we crossed. When I got back they were already way up gone, up ahead.

Don: Well, you were lucky. So anyways, what part of \_\_\_\_\_ did you go to?

Peter: I use to go up to around Glasglow. I had friends from home there Coprage is the name of the little town I use to go to.

Don: That's a funny thing. Most of the Canadian troops from World War II that come back always talk about leaving Scotland. They didn't stick around England. Why is that?

Peter: I don't know.

Don: Everybody went to Scotland.

Peter: Yes. I guess maybe it was

Don: Why did you go to Scotland?

Peter: I was stationed down in England all the time.

Don: So you want to get out of there.

Peter: So I figured it was nicer to go up to see these people her sister and brother moved here, farmed.

Don: Well you're talking about travelling around Europe almost as though it was a tour. You haven't talked about any hardships or?

You make it sound like you were sort of like on a Sunday school picnic over there. But somehow or other I don't think it was?

Peter: Some of it was nice, but actually, we got shelled quite a few times and stuff like that, got bombed, but I don't think it was anything like the infantry or anti-tank, or a tank corp or stuff like that, engineers. We were always back far enough.

Don: When you say back far enough, how far behind the line would you be. Just a few hundred yards eh?

Peter: Well yes, you'd be between 15-2000 yards behind.

Don: And then the lines were pretty mobile ?

Peter: Well that was it that's one thing we liked to have SP's never had to worry about digging in. Like with toes. Guys would dig, they would be there these amount of times, they would have to dig in.

Don: So when you got your rest periods, you didn't get to go back to Scotland everytime, you just got to fall back a few yards.

Peter: That was the only leave I had like in Europe. The rest of the other times you never had any time, well if you had time in the afternoon or something, if you were close to a big enough place and if there was facilities, Canadian facilities there for entertainment and stuff, then so many were allowed to go back each for an afternoon.

Don: Did they have much entertainment for you?

Peter: They had shows and stuff like that. The odd live entertainment, but not very often for us.

Don: What was your relationship with the Belgium people and the Hollanders? How did they treat you when you were not up front?

Peter: Actually the Hollanders I guess you'd say were really the best. Like France we didn't get much to see or know anybody in France because we were moving all the time. But like see up in Holland we were stationed there for quite a while at Sir Topinbosh.

Don: Any of the Dutch people sort of adopt you in for dinner and things like that?

Peter: Oh yes, you'd, well couldn't very well tell you about a meal. They didn't have much. We use to give most of our stuff away if we could like.

Don: They were going pretty hungry?

Peter: Oh yes. That was for sure.

Don: Well I've heard it said that the Holland people, if you're from Canada, even to this day, if you're Canadian and you go through Holland, they'll say oh Canadians and they'll remember the troops, remember them very kindly. The liberators.

Peter: They really took it to heart like. France we went through, so fast when we started, and same with Belgium. What of Belgium we did see.

Don: You were moving through pretty fast.

Peter: But Holland we stayed for I don't know how long, well pretty near all fall I guess. Around Sir Topinbosh, we'd go right up to Germany on one push or two pushes. Up in Holland and along the edge of Germany there. But then we'd come back to the same area always.

Don: When you crossed the Rhine, okay, now you're into German territory. What were the civilians like there? Were they in pretty bad shape too? Were they as bad off as the Dutch? Hungry and stuff?

Peter: Well I don't know. We never had a chance to, see we weren't even legal to talk to them.

Don: That must have been quite a switch now, after you cross the Rhine and here were these friendly civilians who just liberated, and across the Rhine here are a people that you've just conquered. There must have been some noticeable difference?

Peter: Oh there was. The biggest was that you couldn't associate with them or even talk to them. Strictly out. After it was over, you'd talk to some of them.

Don: How did they react to you, were they scared?

Peter: Well I don't know, I don't say they were scared.

Don: You never had much of a chance

Peter: We never had much of a chance

Don: But still you get an impression of them, some kind of an impression on them?

Peter: Well that didn't exactly know, remember my impression then. But it was different.

Don: A different feeling. So then after you crossed the Rhine, it would be a pretty mobile battle all the way. You wouldn't be staying in one place too long, would you?

Peter: Oh no, never stayed too long.

Don: Pretty well on the go.

Peter: You'd be lucky if you stayed there a couple of days or even a day.

Don: And you were still in support of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders?

Peter: Well yeah, unless you go lower, closer to the 2nd div or 3rd div. If they needed support then

Don: This was 1st div then was it.

Peter: No this was 4th armour.

Don: Yeah, but what division was it?

Peter: Well that was 4th Armour division.

Don: 4th armour division? I hear them talking about 1st div and 2nd div.

Peter: Well that's first 1st, 2nd and 3rd, them are infantry divisions and 4th and 5th were armour. Armour and 1st divisions were in Italy.

Don: So you were with the

Peter: 4th armour.

Don: You'd be classified as armour then and you were with the 4th. Which division was it that went up through Italy?

Peter: The 4th and the 1st. Or the 1st and the 5th.

Don: 1st and 5th up through Italy. So after you crossed the Rhine, talking just a few months actually and the war would be over, eh?

Peter: Yeah. They crossed in March, and it was over the 4th of May.

Don: Where were you when the war ended, and how did you feel about it?

Peter: We were just, we were the last support, I think we supported the 2nd division when they took Bollenburg, I think they're called Bollenburg. The last big place we were. But that's as far north as we went.

Don: Well, was the news pretty well received when you heard it that the war was over?

Peter: Well yes.

Don: Celebrating or?

Peter: Couldn't celebrate too much, didn't have much to celebrate on. For us it was over the evening of the 4th. Our guns were even loaded yet, we were still fighting. And then we ceased firing and that was it. Some of our guns, cause I know mine was loaded, because we had to wait 3 or 4 days to get everyone

Don: To get that shell out of there. Because once she's loaded there's only one way to get rid of it.

Peter: Well yeah, can't get it back out. We got it all cleared

Don: So you'd have to wait, sure enough. You'd have to wait to get rid of that shell without starting another war.

Peter: Yeah a while. Like I said, it was over on the 4th, the evening about 6:00 or so, 7:00 we got cease fire. Then one of the other chums of mine was with the Articeberg, let's go back and have coffee. So we walked back to the kitchen by the barn, half-track. Next thing we know putt,putt,putt,putt. German 37 mm starting popping off around us. He got a piece of chrapnel in his instep and I got a piece in my arm which is still there today. And they had to take him out, but I stayed. Doctor just put some \_\_\_\_\_ on it. Keep that as a souvenir. And then they started raising hell about that. We were heading for our guns to start again. Stay where you are, they're just clearing there guns. But they cleared them right amongst us, right where we were back having coffee.

Don: Think they did it on purpose?

Peter: Well I can't see why they couldn't be anything else, because we were right out in the open.

Don: Yeah. By the time they clear there guns .... and that was after the war was officially over when you got hit?

Peter: Well no, it wasn't officially over yet. Official was the 8th. 4 days later, but the 4th was our last action that evening.

Don: Well I'll be darned. So you got a little souvenir back with you in your right arm.

Peter: Yeah.

Don: How big is it? About the size of a dime?

Peter: No, no. Size of a match head. Can hardly feel it anymore.

Don: My brother he got a bunch of chrapnel in him. He got some pretty good size chunks. They're kind of a signal when the weather is going to turn bad. He got them in his leg. So when you came back then, tell me about the trip back and what you did and what it was like when you come home?

Peter: Well, after we were, we came back, we were still in Germany, we came back to a farm, to a farm there for about a

week, or maybe 2 weeks I guess. And then they were going around asking who wanted to volunteer for the Pacific. I was one of them.

Don: Did you volunteer?

Peter: Oh yes. Figured I'd get out of there sooner.

Don: Itched to get out of there.

Peter: But then I wished I would have volunteered for the occupation forces instead, but I volunteered for the Pacific and we came back, flew back from close to Brussel with the airplane, and flew back to England and we ended up at Aldershot.

Don: Flew back?

Peter: Oh yeah, they flew us back.

Don: And what about the equipment?

Peter: That equipment was all turned in.

Don: Just left it there. You weren't going to need it hopefully for a few generations. And then what ship did you come back to Canada on?

Peter: There they are, all lined up to be turned in.

Don: There they are. The S-piggies. Heard a lot about them. You know they made a lot more sense then the 25 pounder and the way we pulled them along behind those quads. And yet when the Korean war came along, there was no such thing as an S-P.

Peter: There wasn't?

Don: No.

Peter: Oh for God's sake.

Don: Of course they used the American 105 Hollister.

Peter: They were using them already in Europe.

Don: Oh, the 105's.



Peter: 105's. English regiment I think. They wanted to trade us, wanted our new guns and give us there old ones, because they were going already to 105's seems to me.

Don: Well I sure liked that 25 pounder. I didn't like the 105 nearly as well, only thing was that it had a higher trajector. It could shoot over a hill. But anyways, so

Peter: Then we were up as far as Aldershot and we got back to Aldershot, and then I was on leave again, and that's when that big Ryche started

Don: Because the troops weren't let out.

Peter: They weren't getting home fast enough. A lot of guys were in a hell of a mess. I wasn't there when it happened.

Don: Did the Tommies intervene with there police?

Peter: I wasn't there, I don't know.

Don: The Brits. They did the same damn thing in World War I you know. The Canadians, I believe it was even in the same place. And they had them in behind barbed wire, and they rioted and they brought the British Tommies in and shot them. That was pretty stupid eh. They didn't make that mistake in the second World War. I guess that's progress. Didn't shoot there own men after the war was over.

Peter: Anyways, like I said I was up in Scotland on my last leave. When I left, they say we don't know when we're going to have a ship for you. But when I got back it was only a couple of days and we were sent back up to Scotland to get on our ship to come home.

Don: Which one did you come home on?

Peter: I came home on the El de France then.

Don: Oh did you. That's the one my brother come home on. Might have been a big tall fellow. Jack McLean. Winnipeg Rifles.

Peter: Oh Winnipeg Rifles, eh.

Don: Of course there's a few thousand men on a ship at one time and they need more than one ship. But he came back on the El de

France. Came back in style. What was it like when you got home?

What were your feelings, can you remember?

Peter: It was nice to get home.

Don: Did you feel like a changed man?

Peter: Well yeah, I was a bit older than I was when I left.

Don: How were you different?

Peter: Call it mature, more.

Don: Different outlook on the world?

Peter: Different outlook on the world. From when I first went over.

Don: Different notions of life and death too eh?

Peter: Oh yeah.

Don: So when you come home were you treated like a hero? Did you expect to be, or did you give a damn?

Peter: No, I don't think I even cared.

Don: What did you want, what were you hoping for?

Peter: Pardon me.

Don: When you come back, what were you hoping for, what were you thinking about?

Peter: I don't know. I wasn't thinking much of anything really.

Don: Weren't worried about the future?

Peter: Not too much.

Don: Just going to enjoy?

Peter: Just going to enjoy. Came home, volunteered for the Pacific. Got home, home for 30 day leave, and it all came to an end. But they still sent us back to Camp Shilo again, as far as

forming this 2nd Canadian infantry regiment or something like that. It was modelled after the Americans. So I went to Camp Shilo there for I forget how long we were there, for a month or so, yeah must have been about a month of training.

Don: So did you have a sweetheart here in Canada went you went over?

Peter: Oh yes I did.

Don: Was it this one?

Peter: Oh when I went over,

Don: I didn't mean to get you in trouble here.

Peter: No, I didn't know her before I went over.

Don: You met here after you come back?

Peter: I met her when I came back, my brother introduced me.

Woman: I knew his brother before him.

Don: What's your first name? I should know it before I forget.

Woman: Kay.

Don: Kay. And what was your maiden name Kay.

Kay: Brownberger.

Don: Brownberger? Where did you guys meet, in Indian Head?

Peter: No, we met downtown at Adam Deschambault garage.

Don: How long had you been out of the army when you married?

Peter: Well, I was still in. I stayed in till 46, January 46. I was going to stay, but things were going slow again there. After we finished, they disbanded us the Pacific force at Camp Shilo, they were sending them back to there own provinces, and I ended up at dear old Dundurn.

Don: That would be enough to make you want to get out.

Peter: I would probably have stayed if they would have sent me back to artillery.

Don: They put you in the infantry?

Peter: They sent me back to infantry.

Don: What outfit?

Peter: No outfit.

Don: Oh they hadn't assigned an outfit yet, but you were going to be infantry?

Peter: They were training us for infantry.

Don: No more riding. You're going to walk. So I don't know what else to ask you. Do you think it was worth it all now Peter?

Peter: Well I don't know, that's kind of a hard question to answer right now. The way things have gone to what, the price we paid for it then. What the world has gone too, but I guess it's progress.

Don: Did you ever go back?

Peter: Oh no, never.

Don: Don't want too?

Peter: Well I wouldn't mind to go back and see what it looked like after it was all fixed up again. But financial situations haven't been that good to allow me too.

Don: What was the job situation like once you were demobilized and out of it, back home?

Peter: Well back home, it was rough as usual.

Don: Did you get any special consideration for having been a return man?

Peter: Well they said you did, but

Don: Did you really?

Peter: Well, to most of my problem was schooling. I only had a grade 5, most of grade 6.

Don: That's what you had before you went over, grade 6?

Peter: Yeah. Not all because I never wrote my exams on grade 6.

Don: So what kind of work were you able to get?

Peter: Oh gee, I worked, just labour work. Back on farm work.

Don: Seasonal? What kind of work? Thrashing in the fall?

Peter: Yeah, thrashing in the fall.

Don: Cutting and combining later on?

Peter: Combining, binders and stuff like that. Pitching sheafs.

Don: Pretty tough life?

Peter: So that's why I went to Ontario to the bush with a chum of mine to go along with him in the fall of 47. We were married in the spring of 47. And in the fall of 47, October 47 that's when I went into the bush with him. That's where I started working on heavy equipment, and that's what I've been doing ever since.

Don: I've got one more hard question Peter, did the war effect your notion of being, of somehow being different then white Canadians? The war came along and suddenly the Métis folks, Indian folks, white folks are all in a unit together and they're all going over against a common enemy and some of the guys get killed over there, you came back to Canada. Had any of those relationships changed after the war? Did your being Métis was that somehow affected by the war itself, the way you felt about it?

Peter: Not actually I don't think. I've always felt, I knew I was a Métis and that I was different then a whitey.

Don: After going through the war with a whole different bunch of people, white, Indian, Métis, did you have some sense of brotherhood over there that you didn't have here?

Peter: Oh yes, I think we probably did, because over there, you didn't say.

Don: You say you probably did, so you're not sure?

Peter: Well, I say probably because like we were all just buddies together you might say.

Don: Nationality didn't matter?

Peter: Didn't matter too much there.

Don: When you came back and got demobilized, did it begin to matter again?

Peter: Well, not really for me, because I never expected it to be anything different.

Don: See, what I'm getting at, I'm just wondering if the Métis and the Indian folks went over there and fought for there country of course along with other people, and you do become comrades, no question about it. And I'm just wondering if that feeling had changed any way between native and white because of the war, if it got better for awhile?

Peter: Well I don't know. It maybe got better, a little better.

Don: Cause things seem to be getting bad again in the cities. I don't know if people forget or what.

Peter: Well, they do forget. All they figure of Métis or Indian is just being drunk and nothing else.

Don: But I mean to say during the war when people were thrown into the same, they all knew different. They all learned and knew different, soldiers. When they come back I'm sure there attitude had changed.

Peter: Oh I imagine so. A lot of them would.

Don: Buddies to buddies.

Kay: But I think it's the younger generation now, isn't it.

Don: You mean it's starting to be nasty between races again?

Kay: Yeah.

Don: I don't know, it seems to me that that's an old idea that just seems to go on and on and on. Sometimes, I've talked to other guys you know, status Indian people who said the war had changed and they didn't really know who they were up until they went into the war, and they come back out and they felt different about themselves. They know who they were. They've been through the mill and felt that nobody would ever give them a bad time again. Well, I'll just try to get, I've got a memory like a siv, especially today. So you joined up, and went into the artillery. Went overseas with the, what division?

Peter: With the 21st field regiment, 64th battery.

Don: 21st field regiment and 64th field battery.

Peter: And then we were broke up overseas for reinforcements, and then I ended up with the 31st field battery and the 23rd S-P regiment.

Don: 23rd S-P regiment. That's when you hit France, Belgium all of them. And you stayed with them right through, until you were back in Canada, and then they were going to set up this outfit to go to Pacific to fight the Japanese and then it never came around? Okay, because I am going to go to Ottawa, and if I have your outfit, I can get, what I'm going to do Peter, ( I guess I can shut this off)