

MEMORIES OF COMBAT: HOW WORLD WAR II VETERANS CONSTRUCT THEIR
MEMORY OVER TIME.

by

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Abstract

Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, American society sought to record the stories of World War II veterans before they passed on. The United States Congress established the Veterans History Project in 2000 in order to collect stories not only from World War II veterans, but also from veterans of all wars. Although many similar programs existed before this one, this initiative stimulated the interest of communities all over the country to conduct oral history projects of their own. As a result, the availability of veterans' accounts improved for scholars as well as for the general public. Along with veterans' interviews, many collections include donated letters, diaries, and memoirs. Many of these institutions have posted their materials on the internet, thus giving easier public access to the sources. The increased availability of veterans' accounts has shifted the question from, "What was the World War II veterans' experience?" to "How do the veterans reflect on their experience?"

This study analyzes the memories of World War II veterans who have documented their experiences at two separate times in their lives. It examines wartime letters and diaries written by soldiers as well as, oral histories conducted after the war. This study compares three veterans' memories over time and the influence of collective memory on their remembrances.

This case study finds that although these three veterans had very different experiences, they all reflected on their experience in similar ways. The veterans' immediate accounts were straightforward and without introspection, while their later accounts included interpretation and analysis of their experiences. Although the details in each narrative are unique to the veteran, the overall tone and meaning of the memory constructed in their oral histories followed the meaning presented in the American collective memory of the war.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Dedication.....	vi
Chapter 1 - Introduction: The World War II Narrative	1
Chapter 2 - Richard Jepsen: A Machine Gunner	9
A Man of the Moment: The War Letters.....	10
The Influence of Time: The Memoir	14
A Growing Nostalgia: The Interview.....	20
Shaping Memory over Time	22
Chapter 3 - Ralph Utermoehlen: A Scout	30
War: The Letters	32
Reconstructing Memory: The Interview	36
The Evolution of Memory	41
Chapter 4 - Arthur Zschoche: A Navigator	45
In the Moment: The Diary	46
Remembrance: The Interview.....	50
Evolving Memory	56
Chapter 5 - Conclusion: Reconstructing Memory	63
Bibliography	77
Endnotes	82

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Dedication

For my Mom and Dad, who have always given me the freedom to follow my heart.

Chapter 1 - Introduction: The World War II Narrative

Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, American society sought to record the stories of World War II veterans before they passed on. The United States Congress established the Veterans History Project in 2000 in order to collect stories not only from World War II veterans, but also from veterans of all wars.¹ Although many oral history programs existed before this one, this initiative stimulated the interest of communities all over the country to conduct oral history projects of their own. As a result, the availability of veterans' accounts improved for scholars as well as for the general public. Along with veterans' interviews, many collections include donated letters, diaries, and memoirs. Many of these institutions have posted their materials on the internet, thus giving easier public access to the sources. The increased availability of veterans' accounts has shifted the question from, "What was the World War II veterans' experience?" to "How do the veterans reflect on their experience?"

In the past, military historians tended to concentrate on the strategy and leadership of wars and largely ignored the common soldier in their analysis. It was not until the 1970s that historians began increasing their attention on the human experience of war. Many of the scholars chose to explore the soldier's external as well as psychological or internal experience by relying on letters, diaries, memoirs, and oral histories. Two leading contributors to this body of literature are the historians Peter S. Kindsvatter and Gerald Linderman.

In *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam*, Kindsvatter examines American army soldiers and Marines in the twentieth century.² He provides a realistic depiction of World War II combat by including the gruesome aspects of battle in an effort to dispel the myth of the "good war." This myth defines the conflict in moral

terms, as a fight of good versus evil, and ignores the horrors of war, instead emphasizing the heroic sacrifices of the soldiers.

Linderman similarly contests the good war myth in *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II*, which assesses the psychological experience of the American combat infantryman in World War II and identifies the stages through which combatants move during their time at the front. The initial stage encompasses the new soldier's naiveté, characterized by his use of "big talk" and his expectation that the "other guy" will die. Soldiers displayed this stage when they took unnecessary risks during combat, such as standing up in a foxhole or walking around under fire. However, eventually the soldier became aware of the reality of his situation and the constant possibility of death or serious injury. He responded to this awareness by developing specialized knowledge of his job, learning lessons from the field, and developing combat intuition, each of which aided in his survival. A soldier increased his chances of avoiding death by learning the sounds of combat, which ones indicate dangers and which ones do not, and especially identifying outgoing versus incoming artillery fire. However, even soldiers who developed skills to avoid death still believed that luck plays a role. Ultimately, the soldier coped with his situation by shutting out the horror, which sometimes caused him to disconnect from humanity and engage in acts such as shooting prisoners, robbing civilians, or taking pleasure in destruction.³

The United States government constructed the good war myth during World War II and circulated it through propaganda. It is a romanticized version of the war that contends that the conflict was necessary, with emphasis on the sacrifice and honor of those who fought and died for a virtuous cause. The image of the "good war" continues to exist in American public memory, despite scholars' questioning of it.⁴

Kindsvatter and Linderman dispute the “good war” myth by recreating the soldier’s actual experience, but they do not investigate his memory. It is history and memory scholars who research the process of constructing memory. Scholars of history and memory have analyzed the process by which individuals as well as communities remember events. Jay Winter defines collective memory as “...the process through which different collectives, from groups of two to groups in their thousands, engage in acts of remembrance together.”⁵ Constructing collective memory comes from a community’s inclusion and exclusion of many individual memories to form one general recollection of an event. The community that determines the meaning that the event receives reinforces it through societal constructions such as monuments, memorials, films, and other public statements. The meaning of a collective memory connects a specific event to the identity of the community that constructs the memory.⁶ Thus, the meaning that a community places on an event reflects the identity of that particular group.

According to Jay Winter and Maurice Halbwachs, memories are constantly evolving and changing as an individual lives through new experiences. With each new encounter, an individual’s perspective changes and therefore alters the way he interprets the past.⁷ For example, the emotional connection an individual feels towards an event fades over time, regardless of whether the experience was pleasant or unpleasant. As a result, a veteran is more likely to express the negative feelings he associates with his combat experience in earlier recollections than in later accounts, after his emotional connection to the event has decreased.

In addition to the passage of time affecting an individual’s memory, the collective memory also influences the way he recalls events. Winter agrees with Halbwachs that although societies influence the memory that individuals construct; ultimately, it is the citizens of a community that remember and not the society. Societal constructions such as monuments and

memorials provide a framework for events to be remembered and over time those cues influence the personal narrative that individuals construct of a particular event.

Although neither Halbwachs nor Winter explores veterans' memory over time, Fred Allison does so. Allison's "Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives over Time" examines a Vietnam veteran's memory of combat by comparing two interviews, in which the soldier participated at two separate times. Allison found that the length of time that elapsed between the soldier's recollection and his actual experience affected the type of information he included in his interviews.⁸ Allison describes the veteran's immediate recollection as an "oral snapshot of the world of a combat marine" and the later interview as a "study in how memory reconstructs a combat experience." In his immediate recollection, the veteran in Allison's study provided "a bland, matter-of-fact" account devoid of explanation or interpretation and spoke about "intense deadly combat" with a "mundane candor."⁹ However, his remembrance reconstructed years later offered an analysis.

Allison suggests that the differences between the two interviews are a result of "veterans' memory work[ing] to organize and make comprehensible an event that might not have been orderly or comprehensible in the first place."¹⁰ He concludes that when veterans have time to reflect, they are able to make sense of their involvement by placing it within a specific narrative. Thus, recollections recorded immediately following an incident are valuable because they include the soldier's reaction before he had time to edit his memory.

The present study draws on both Halbwachs and Winter's theories on memory construction as well as Allison's findings on the way that a veteran remembers his experience over time. According to Winter and Halbwachs, one would expect that the immediate record a World War II soldier provides would exclude his interpretation and that only later would he be

able to assign meaning to it. Additionally, one would expect that the society to which the veteran belongs influenced his narrative. For example, when soldiers returned home after World War II, they were not encouraged to share their stories but instead to leave the war behind them. In general, society did not begin to ask World War II veterans about the war until the 1990s, at which time many veterans began to recount their stories. However, even then there were only certain stories that society wanted to hear from them. As John Bodnar explains in *The "Good War" in American Memory*, society did not want to hear about the gore but about the sacrifice and heroism of the soldiers.¹¹

Allison's theory that soldiers offer different accounts of their experience depending on when they construct them holds true in this study. However, the present study goes further and suggests that it is not only the passage of time that shifts a veteran's memory but also the influence of collective memory, thus drawing on Winter and Halbwachs's theories on the process of memory construction. This study also presents an opportunity to combine oral and written sources, produced by one individual, in a single case study. The findings add to the literature on veteran memory and advance the work of scholars studying oral histories and the effects that collective memory has on individual memory construction.

Three veterans, Richard Jepsen, Ralph Utermoehlen, and Arthur Zschoche, provide a rare opportunity to examine how World War II soldiers' memories evolve over a lifetime because we can compare oral and written sources for each of these individuals. Each veteran constructed at least two separate accounts of his combat experiences over the course of his life. Jepsen wrote fifty-six letters home during the war, thirty-six of them while stationed overseas.¹² He also completed his 105-page memoir, which was self-published, in 1996.¹³ In September 2003, he participated in the Riley County, Kansas Veterans Oral History Project, and a fellow World War

II veteran, Jim Sharp, interviewed him.¹⁴ Utermoehlen constructed two separate recollections: his wartime letters, including twenty-eight written between February and May 1945, and an oral history produced in September 2003 with the Riley County, Kansas Veterans Oral History Project. Zschoche also produced two records of his experience, a diary covering April 21 - May 29, 1944, while he was in Yugoslavia, and an oral history produced in February 1999, when his daughter, Professor Sue Zschoche, interviewed him about his World War II experience.

There are some limitations on the value of oral histories as historical evidence. Factors that may affect the reliability of a veteran's interview include his relationship with the interviewer, the reason for the interview, the motivation of the interviewee for participating, and the age of interviewee. However, the accuracy of details such as dates are not what is important when analyzing how the veteran recalled his combat experience and the narrative that he chose to produce.

All three veterans in this case study were from Kansas. Two of the soldiers were drafted into the Army, and the other enlisted in the Army and then was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Force. Two of the veterans, Jepsen and Utermoehlen, served on the ground in the European theater, while Zschoche served with the Army Air Force stationed in Italy. Although the three veterans in this study had very different experiences, they are united by the aim of the study, an examination of how veterans reconstruct their combat experience over time.

The Army drafted Jepsen in 1943, and he served in the European theater from 1944 until 1945. He began as a messenger but became a machine gunner after experiencing one-hundred days of combat. He spent nine months in combat. After Germany surrendered, the Army selected Jepsen's unit to spearhead the invasion force for the Japanese home islands, and his unit was

sailing back to the United States en route to the Pacific theater when the Allies dropped the atomic bombs and Japan surrendered. As a result, Jepsen's unit remained in the states, and the Army discharged Jepsen in November 1945.

Utermoehlen had a farm deferment for one year before he gave it up and the Army drafted him in the summer of 1944. He served with the 69th Infantry Division in the European theater from February through June 1945. He spent three months at the front, serving with the rear attachment as well as spearheading battles. The majority of his World War II service was with the Army of Occupation in Germany, first as an agricultural instructor and then as a jeep driver with the 29th Division, before he was transferred to the 78th Division after the 29th departed for home. While with the 78th, he patrolled the Russian-American line, and then a commander reassigned him to duty with the local Red Cross. He returned to the states in March 1946.

Zschoche volunteered for the Army in February 1941. He served as a bookkeeper at the officer's club at Fort Leavenworth until he volunteered for the Army Air Force. He trained as a navigator, graduated with Navigation Class 43-13 on September 11, 1943, and then received his commission as second lieutenant. He arrived in Italy on February 5, 1944 and flew his first mission on March 19th. The 460th's target that day was the Ploesti oil fields in Romania. On April 21, 1944, he and his crew bailed out over Yugoslavia after they ran out of fuel. Zschoche spent thirty-nine days in Yugoslavia before the military evacuated him and his comrades on May 30 and they returned to the 15th Air Force in Italy. Once back in Italy, Zschoche spent thirty days in the hospital recovering from his injuries before returning to flying in July. He flew one more mission before reassignment. He departed Italy on September 13, 1944, and arrived in New York thirteen days later. He returned to Fort Leavenworth, where the Army discharged him later that month.

Although these three veterans had very different experiences, they all reflected on their experience in similar ways. As Allison suggests, each veteran's immediate account was straightforward and without introspection, while their later accounts included interpretation and analysis of their experiences. Additionally, each set of recollections follow Halbwachs and Winter's theory on the influence of collective memory on the construction of their individual memory. Although the details in each narrative are unique to the veteran, the overall tone and meaning of the memory constructed in their oral histories followed the meaning presented in the American collective memory of the war.

Chapter 2 - Richard Jepsen: A Machine Gunner

Richard Jepsen provides a unique opportunity to examine a veteran's memory over time through comparison of his three separate accounts of his wartime experience: his wartime letters, 1996 memoir, and 2003 oral testimony. His initial memory reveals little about his combat experience and is devoid of introspection, while his later accounts include more description about his combat-related experiences and provide introspection. The changes in Jepsen's memory support Winter's theory that time influences the meaning and interpretation that individuals place on their past events and that societal cues also influence the meaning that individuals attach to their memories.¹⁵ The American collective memory of World War II shaped the narrative that Jepsen provided in his later account of the war, and his later memory emphasized themes found in the collective memory and minimized themes not found in the collective memory but present in his earlier accounts.

Richard Jepsen was born June 29, 1925 in Lincoln County, Kansas and graduated from high school in 1942 at age sixteen. The Army rejected Jepsen's attempt to enlist in the Army Air Force because of his poor eyesight. Unsuccessful at becoming an airman, Jepsen decided to move to California to work in the shipyards with his father. However, later in 1943, as his eighteenth birthday approached, he returned to Kansas, where he worked on a local farm until he received his draft letter in August. The Army inducted Jepsen on September 8, 1943 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and he went to Camp Groober, Oklahoma for basic training.

Jepsen's unit, Company C of the 120th Infantry Regiment, 30th Division, arrived in Scotland in May 1944. The unit reached the frontlines on July 6, when his unit debarked at Omaha Beach. He spent nine months at the front, fighting through France, Belgium, and Holland

and into Germany. Jepsen fulfilled a variety of duties during his service, beginning as a messenger and ending as a machine gunner.¹⁶

After the war in Europe ended, the Army selected Jepsen's unit to serve as part of the Japanese invasion force. However, his division returned to the United States for a furlough in August 1944 before heading to the Pacific theater. The war with Japan ended while he was en route to the United States, allowing Jepsen to spend the rest of his service stateside before his demobilization on November 23, 1945.¹⁷

Fresh from his military service, Jepsen took advantage of the GI Bill and completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in animal husbandry at Kansas State University in 1950 and 1962, respectively. He returned to duty as a reservist during the 1961 Berlin Crisis, when he served at Fort Riley, Kansas for one year.¹⁸ In 1963, Jepsen joined the faculty at Kansas State University. He earned his doctorate from North Carolina State University in 1974, and went on to teach with a farm-training program before becoming a county extension agent. After retiring in 1985, he served as a commissioner for Riley County, Kansas. He died in Manhattan, Kansas on August 26, 2010.

A Man of the Moment: The War Letters

Throughout his service, Jepsen wrote many letters home, providing snapshots of his life during the war. He wrote his letters in a matter-of-fact manner, devoid of introspection and from a narrow perspective of the war, that of a ground soldier. Military censorship constantly affected the content of his letters. As a result, his letters did not include much detail about the actual combat that he experienced. Also, Jepsen did not have time to process his wartime experience to

make sense of it during the war, which resulted in little introspection and interpretation in his letters.

The primary purposes of his letters were to let his mother know that he was safe and to request that more mail be sent. In all of his letters, he included lines such as, “It’s Sunday so I better write and let you know I am ok” or “Just a line to let you know I am still okay.”¹⁹ He looked forward to receiving mail and was disappointed when packages did not arrive. He expressed his desire to receive more letters often, writing, “I better answer your letter or maybe you’ll stop writing.”²⁰ The energy he put into ensuring that he received more letters is revealing about the importance and influence letters played in his daily life.

Jepsen acknowledged the pleasure he felt when receiving a package. He also identified the joy receiving packages brought to his comrades, “the boys,” as he referred to them. In fact, the only time Jepsen mentioned GIs within his letters was when he thanked his mother for a package. This omission of conversation involving his comrades is intriguing, as it suggests that he did not form tight bonds with them; however, the fact that he shared his packages with them suggests that he did develop stronger bonds. Perhaps, in an effort to keep his army life separate from his life back home, Jepsen chose not to discuss his relationships with his comrades in his letters.

Jepsen’s letters offer a glimpse into his life on the frontlines. Although he did not directly discuss combat, he gave clues to what the fighting entailed. For example, in a letter of August 24, 1944, he wrote, “This house we are in has a few holes in it caused by a bomb that hit about 20 feet from it.”²¹ Jepsen was able to provide his mother with details about his environment and the type of danger he was experiencing without describing specific details of the fighting. In another letter written six months later, Jepsen sent a very similar message, writing, “The situation hasn’t allowed

me to write very much.” In addition, Jepsen made another indirect reference, “I sure hope we never spend two weeks again like the last two. We really had it miserable but it is all over for now.”²² These are all examples of how Jepsen chose to communicate with his mother about combat without providing details or any analysis.

Notably missing from his letters are accounts of death and carnage. One reason for this omission may have been censorship. Jepsen identified the restrictions placed on him by censorship and conveyed his irritation about those limitations. He expressed this frustration when he wrote, “You want me to tell you more about what’s going on and I can’t because of censorship.”²³ Undoubtedly, Jepsen had more to say than the military permitted him to express in his letters. His willingness to write about his experience was apparent in a November 14, 1944 letter, in which he spent six pages summarizing the places he had been and the action he had witnessed since his arrival in England in May. In November, the military reduced censorship for events that took place before October, and as a result, Jepsen was able to write this letter.²⁴ However, despite this opportunity to recount what he had been through, he still wrote in a matter-of-fact manner and did not include interpretation or explanation of the events. He summarized his first several months in theater by writing:

I left South Hampton, England on July 3 and landed on Omaha beach July 6th. From there I went to a replacement camp about 4 miles from Trevieres [Trévières]. I stayed until July 13 and I was taken by truck to rear headquarters of the 30th division. I remained all night and the next day, which I believe was Sunday. I was assigned to d company 20 Inf. and was taken to the kitchen area of D co. I stayed there until Wed. July 18, when I went to the front lines.²⁵

In that same letter, he wrote, “...we marched in some direction mostly south and fought several small and local battles. We continued until Aug. 2 when we went for Tessy-sur-Vire. We fought a two-day battle for the town and then we had a two-day rest.” Here again, he gave only a

limited description of events. He included the fact that battle took place, but he offered no additional information or images of the events.

Later in the letter, he commented on the destruction caused by bombs. “The air corps did a wonderful job in helping us [...] [T]here were craters 15 ft. deep where the heavy bombs had landed. There were bulldozers right behind us filling the craters so the tanks could follow.” Here he wrote about the unique experiences of combat as if they were not extraordinary at all.

Jepsen directed his mother not to share even the mundane details he mentioned. He concluded his letter with, “P.S. remember no publication,” revealing that he was still cautious despite the leniency in the censorship. This letter suggests that when given the opportunity, Jepsen was willing to write about at least some aspects of his experience. However, even when not restricted by censorship, he chose not to include his personal reaction and only offered a straightforward description.

Over the course of the war, Jepsen became increasingly weary of conditions at the front. Tired of the fighting and the difficult living conditions, he wanted to return home. He also, since he knew he was not going home any time soon, began to emphasize his desire to remain in the rest area. He wrote, “We are resting again, and I hope we stay here for about three months.”²⁶ The longer Jepsen was at the front, the more his displeasure with the infantry became apparent. In a letter to his brother, he wrote, “Boy, if you ever get drafted, hit the Navy. For God’s sake don’t get the army, at least in the Navy you have a fairly dry place to sleep.”²⁷

The longer Jepsen remained at the front, the more alienated he felt from the citizens in the states. Frustrated by the comments made by public figures regarding the frontline soldier, Jepsen wrote his mother, “Boy was I mad when [Bing] Crosby said the boys on the front are clean shaven and have a high morale and some more about saluting. Everything he said was just

the opposite.” Jepsen also expressed his disappointment with comments made by a congressional representative, who said, “...there wasn’t 1 out of a hundred who wanted to go home. I think he meant 1 out of a hundred wanted to stay.” Jepsen continued, “The best [idea] I think is the idea of 200 days combat and a furlough home because that [is] what I’ve got.”²⁸ These comments suggest that by January 1945, Jepsen was ready to return home, and his desire to keep fighting was waning.

Once it became obvious that the war in Europe would soon end, Jepsen began to discuss the possibilities of his next assignment. He was not eager to fight in the Pacific; rather, he hoped to remain with the Army of Occupation. Jepsen was certain that he would not return home immediately after the war, He told his mother, “...I’ll consider myself lucky to stay here as the AO (Army of Occupation).”²⁹ He certainly wished to return home but did not see this as a realistic possibility and accepted his fate to remain abroad. He wrote, “It’s just like the saying ‘everybody can’t go home,’ and I am not planning on it.”

Throughout his letters, Jepsen was a man of the moment. He spoke about his experience in a matter-of-fact manner and did not offer much analysis. Even when presented with the opportunity to discuss his engagements with the enemy, he chose not to do so. Unable to include details about the fighting due to censorship, Jepsen devoted much of his letters to inquiring about his family’s life back in Kansas. During these letters, he also revealed his weariness of combat and his desire to return home.

The Influence of Time: The Memoir

Jepsen chose to document his experience further many years after the war in a personal memoir, incorporating many of the same occurrences found in his letters. However, he also

included elements of what scholars have referred to as the “internal” war, referring to a soldier’s private thoughts and emotions. The inclusion of this introspection makes the memory in the memoir significantly different from the one in his letters.³⁰

Jepsen reveals his internal war experience in his memoir with his discussion of what he termed “quirks of war,” a phrase he coined to explain the role that fate played in his survival. Throughout the memoir, he identified eight instances or quirks of war where he escaped death.³¹ For example, he wrote about the time he survived a butterfly bomb that killed the radioman alongside him.³² Jepsen recalled that shrapnel from the bomb struck the radioman in the head. “He must have ducked so fast that his unstrapped helmet didn’t come down as fast as his head and the bomb fragment hit him at that moment.”³³ Jepsen avoided death once again while jogging along a hedgerow, when he tripped and fell over a tree root at the exact moment a sniper’s bullet flew over his head.³⁴ Only after the war, once Jepsen had time to process, was he able to attach meaning to these events, which allowed him to make sense of why he survived.

Jepsen stressed his excitement for battle in his memoir, as he began the war eager to participate. His goal was to become a machine gunner, and he spent one-third of his time at the front trying to obtain this assignment. Jepsen desperately wanted to become a machine gunner because of the increased action this post entailed. Another way he sought out excitement was hunting for souvenirs, an activity that drew the attention of many soldiers due to the danger and excitement involved.³⁵

Although Jepsen enjoyed searching for souvenirs, his interest in risking injury dwindled as it became evident to the troops that the war would soon end. In late April of 1945, after experiencing a close call, he recalled, “I decided then and there that I had survived the war this

long and I would have nothing more to do with explosives or anything else that might be hazardous to my health.”³⁶

The memoir also raised the subject of morality. Jepsen recalled a time when an aggressive dog charged at him while he was exploring a house for souvenirs, which resulted in Jepsen shooting the dog. Many years after the incident, Jepsen had assigned a meaning, a justification for his actions towards the dog that day: “I think I was probably at the stage where if anything threatened my wellbeing I was going to shoot it.”³⁷ Although Jepsen did not directly state that he regretted his decision at the time, he did write that he “felt bad,” but that he also “...sure didn’t relish the possibility of a dog bite either.” His decision to include this encounter is revealing as it highlights the process that Jepsen went through after the war, working to construct his memory and accept his actions.

Jepsen also indirectly questioned the decency of his fellow comrades. He recalled seeing a soldier cut off a dead German’s finger in order to obtain a ring.³⁸ Unlike the discussion of his decision to kill the dog, Jepsen provided no rationale for the soldier’s decision to cut off the German’s finger, nor did he condemn the soldier for his action. However, including this specific event in his memoir strongly suggests that he was still struggling to make sense of what he had witnessed.

Jepsen offered judgment about the integrity of the German army as he recounted the Germans’ decision to use displaced persons to slow the Allied advance in Belgium. He agreed that such action would be effective, though he could not understand why the Germans also decided to strafe the displaced persons. “I don’t know the reason why the Germans fired on the civilians, but it seemed typical of what they would do.”³⁹ Jepsen’s judgment is yet another

example of how he was, in fact, still in the process of constructing his memory many years after the war.

Although he mentioned the presence of combat fatigue and shell shock among the troops, he offered little explanation of those situations. Instead, Jepsen merely included them in his recollection. For example, he recalled hearing a soldier crying in his foxhole one night. "... [I]t seem[ed] he was literally scared to death. He was incoherent, and really couldn't function."⁴⁰ However, Jepsen did not provide his opinion on the incident, but only stated that he saw the medic take the soldier to the aid station and then never saw him again.⁴¹ Jepsen did question the actions of soldiers who appeared to have shot themselves in order to leave the front. He stated, "I don't understand shooting oneself to leave the front."⁴² So, although Jepsen did not directly provide his judgment of all soldiers suffering from combat fatigue, he did separate those soldiers who purposely injured themselves from those who did not.

Frontline soldiers were familiar with "Bed Check Charlie," a name they gave to German aircraft that flew over the GIs at night. Jepsen wrote about one such raid when he heard a soldier praying to God asking that the Germans not see them or that they not drop a bomb if they did see them. However, once the anti-aircraft battery began firing at the planes, the aircraft flew back and dropped three flares. When this occurred, the soldier who had been praying exclaimed, "God Damn, they dropped three more." After the incident "no one would admit to the praying," and everyone had a laugh about the soldier's word choice."⁴³ The internal war that soldiers go through includes the personal struggles they confront, including the stress of battle. This example illustrates that Jepsen, along with many of his comrades, sometimes responded to such tense moments with laughter.

Jepsen reflected on his own internal struggle with combat fatigue in his memoir. He recalled one night late in the war when he found himself shaking in a foxhole as he watched and heard a bombardment taking place.⁴⁴ "...I began thinking the constant pressure, and excitement must be getting to me because it was some time later before I could quit shaking."⁴⁵ It was too dark for anyone to see him and it was at that moment that he "vowed that 'combat fatigue' was not going to get me."⁴⁶ Jepsen's personal fear of suffering from combat fatigue and receiving negative judgment from the other soldiers is evident in the memoir.

Jepsen's discussion of death is very sparse. Although he included some description of killing, it is not the primary focus of his memoir. The only death he personalized, by including details about the incident and his involvement, was that of his second gunner. Jepsen described that incident in detail. Jepsen and his second gunner had crossed the Rhine River after firing on the Germans. Once across the river, they dug slit trenches but chose to lay in the sun instead of resting in the hole. However, a German 88 soon fired on them.

I told my second gunner "We dug these holes we better get in them." I had no more than laid down in the hole when an 88 shell hit not five yards from where I was lying. The concussion was tremendous but the shrapnel all went over me. The second gunner had not gotten down into his hole and he was badly wounded. I called for the medic but none came. I knew where he was so I went the few yards to his hole and told him the second gunner was wounded. He didn't want to come out of his hole. He said the shells were falling. I told him "Hell, I'm out here now get over there and tend to my second gunner. He is hurt bad." In fact the second gunner was dead. I was quite upset as he seemed like he was an older brother to me. We had gotten along very well as a team.⁴⁷

The distance that Jepsen kept between himself and other GIs is evident throughout the memoir, his second gunner being the only exception. Just before the death of his second gunner, another soldier asked Jepsen why it was so difficult to get to know him, and Jepsen replied, "I hadn't thought about it."⁴⁸ Jepsen encountered that same soldier after the death of his second gunner, and he pointed to his dead friend and remarked to the soldier, "Now, you see what I was

talking about last week.”⁴⁹ Jepsen’s response to the soldier suggests that part of his mechanism for dealing with the death of fellow soldiers was to distance himself from them. The fact that Jepsen witnessed death significantly more often than he mentioned it in his memoir illustrates that he was censoring his public memory and choosing to omit certain events from his public recollection.

Increasingly during the 1990s, American society sought to preserve the stories of World War II veterans, especially the tales of sacrifice and honor, for future generations. The sponsors of these efforts were less interested in capturing the gruesome details than in emphasizing the patriotism and sense of duty that inspired the veterans. As a result, American society, including government personnel and public citizens, constructed a collective memory that emphasized these characteristics.

The memory Jepsen constructed in his memoir included introspection, explanation, and analysis missing in his letters. He wrote the letters from a narrow view and centered on his immediate circumstances, whereas his memoir had a broader perspective that reflected knowledge he had acquired after the war. This change resulted in recollections that not only included what he saw and did himself but which provided context and interpretation.

The effect of time on Jepsen’s construction of memory is evident when comparing his letters to his memoir. Time had allowed him to attach meaning to his experience that enabled him to accept what he had witnessed during the war. For example, when Jepsen recalled the day that he killed a dog while he was searching for souvenirs, instead of simply stating that he killed a dog, he included his justification for his action, that “at that point I would kill anything that threatened me.”⁵⁰

Overall, his remembrance in his memoir was primarily introspective. His memory centered on understanding why he survived the war, and his narrative emphasized the challenges he faced during combat. He summarized his experience in his post-log, a short summary of his wartime experience located at the end of his memoir: “Everyday life in war is an adventure, usually not pleasant, almost always uncomfortable.”⁵¹

A Growing Nostalgia: The Interview

After leading a successful professional career, raising a family, participating in veteran organizations, and attending a World War II reunion in France, Jepsen chose to produce one last record of his experience in an interview conducted in September 2003. In the interview, he concentrated on the war in broad terms and placed little emphasis on his individual actions. The meaning he gave to his memory emphasized the sense of pride he felt about his involvement in the conflict. The questions asked by the interviewer, the knowledge he had gained since his involvement in the war, and the audience he was addressing all influenced the content of his interview.

Jepsen formed his narrative while being prompted by questions from the interviewer, which influenced what he chose to discuss. When the interviewer asked, “What caused you the most fear?” Jepsen responded that “duds” caused him a great deal of fear because the artillery shells never exploded. They “make you stop and wonder.” He continued:

I can remember one night when we were being shelled by pretty big stuff one of them was a dud, they come in and wake you up and then there’s this thing that comes screaming in and [you] say when the hell is it gonna [sic] hit. It is unsettling to hear the artillery shell come “roaring” in and then never hear it explode.⁵²

When asked by the interviewer about the “great bombardment,” Jepsen recalled, “it [bombardment] isn’t pleasant I can tell you that” and stated that, “I am still mad about that.” Even after many years, the bombardment still evoked a strong emotional reaction.

Aside from these few snapshots of his personal experience, the majority of his interview provided a general description of the war. He discussed activities that were common among soldiers, such as digging foxholes and riding on trucks. He explained the role of foxholes, machine guns, and platoons. He emphasized the importance of the overhead, the cover of a foxhole, by describing a time when shrapnel struck and killed a soldier because his foxhole did not have one. “One of the mortars landed on top of the hedgerow and the shrapnel went down into the hedgerow where the medic was making coffee and killed him.”⁵³

While reconstructing his memory, he incorporated aspects of the war he learned after the completion of the war. He used the phrase “the perfect infantry attack,” an example of the influence of outside sources on the memory, which he recalled many years after the war. This phrase was not included in his initial account because the military community had not yet identified that particular action as the perfect infantry attack.

In his interview, Jepsen used his knowledge of the war to place his actions within a larger framework. He mostly summarized his involvement in the war in terms of his division. Throughout the interview, he often described what his division did and where he was in relation to that action. Thus, he broadened his recollection to include not only his actions, but also details about the war in general. For example, he stated that his division led the charge into Belgium, but that his regiment was not part of the initial entry. Instead, his regiment was in reserve behind the actual fighting units.

The memory Jepsen constructed in his interview centered on the war in general and consisted mostly of widely known facts. He referenced well-known engagements, such as the battle at Saint Lô. He emphasized the pride he felt towards his unit and his involvement in the war. This is illustrated by his final line of the interview, “It was a great experience, but I can live a long time before I do it again.” The fact that Jepsen described his experience as “great” is telling. Jepsen did not mention this sentiment in either his letters or his memoir. It was only after he had time to reflect and formulate his narrative that he could be proud of his contribution to the war effort.

Shaping Memory over Time

Comparing Jepsen’s remembrances shows that his memory evolved over the course of his life as the purpose of his narrative changed and events were included or excluded.⁵⁴ The alterations occurred as time passed and his perspective changed. His letters described how he survived the war, his memoir offered his understanding of why he survived, and his interview discussed his actual experience.

Although Jepsen constructed his memory at three separate times, there are a few consistencies. One is his discussion of the “bombardment” that he survived. The incident to which he referred occurred at Saint Lô, when the Army Air Force mistakenly bombed the Allied lines. His memory of the event remained identical in each of his recollections, and the anger that he felt towards the Army Air Force appears in each of his accounts. Even in his oral history conducted many years after the war, his anger was apparent. He stated that he was “still mad” about the mistake. This continuity is important because it reveals that although the collective memory overshadowed Jepsen’s personal experience, the latter was not absent.

Jepsen's memory changed as he omitted and retained certain incidents. Although he addressed similar events in all three recollections, he did not always emphasize the same aspects of each one. For example, he described entering France, Belgium, and Holland in all three accounts. However, in his letters, he emphasized the role of the Free French after Allied troops had entered the towns and the efficiency with which they had arrested the collaborators. In his memoir, he recalled the role of the Free French in the towns after the Allies had liberated them, but he offered more information about the reception the troops received from the citizens than he had in his letters. He recalled that the citizens were grateful and threw flowers, kisses, and even fruit, at the soldiers. The Belgians actually threw apples at the troops, causing the soldiers to cover their heads with their helmets as they rode through the town.⁵⁵

In the interview; however, he completely left out the actions of the Free French and instead focused on the celebration and gratitude that the troops received from the citizens. His perspective had changed, demonstrating that the context in which he constructed his remembrance at each stage was different. Identifying what Jepsen eliminated reveals the process of constructing and reconstructing his memory. Jepsen's decision to ignore the harsh actions of the Free French suggests that he chose to reflect the American tendency to concentrate on the positive elements of the war, sacrifice and honor, rather than the gruesome acts, such as killing.

In both his memoir and interview, Jepsen expressed a "macho" attitude of desiring to fight the Germans and being excited for battle when he first arrived in theater. Yet this element is completely absent in his letters. This omission is another example of how his memory evolved over time, as Winter and Halbwachs's theories suggest that it would.⁵⁶

The differences between Jepsen's immediate and later accounts of the war are also in line with Allison's findings. Jepsen's initial recollection was a matter-of-fact account and offered no

interpretation, while his later accounts were quite different. In his later remembrances, he incorporated pride into his memory, an element absent in his initial recollection. Throughout his memoir, Jepsen expressed his pride not only in his own actions but also in the achievements of his division. He was proud of his unit's ability to "keep its cool" under the stress of combat, of his division's capture of more prisoners than any other division as of September 23, 1944, and that his was the first American unit to enter Belgium and Holland.⁵⁷

There is also a difference in the narrative in each of the recollections. His memoir emphasized the challenges at the front, whereas his interview briefly mentioned his daily hardships but focused on troop movements. He concluded his memoir, "Everyday life in war is an adventure, usually not pleasant, almost always uncomfortable." He concluded the interview stating, "It was a great experience, but I can live a long time without doing it again." His final comments in his memoir emphasize the challenging conditions of combat, while his last statement in the interview highlighted the pride he felt in his involvement in the war. Although Jepsen made it clear that he was not eager to relive his war experience, he described it as "great," a sentiment not found in his earlier recollections.

In the interview, Jepsen's personal memory of the war nearly disappeared. He offered a common description of the war, describing foxholes, machine guns, and traveling. The interview supported the narrative adopted by the American collective memory that emphasizes the honor and sacrifice of the soldier.

The changes in Jepsen's vantage point over time contribute to the differences among his recollections. For example, when he wrote his letters, he did not know how the overall war was unfolding, what the outcome would be, or even whether he would survive. As a result, his letters dealt with his immediate situation. When he wrote his memoir, published over fifty years after

the event, those wartime uncertainties had been resolved, and thus he was able to offer an interpretation not available to him earlier. The influence of this acquired information is most evident in his inclusion of facts that he could not have known while he was in combat. For example, Jepsen referred to specific plans that Hitler had developed. In the interview, he devoted attention to troop movement and action that his division completed even if his unit did not participate in those actions.

His decision to frame his involvement in relation to the achievements of his division illustrates the impact that time had on his memory. He emphasized the positive outcome of the war and successful military actions, including the perfect infantry attack, and concluded the interview not by restating the horrors of the war but by asserting that it was a “great experience,” even though he did not wish to repeat it.

It is also possible that over time veterans subconsciously begin to intertwine their memory with the widely publicized collective memory. Winter suggests that there is not an individual memory and a collective memory, but that these memories are braided together and include elements of both.⁵⁸

Once the individuals within a society accept a collective memory, it is difficult for counter-memories to achieve recognition within that particular community. It is only when a community changes the questions it asks about a specific event that construction of a new collective memory is possible. For example, immediately following the war, American society was not interested in hearing from the soldiers themselves, but instead chose to remember the romanticized version produced during the conflict.

The United States government produced propaganda and developed marketing campaigns explaining the need for Americans to fight in the war abroad and sacrifice for the troops at home.

The Office of War Information produced films, posters, and cartoons and held war bond drives that framed the American soldier as a hero fighting for good in an evil battle and depicting the enemies as animal-like and the Allies as saviors. Government and military officials reassured citizens that the fighting soldiers willfully were doing their part to stop Hitler and Japan, and that morale was high among the troops because they were fighting for a just cause. Popular films such as Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series sought to "create a will to win by...showing clearly that we are fighting for the existence of our country and all our freedoms."⁵⁹ Additionally, the government did not allow publications of photographs or newsreels that depicted dead Americans during the early years of the war in an effort to maintain the public's support for the conflict. Because of the marketing campaigns directed towards swaying the attitudes of the citizens, the American public found themselves saturated with pro-war materials that argued that American participation was necessary and honorable. However, these messages largely left out the harsh realities of the war that all combatants experienced.

After the war, this idealized representation of the war remained the popular image of the conflict, as Americans wanted to forget about the sacrifices they made during the war and were eager to enjoy the new prosperity many of them attained because of the war. Although counter-memories did exist, they were unable to change the "good war" memory constructed during the war. Subgroups within society, such as returning soldiers and families who had lost loved ones during the conflict, expressed counter-memories. Additionally, some films and literature were produced after the war that included aspects of the harsh reality of war. However, society as a whole did not choose to embrace those stories and integrate them in the World War II narrative.⁶⁰

Even though the sentimentalized memory of the war did not reflect the veterans' experience, many soldiers chose not to challenge publicly the popular memory because they wanted to put the war behind them and enjoy their lives the same way that American society was anxious to forget about the struggles and sacrifices of the war. Furthermore, the collective memory did not incorporate the soldiers' narrative because many veterans chose not to offer their stories. Over the course of the war, soldiers had increasingly felt disconnected from the citizens that remained at home.⁶¹ As a result, many soldiers felt it was impossible to communicate with the home front about the realities of combat and therefore chose not to share their experiences, making them less likely to contribute their narrative to the collective memory.

Although many soldiers chose not to share their stories immediately following the war, some did. Some veterans, such as James Jones, shared their narratives through fiction; nevertheless, despite his efforts and the efforts of other soldier writers, the collective memory continued to leave out images of the suffering soldier, and focus remained on the heroism and achievements of the war. Another subgroup with a counter-memory were the families who lost loved ones, who, instead of only framing the war as necessary and the veterans as heroes, included the suffering and loss that the war caused in their memory.

Although society as a whole did not embrace the soldiers' narrative, many veterans did speak out and try to have their voices heard. Unfortunately, society was not yet ready to hear them in the immediate years after the war. It was not until the aftermath of the Vietnam War that American society increased its efforts to recognize and honor the veterans of World War II because that war was a testament of the American moral character, part of the American identity challenged by the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, even after society began to ask new questions about World War II and what the veterans' experience was, they still wanted to hear a certain

type of story, the story of the veteran hero. They allowed brief discussion of the challenges that the veterans faced, but required that the overall message be one of optimism, sacrifice, and heroism.

Beginning late in the twentieth century, society increasingly questioned the romanticized version of the war and sought out veteran remembrances, and scholars made an effort to include the reality of combat. Popular films such as *Saving Private Ryan* and the television mini-series *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific* sought to highlight the realities of battle and bring attention to the struggles that soldiers faced. However, the collective memory still centered on the honor and sacrifice of soldiers and the images found in the good war myth. Once again, the memory centered on the fallen and their heroism and not on the gruesome or unpleasant acts of war.

The limited narrative, one that focused on the sacrifice and honor of soldiers, made available to soldiers by their society explains why Jepsen's narrative in his interview differed from his earlier recollections. As Winter argues, it is unlikely that a society that adheres to a specific collective memory will recognize a counter-memory.⁶² Therefore, veterans who want to participate in projects aimed at perpetuating a particular collective memory may feel pressure to construct a memory that fits into that narrative. For Jepsen, the narratives available to him were restricted if he wanted to participate in a project aimed at honoring the soldiers of the war. As a result, Jepsen's oral history included very little of the horrific elements involved in war and instead emphasized the qualities found in the collective memory: pride in his division, pride in his country, and pride in his contribution to the war effort.

Jepsen's memory was fluid and fluctuated as his perspective changed; ultimately, the narrative in his interview reflected society's collective memory and very little of his unique

experience. This shift in Jepsen's memory was a result of the influence that collective memory had on Jepsen's reconstruction of his memory many years after the war.

As Allison, Winter, and Halbwachs state, it is only after the individual has had time to formulate his memory of an event by placing it within the context of his life that he is able to assign a meaning to it that includes personal analysis of the event.⁶³ This is what Jepsen did in his memoir and oral history. His letters provided little interpretation or meaning, but they did include details about his everyday life in a straightforward manner. One can see that in his memoir Jepsen was in the process of making sense of his experience. He was still placing his memory into an understandable narrative. He reflected on his personal experiences, such as combat exhaustion and witnessing the death of a friend. Then in his interview, Jepsen was still reconstructing his memory to fit into a narrative accepted by society. So, the narrative he constructed in his interview omitted the horrors of the war and the negative challenges, such as combat exhaustion, and instead focused on the themes accepted by American society. The influence of collective memory on Jepsen's personal memory resulted in an interview including little of his personal encounters amid a broad account of the war.

The purpose and intended audience of an interview significantly affect the recollection a veteran provides. In addition, the narrative that he follows reflects more of the collective memory accepted within the society producing the interview than his own personal experiences and thoughts. It is within the evolution of Jepsen's accounts that one can see the impact of time, audience, and perspective in regards to the content and detail in each of Jepsen's records: his letters, memoir, and interview. Furthermore, the society to which he belonged at the time that he constructed each of his remembrances influenced the interpretation that he provided.

Chapter 3 - Ralph Utermoehlen: A Scout

Ralph Utermoehlen provides a rare opportunity to examine combat memory over time through his letters written home during the war and his interview conducted many years after the war. His separate remembrances provide a chance to study the impact of the American collective memory of World War II on his individual memory. His initial recollection provided a narrow perspective of his experience and included little about his involvement in combat. In contrast, his later remembrance emphasized his combat-related experiences and the pride that he felt in his contributions to the war effort. The narrative reflected in his later remembrance echoed several of the themes present in the collective memory that he did not include in his earlier account.

Ralph E. Utermoehlen was born on August 22, 1924, in Pittsburg, Kansas. He graduated high school in 1942 and worked on his father's farm for a year, when he gave up his farm labor deferment. On August 18, 1944, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the Army inducted Utermoehlen into service. He attended basic training at Fort Hood for thirteen weeks before heading to the European theater. During his service, the Army classified Utermoehlen as a rifleman.

Utermoehlen shipped out on January 8, 1945, and arrived in Scotland on January 17, 1945. He joined the 69th Infantry Division on February 1 in Belgium, where he became part of the 271st Infantry Regiment, Company I. He served both on the frontlines and with the reserve units, securing towns after initial units moved through them. Utermoehlen worked as a scout and communications expert in the Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns. On March 1 shrapnel struck his legs, but he was not seriously injured. His unit assisted in breaking through the Siegfried line, taking the town of Liwzieg, and securing the Mulde River. Utermoehlen experienced both heavy and moderate fire and earned the Combat Infantry Badge. Within the military community, Utermoehlen's division is well known for its "link up" with the Russian

troops on the Elbe River on April 25, 1945. Although Utermoehlen was not among the troopers on the bridge, he took pride in his division's distinction and accolades.

Utermoehlen spent a little over three months in a wartime combat zone and then spent the rest of his service with the Army of Occupation. Once the war with Europe concluded, the Army sent the 69th Division home. However, Utermoehlen did not have enough points to return home, and the Army reassigned him to the 29th Division.⁶⁴ He remained with the 29th Division from June through October 19, 1945. Once the war in Europe was over, the military organized classes for soldiers to take during the occupation phase of their service, with soldiers with specific knowledge and skills teaching the classes. Utermoehlen's commanders selected him to teach agriculture because of his high school diploma and farming experience. After the class was over, Utermoehlen spent the rest of his time with the 29th Division as a jeep driver until the division returned to the United States. Once again, Utermoehlen did not have enough points to return home, and the Army reassigned him to the 78th Division stationed in Berlin, guarding and patrolling the border between the American and Russian sectors of occupation. However, not long after joining the division his commander transferred him to a position with the Red Cross, where he spent the rest of his service. Utermoehlen sailed from Europe on March 7, 1946, after one year and two months of foreign service. He arrived in the states nine days later and mustered out at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on March 21st.

Utermoehlen took advantage of the GI Bill in the immediate postwar years. He took a few general courses at Pittsburg Junior College prior to majoring in agriculture at Kansas State University. After graduating in 1949, he taught in the small town of McCune, Kansas. Utermoehlen became involved in veteran organizations in the 1970s and attended reunions in the United States and Germany. He bought a military jeep in 1970 from a college student and

restored it to its World War II state, which became a point of pride for Utermoehlen.

Utermoehlen died in Manhattan, Kansas on June 3, 2007.

War: The Letters

Over the course of his service, Utermoehlen wrote many letters home. The majority of his letters focused on his hometown of Pittsburg, Kansas and his family's farm. He did not discuss his fighting experience much, although he included details about his life on the frontlines. He wrote his letters in a matter-of-fact manner and did not discuss his internal war experience. During the war, Utermoehlen did not have time to process his experience nor place it within a narrative. Thus, the memory of the war in his wartime letters excludes his own interpretation.⁶⁵

He used his letters to let his family know that he was safe. He included lines such as, "I just finished chow this evening so I feel pretty good,"⁶⁶ and "nothing to write about except [that the] weather's not to[o] bad and I'm doing keen."⁶⁷ He was eager to receive letters and was very interested in the current events in Pittsburg. He requested that his parents "...write often [and] regular, so I can hear regular. [sic]"⁶⁸ Mail was an important part of his experience, and he wrote home after receiving several letters that made him feel "real good."⁶⁹ He encouraged his family to write v-mail and air mail, since they arrived faster than the regular mail. In addition to letters, he looked forward to receiving food packages, or "eats," as he referred to them, often requesting his family to send him candy and cookies.

The majority of Utermoehlen's letters focused on his family farm in Kansas. He wanted to be informed about "... all that happens there on the farm and everything else around those parts, [be]cause I'm very interested in such things back there."⁷⁰ He consistently inquired about the progress of the farm, what crops had come in, what new machinery his father had purchased,

and what steps his father was taking to prepare for the next season. He often included advice in his letters. For example, on February 19, 1945 he wrote, “You’d better have that corn out by now,”⁷¹ and on March 14 he wrote, “I hope you got all the oats out and plowing done by now [be]cause you should get out some early corn this spring. [sic]”⁷² Additionally, he repeatedly urged his parents to sell his Ford and use the money to purchase another tractor.⁷³

Utermoehlen was very social and wanted to know the news in Kansas. He asked his mother to send him important newspaper clippings.⁷⁴ Utermoehlen was very interested in the Pittsburg community and often inquired about his neighbors, “How’s everyone in [the] neighborhood coming along with their farming?”⁷⁵ “How’s Ed and the Holden’s coming along[?]”⁷⁶ Even after experiencing heavy fighting, Utermoehlen spent his entire March 14 letter to his grandmother asking about people back home. He was happy to hear that some soldiers were returning home, as he wrote, “[It is] Good that the Moore boys got to come home.”⁷⁷ He wanted to know what all his old friends were up to and often asked for their addresses: “Send on the addresses of all the guys that I know over here.”⁷⁸ In addition, he wanted his community to know about his activities. He instructed his mother, “Put pieces in [the] paper about what I say about myself and what I send home, [I]t informs lot[s] of people.”⁷⁹

Throughout his service, Utermoehlen was curious about which boys were returning and heading off to the war. In his March 21st letter, written after he had experienced intense combat, he asked, “Have any of the guys gone to service lately? Are the farmer’s stills staying on farms? [sic]”⁸⁰ In a different letter he wrote, “Has any of the farm kids gone to service yet[?] [sic] Are they still lucky[?]”⁸¹ An interesting line appears in a letter he wrote a month later to his mother: “Remember how they all worried about me being out of it [?], I think I made up for it though.”⁸² This line is very interesting because it suggests that Utermoehlen had experienced some social

pressures to give up his farm deferment. His interest in the other young farmers reveals that acquiring war experience was a strong issue on Utermoehlen's mind both before and during his service.

In addition to inquiring about life in Kansas, Utermoehlen also wrote about things in Germany. However, he rarely provided details about the fighting he experienced. Instead, he wrote about his noncombat activities, such as, "I just bathed, shaved, [and] washed [my] hair..."⁸³ Or "I'm drinking a coke [it] really tastes good. [I] had some beer too. [It] Really seems like back home."⁸⁴ Utermoehlen wrote about the adventures he experienced as well as the German countryside; however, he generally left out details about the combat he witnessed. For example, after observing how the German farmers worked, he wrote his parents, "I get a kick watching these slow farmers putter around working with oxen and slow horses. They don't strain themselves much. They have nice cows, chickens, and hogs though. They all live in small villages and farm land around between the towns which are real close together."⁸⁵ "They've got real cows here. They leave them in their barn all [the] time. The barn is right on [the] edge of [the] house, [they] pile the manure just outside [the] barn and house door."⁸⁶

Although Utermoehlen spent time clearing towns, he also spent time with the frontline troops as well. The few times in which he described a combat-related event he did so in a straightforward manner, not drawing attention to the situation but rather writing about it as if it were nothing out of the ordinary. "It's a nice day today so I imagine the planes will get under way again."⁸⁷ In another letter, he wrote about a plane crash he witnessed. "[L]otta planes flying around. [I] Saw one hit and explode in mid-air today, [the] men and pieces [from the planes] came floating downward."⁸⁸ Utermoehlen wrote about these incidents as if they were not unusual.

He also wrote about combat not by directly discussing it, but by offering clues in his letters. Utermoehlen left out details about the actual fighting and instead stated why he had not been able to write. In one letter, he explained, "... we were on the move so much, and they wouldn't let us [write] either..."⁸⁹ In another letter he wrote, "We haven't had time or opportunity to write much lately as we traveled so fast and much."⁹⁰ On March 17th he wrote, "[I'll] write now while I got some time, even though I haven't got much to say. [Y]ou know there's not a lot to write about over here."⁹¹ Sometimes he wrote that he experienced some "combat excitement:" "We ran the Jerries out of some houses and made ourselves at home. [We] Had ham, eggs, canned strawberries, cherries and even milked a cow for milk and cream. We had a regular picnic for a while."⁹² However, in his description, he did not offer any additional information about his encounter with the Germans. He also indirectly wrote about the action with comments such as, "It's nice here now. We've been taking it a little easy lately."⁹³ While he alluded to his combat involvement, he rarely offered details about what he did. He described his experience in a casual manner and offered little or no explanation of his actions. For example, he wrote, "Well I've got to fall out now to go clear out some towns, so I have to quit now and write more later."⁹⁴

Censorship, although not a prominent theme in his letters, was present. Apologizing for the delay between his letters, he wrote, "You'll have to excuse the lapse between my early letter, as we moved so much and they wouldn't always let us write, same holds true now. [sic]"⁹⁵ Once the war with Germany ended he wrote, "Don't have to have material censored now."⁹⁶

Anticipating the end of the war, Utermoehlen began to contemplate what the next assignment would be. By June 1945, he was still speculating about where he would end up. He expressed his desire to remain with the Army of Occupation as opposed to serving in the Pacific

theater. Utermoehlen's service with the 69th Division ended in June 1945 when the Army sent the division home and he remained in Germany as part of the Army of Occupation, serving with the 29th Division and then the 78th Division before returning stateside in March 1946. During his stint in the Army of Occupation, he wrote several letters home. Although he enjoyed his service with the 29th Division, by the time he joined the 78th Division he had become weary of being overseas and wanted to return to the states.

Utermoehlen's letters offer a narrow perspective of the war. He described his encounters in a straightforward manner and offered minimal interpretation of his experiences. Although he mentioned a few incidents that he experienced on the frontlines, the majority of his letters were concerned with his family and events back in Kansas.

Reconstructing Memory: The Interview

After leading a successful career, raising a family, and participating in various veteran organizations, in September 2003 Utermoehlen decided to leave one last record of his war experience. Although produced many years after his letters, much of the sentiment found in the interview matches that in the letters. However, much of the content is different, concentrating on his frontline experience as opposed to his family in Kansas. The narrative provided in the interview offered an exciting portrayal of his war adventures and included some introspection. The recollections he expressed emphasized the pride he felt as a result of his contributions to the war effort.

In his interview, Utermoehlen included colorful accounts of his adventures. He recalled that one night his unit took position just inside the Siegfried line before they were to take Oberreifferscheid, a small town in Germany. "Some of us were in pill boxes, some of us were in

what we called pine tree dugouts we made,... but we stayed there about a day [and] then we moved out.”⁹⁷

In addition, Utermoehlen recalled specific details about his service. He reminisced about patrols and the fact that even years after the war he could still hear the sound of the ice. “[I can] still hear the sound of that ice and snow as you walk on it getting pretty close to where your enemy is... and you think they can hear you for miles around. But luckily, I made it and made it back. That little [bit of] information was of importance I guess, what we found out. You never know when you’re down there on the frontline.”⁹⁸

He also chose to recall funny memories of his experience during the war. Utermoehlen recalled one night when his unit set out to make pancakes:

As we were in the German mountain area.... to supplement our chow, army chow, which was K and C rations; some of us came to be a little what you’d call scavengers. We’d send somebody out and find some bacon in a basement, and maybe find some ingredients that would make pancakes.⁹⁹

Utermoehlen recalled that this particular day the kitchen was not set up properly, as the troops had found a wine cellar the previous night and celebrated too well. Still, his unit decided they were going to have pancakes. So, the GIs went out to find the ingredients, bringing them back to Utermoehlen to mix and prepare; however, there was a mishap with the flour, as the more that Utermoehlen stirred the mix, the harder it became. Utermoehlen explained:

German flour has a very coarse texture, and this guy, with the wine, had mistaken plaster for what you call German flour. I tried to mix it up in that old sink, and it just got harder and harder and we dumped it out in the yard. The next morning, it was just like a rock there. So we didn’t have anything that night, but it was a fun experience. You know, another one of those things, you have to find humor somewhere when you are in the infantry, I guess.

In much the same way, Utermoehlen recalled one night in which he and his first scout, Mike Music, were out on night patrol in no man’s land at about 2 o’clock in the morning.

We were going down each side of this cobble stone road and we heard something coming, and it turns[ed] out it [was] a German, oh probably an 18 or 20 year old guy on a bicycle. So, in good infantry style we deploy in each side you know and halted him. Talk about one scared German that guy was, because he didn't think there was anybody within 100 miles of there.

Although Utermoehlen did not emphasize the occurrence of death or the gore of battle, he did discuss combat engagements. For example, he recalled that one of his first duties as a member of the 69th Division was assisting the engineers with clearing roads that the Germans blocked with trees. His job was to remove the trees from the road to allow for passage of vehicles. However, he recalled that this assignment was depressing. "It was, you know, kind of sad then. You begin to see bodies and animals as stuff [is] plowed up from the snow [from] of the [Battle of the] Bulge fighting, and you realize that this is serious business."¹⁰⁰

In his interview, Utermoehlen also reflected on his battle wounds. During an engagement with the Germans, shrapnel struck his legs as he was "... jumping into a shell crater."¹⁰¹ Of significance, is that while describing his experience the focus changed from his wound to the dead soldier that was in the shell crater when he jumped into it. He recalled, "[The] sad thing about the shell crater was [that] another American GI had lost all the lower extremities of his body from a direct hit."¹⁰² This recollection, although initially about his wound, became more about his memory of seeing a dead soldier than about his injury. Utermoehlen's decision to include the dead soldier in his narrative is significant because he rarely referred to death in his remembrance. Although he did choose to include his experience with death in this instance, he did so in a straightforward manner that did not include details about the gore of the incident or his emotional reaction to jumping into the crater and seeing the dead soldier.

Utermoehlen also included instances of survival. One night after digging in after a battle, he heard groaning coming from the field around him. He recollected:

As we were digging in, we could hear some moaning or groaning out in front of us. I was sent back to the basement CP, of this old house, to tell them we heard some moaning out there and [we] didn't know whether it was American or German. So, [the] lieutenant and his runner went out to look. The poor lieutenant tripped the landmine, and he was being carried back then by his runner.

In reflection, Utermoehlen recalled that the moans belonged to an American GI who luckily was able to receive medical assistance from another soldier. Years later, during a reunion, Utermoehlen reunited with the lieutenant injured by the landmine, and they reminisced together about that night. Although this story began about the injured soldier in the field, Utermoehlen concluded his thoughts by stating that the lieutenant survived and that the injured soldier was also rescued.

Utermoehlen recalled some of his postwar experiences while he was traveling through Europe, on his way back to the United States. While he was in Belgium, awaiting further instructions on his departure, he guarded American prisoners destined for a court-martial. Utermoehlen recalled the uneasiness with which he performed this task:

... You're locked up in the jail, with them, with a carbine. You can let them out to go to the latrine or bathroom and then back and forth. In the back of your mind you're thinking, 'wow don't you know, as a guard, you're responsible for them.' Luckily that tour of duty, the three hours or whatever it was on duty, was uneventful, locked up in the cell block with them.

During his next tour guarding the prisoners, he recalled thinking that he hoped none of the prisoners would try to escape. "We had to take them [the prisoners] all around the camp area for exercise, and you're walking behind them with the carbine. It was another one of those things, I made it this far, let's not have anything happen now. [sic]"¹⁰³

In the interview, Utermoehlen revealed his continual process of reconstructing his memory and attaching meaning to his actions. He recalled an incident where he and the first scout, Mike Music, chose not to follow SS troops who had fled from a town that his unit was

soon going to occupy, after displaced people informed them about the SS troops' presence in the town earlier that day.

We were way out in front of everybody else....and we knew, unfortunately, from the past experiences [with] of our lieutenant, if he knew... what [the displaced people] they told us, [we] might be [in] a little rougher [situation] than we need[ed]....These guys said there had been German SS troops in that town until about noon... So we, unfortunately, had a little conference between ourselves and gave cigarettes to those Polish displaced people and told them don't tell anybody anymore about that. That particular night the shelling went on something pitiful, you know, really cleaning that SS troop out, they didn't want to give up. But I don't know whether that was just smart business or whether we were cowards, but anyway Mike and I realized we were where we were supposed to be....That was our mission, I guess, and not to go try to chase those guys down because they were taken care of during the night. In fact, I do not know that I have ever seen such an artillery barrage that was put out that night.

By offering a justification for his actions, Utermoehlen revealed the struggle he endured regarding his decision not to chase after the SS troops, reflecting his ongoing struggle to attach meaning to his wartime experience.

As the interview progressed, Utermoehlen also discussed his service with the Army of Occupation. In his accounts, he recalled that the Army needed activities to occupy the soldiers' time now that the fighting did not occupy it. The Army organized classes for the soldiers to take, and Utermoehlen's commanders selected him to teach a course in agriculture. He recalled, "With my high school diploma, FFA, and 4-H work, I became the instructor, [teaching] 2 hours, 5 days a week for 6 weeks."¹⁰⁴ Utermoehlen enjoyed working in the school and referred to his assignment as "fine duty."¹⁰⁵

The pride Utermoehlen felt in his contributions to the war is evident in this interview. He reflected positively on his military experience as a whole, especially because he felt that his assignments during his service with the Army of Occupation were "fine duty," meaning that he was lucky in his assignments of teaching, driving a jeep, and working at the Red Cross. However, even with his positive perspective, he still acknowledged that he had witnessed combat

as well. He concluded the interview stating, “There are different experiences, not everyone had the same one, but I just finagled or was lucky enough to get a few little breaks at the end, and I feel I deserved them.”¹⁰⁶

Although the interview was primarily about his individual experience, his narrative reflected several aspects of the American collective memory of the war. He emphasized the significant pride he felt about his part in the war. He provided examples of his combat experience in an effort to validate his status as a veteran of the war, not only to fellow veterans but also to the members of the American society.

The Evolution of Memory

In summary, the narrative Utermoehlen constructed of his war experience shifted over time as his perspective changed from new life experiences. The immediate memory found in his letters focused on his life back in Kansas and largely ignored his combat experience. He described his experience in a clear, straightforward manner, largely omitting any interpretation. In his later accounts, he provided a more colorful description that focused on his combat experience and emphasized his contributions to the war. He shifted from a mundane, matter-of-fact way of describing his experience to a more introspective style.

Despite constructing his memory of the war at two separate stages in his life, there are several similarities among his recollections. For example, in both accounts, he described the destruction of the German towns that he witnessed. Additionally, both of Utermoehlen’s accounts reflect societal pressures. In the interview, Utermoehlen recalled giving up his farm deferment after one year: “[Y]ou see everyone else going and you say, ‘I better give up that deferment,’ so I did,”¹⁰⁷ thus falling in line with societal norms and pressures of that day.

Furthermore, Utermoehlen showed a picture of himself in uniform taken at the PX in Camp Hood to illustrate his martial status. He stated, “I really look like a soldier; I wanted to show the folks that I was for real.”¹⁰⁸

Although Utermoehlen indicated that he deserved the breaks given to him towards the end of his service, he still provided what he considered proof of earning those breaks. Additionally, he described the dangers he experienced in the war as evidence to support the validity of his service, “We had, three injuries and three casualties out of our squad.” Similarly, he recalled several instances when his life was in danger. “I remember, as we were being shot going down on the Fur River crossing. [You] heard those bullets go by you, zing, you know, zing and you begin to feel like a rabbit. The third guy behind from my spot, old Smitty, I saw him fall, you know, just took a direct shell from the sniper.”¹⁰⁹

The main difference between Utermoehlen’s letters and his interview is the presence of introspection. In the interview, he concentrated on his military experience and emphasized his contributions to the war. He provided additional detail about his daily experiences during the war, while never contradicting his personal letters.

Utermoehlen’s memories transformed over time to include details about his experience omitted from his earlier recollections. In the interview, he included a story about a decision he and his fellow scout, Mike, made not to chase after the SS troops. They rationalized that since artillery was going to hit their position anyway, not following them was the better decision. Years after the war, he offered an explanation for their decision, indicating that it was a part of his experience that he was still in the process of understanding.

Conversely, one incident mentioned in the letters that was not present in the interview was the air accident Utermoehlen witnessed where two planes crashed into each other

Utermoehlen watched as men and pieces from the planes fell to the ground. Although Utermoehlen described other instances of death, this account held such significance for him that he mentioned it in two separate letters, although he later omitted it from his interview narrative.

Moreover, Utermoehlen's letters offered very little detail about his combat involvement. He simply mentioned moving through towns and causing their destruction, but no more. Rather, he focused on life at home, what the state of the farm was and whether or not his parents had sold his Ford or not. He also inquired about neighbors and the location of friends fighting in the war so that he could write to them.

In contrast, the interview emphasized the validity of his participation in the war. He stated that his time in combat "was short, but he experienced a lot."¹¹⁰ Utermoehlen's need to justify his contribution to the war may be at least partially a result of the societal pressure he felt to fight in the war. Utermoehlen felt these societal pressures both during the war and later in his life when society increasingly recognized World War II veterans for their sacrifice and service. He felt pressure to fit his memory into the glorified narrative accepted by his society.

In addition, the majority of Utermoehlen's interview were reminisces about his experience on the frontlines, including specifics of his personal experience and details about the fighting. Although he did not emphasize the gore that he witnessed, he did include more detail about the death and carnage he saw than he had in his letters. For example, he mentioned his friend Smitty's injury and gave an account of a soldier who lost the lower half of his body. However, Utermoehlen merely mentioned these incidents and did not make them the focus of the memory. Utermoehlen's decision to avoid framing the horror and gore of combat as his primary memory may be in response to the urge to stay within the collective memory.

In his interview, he had adequate time to process his experiences and place meaning on them. He provided more description of his experiences, including some interpretation of the events in which he participated. Additionally, in the interview, Utermoehlen focused on his life at the front, recalling both combat and non-combat related experience, such as baking pancakes in a German house or clearing a German town.

Although Utermoehlen's memory consisted mainly of his individual experiences during the war, aspects of the collective memory are still present in his recollection. In his concluding thoughts of the interview, he emphasized the importance of keeping America free while recognizing the sacrifices of the men who lost their lives during the war, each a prominent element of the American collective memory.

In the interview, Larry Parsons asked Utermoehlen if there was anything he would like to tell his grandchildren. "Well, the fact that America and its free way of life... [are] really worth preserving. But, it takes some sacrifice by some people; and unfortunately, it winds up being a [the] youth, every time, of the society that pays the price. [sic]"¹¹¹ He continued, "I have been back to the cemeteries in Europe where a couple of these squad guys are buried. You think, here it is fifty, sixty years nearly and they have not got[ten] to enjoy anything that all of us had during that time. [sic] They gave the sacrifice back then, it's sobering."¹¹²

Utermoehlen went on, "I thank the people for deciding that these stories should be put somewhere for future generations. For some reason, for about fifty some years, we participants did not talk about it until our grandkids or somebody began to ask us a little something."¹¹³ These final remarks made by Utermoehlen reflect the message found in the American collective memory of the Second World War and support its claims about the necessity of the war.

Chapter 4 - Arthur Zschoche: A Navigator

Arthur Zschoche provides a unique opportunity to study veteran memory due to his wartime diary and his oral testimony conducted many years after the war. The memory presented in both of these accounts reveals that Zschoche's memory changed over time. However, his memories do not contradict each other, though they do emphasize different themes. Zschoche's diary is a brief record of his survival, while his interview provides details about his adventures and includes insight into his thought process during the war. In addition, his interview follows the narrative found in the collective memory, which emphasizes veteran pride in taking part in the historical event that was the Second World War, while at the same time focusing only briefly on the challenges and trauma of the experience. The influences of time and collective memory on Zschoche's memory best explain the differences between his accounts.

Arthur Zschoche was born on October 10, 1915 in Atchison, Kansas. He graduated from High School in 1933 and began working at Dolan Mercantile Company as a salesman. Zschoche volunteered for the Army in February 1941. The Army inducted him on the 28th and stationed him at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he worked as a bookkeeper for the officer's club. In 1942, he volunteered for the Army Air Force and became an air cadet. After he graduated from navigator school on September 11, 1943, the Army commissioned him as a second lieutenant. He departed the United States on January 29, 1944 as part of the 760th Squadron, 460th Bomb Group, 55th Wing, 15th Air Force, and arrived in Italy on February 5. While stationed in Spinazzola, Italy he flew twelve missions as the navigator on a B-24.

During a mission over Yugoslavia on April 21, 1944, his plane lost a fuel line after receiving fire, requiring his crew to bailout. In the landing he suffered an injury to his head and ankle, but partisans quickly rescued him. After spending thirty-nine days in Yugoslavia, he and

his crew returned to Italy on May 30, 1944. Once he was back in Allied lines, he went to a hospital in Bari for further recovery. He returned to flying after spending about a month in the hospital, but only flew one more mission before his assignment was changed. He spent the remainder of his time in Italy waking airmen up for their flights in the morning. He returned to the United States as a first lieutenant. He concluded his military service on September 25, 1944. After the war, Zschoche returned to Kansas where he later married and raised a family before he died in Leavenworth on June 28, 1999.

In the Moment: The Diary

Arthur Zschoche's diary offers an immediate account of his experience. The diary is in a matter-of-fact manner, is sparse in detail, and offers little interpretation. It chronicles his journey across Yugoslavia with his crewmembers as they attempted to reunite with the 15th Air Force in Italy. Each daily entry records the details of his survival: his sleeping and eating patterns, the status of his health, and his hopes for an evacuation.¹¹⁴

Zschoche wrote his diary to track his survival. Each entry listed the details of that day.

His first entry recorded his parachute jump:

Gas _____ - Out at 13,000
Chute opened okay
Very quiet going down
The ground coming up very fast
Landing on a couple of rocks
Head Bleeding
Leg Hurts – Cigarette – Prayer
Two Partisan hires – carrying me like a child to a horse.¹¹⁵

In this entry, Zschoche quickly and concisely describes the facts of his experience and the details of his injuries.

His first entry recorded his bailout and included more description than any other event during his time in Yugoslavia. He reflected on his parachute jump and stated that his parachute opened, his drift to the ground was “very quiet,” and the ground seemed to come very quickly.¹¹⁶ He landed on rocks, which resulted in head and leg injuries. After he landed, he had a cigarette and prayed, before partisans arrived and carried him to a horse. That night he reunited with members of his crew, and the partisans bandaged his head and legs wounds. He was able to eat but could not sleep. Sleeping conditions were poor, there were bugs, it was hot, and there was an unpleasant foot odor.¹¹⁷

Zschoche’s diary is a record of his survival that documents his health in regards to the sleep he achieved, the food he ate, and the state of his injuries. He was able to eat each day; however, there was more food some days than others. Most often, his meals included coffee in the morning and eggs, bread, and milk or some variation for lunch, with soup and meat for dinner. Although some days all he had for lunch was milk.¹¹⁸ He often indicated that he also enjoyed cigarettes throughout the day.

Sleep was a challenge. The first couple of nights, he did not sleep at all as he suffered from bugs, pain, and the heat. He never seemed to have a good night’s rest, though he slept better some nights than others. For example, he wrote “sleep a little better” on April 23 versus “no sleep-Bugs-Heat-Stinky Feet” on April 21st.¹¹⁹ His quality of sleep improved over time as his injuries also improved, although bugs and crowded sleeping arrangements remained a problem.

He expressed that he suffered from pain a few separate times. First, on the night of his jump, he wrote, “leg hurt.” On the following day, he once again noted that his leg hurt as well as “pain-bugs-etc” to describe how his rest went that night.¹²⁰ Then again, on April 29th, he wrote, “hurts like hell” and he followed this on May 3 with “bones hurting – tired-sore.”¹²¹

Zschoche suffered from the injuries to his head and ankle. He documented each time that the partisans cleaned his injuries. The Italian doctor with the partisans treated the injuries. Although he rarely included comments on how he was feeling, he did describe the pain he was in a few times. For example, he wrote, “hurts like hell” in his entry for April 29th, after the doctor dressed his head wound.¹²² On the day that his cast was removed, he wrote, “Doc took off bandage” and “head just filthy.”¹²³ Zschoche also recorded the physical conditions of his crewmembers, indicating the medical attention they received, such as “Roach on litter” or “Greene- bruised back.”¹²⁴ These are examples of the concise descriptions that he provided in the diary. He just recorded facts and did not add explanation or provide insight into the events mentioned.

Zschoche’s early diary entries are a record of his survival, providing the details of his basic needs: sleeping, eating, and health status. However, his entries evolved to include activities in which he participated as well as observations that he made and luxury food items he purchased. Also, after he began to feel a little better, Zschoche included brief descriptions of how he and his crewmembers spent their time when they were not sleeping or traveling. On most days, he enjoyed a cigarette, as he emphasized on April 26th when he wrote, “cigs-cigs-cigs.”¹²⁵ He also read his bible, played cards, and sang songs with his comrades. He mentioned that over the course of his journey he had contact with girls who “pressed his pants”¹²⁶ and that he “received shaves, [and his] feet [were] washed.”¹²⁷ Beginning May 16th, he was able to purchase items. On the 18th he purchased eggs, and the next day he bought “nuts, milk, eggs.”¹²⁸ In addition to food he bought items such as crutches and a pencil.¹²⁹

Zschoche kept a detailed account of when and where they traveled and often included the time they spent on the road. He stated their mode of transportation, which was typically

horseback, though sometimes they moved by train and by foot. The terrain was mostly mountainous and made for challenging travel. For example, he wrote, “On horse – off at 0100” on April 23rd along with a description of the terrain: “rough roads – mts –” and “bad rocky trails.”¹³⁰ On May 7th, he noted, “On the train at 0945 til 0600.”¹³¹ A week later, he wrote, “beautiful country for a change.”¹³² He recorded on May 19th that he had spent four weeks in Yugoslavia.¹³³

Zschoche also indicated when the partisans were involved in skirmishes. Although he did not provide much detail, on April 25th, he simply wrote that the partisans enjoyed the “spoils of war”¹³⁴ and the next day that the “Partisans [were] in from battle 0800-0100pm [and] they won.”¹³⁵ Yet he did not elaborate at all. He also recorded the sounds of combat that he heard. On May 3rd he wrote, “red flare, machine gun & rifle shots all night, on & on, break at 1230-.”¹³⁶ Three days later, he mentioned “cannon & machine guns.”¹³⁷ Zschoche presented no clue about how close he was to these occurrences.

Zschoche did not mention the partisans very often: however, he did indirectly question their decency. He wrote about the actions of one of the partisans, a fellow named Metra. On April 24th he saw, “Metra kicking [a] horse in [the] privates” and on April 26th he saw Metra “beating horses again.”¹³⁸ Clearly, this bothered Zschoche, yet he still related each incident in a matter-of-fact manner and did not offer any analysis or context for his description.

Over the course of his thirty-nine days with the partisans, Zschoche began to grow weary of his situation. On May 12th, he wrote, “the longest day yet.”¹³⁹ His frustration was reflected in his entry the next day, when he wrote, “pissed-off no-horses,” referring to the delay in continuing on their travels due to lack of horses.¹⁴⁰ Later that day he wrote, “Really want to leave.”¹⁴¹ The rate of travel was wearing on his patience, and he wanted a more rapid pace. Although in general

he did not include introspection in his diary, there were a few exceptions. On May 8th, the situation appeared to be wearing on him as he wrote, “hopping [sic], [and] holding on for life it seems.”¹⁴²

He also recorded the rumors he heard about their possible departure. On May 5th he wrote, “Rumors of Me, Danner & Greene leaving-.”¹⁴³ Later in the month he recorded that all the men were talking “...of going home.”¹⁴⁴ On the 11th he wrote, “we have hopes of leaving,”¹⁴⁵ but sadly, there were delays with the evacuation. On May 25th he wrote, “no plane,” but the following day he recorded “plane circles,” and then two days later he noted that a plane made a practice run for the rescue of the crewmembers: “Dry run on plane.”¹⁴⁶ However, Zschoche did not record the actual rescue in his diary. In fact, the diary ends after his lunch on May 29, 1944, and his evacuation was the next day.

Conditions apparently improved over the course of Zschoche’s time in Yugoslavia, with him buying certain food items during his last days in Yugoslavia and less frequently mentioning the state of his injuries in his daily entries. Zschoche’s early entries were a record of his survival, focusing on his basic needs of sleep and food, and care of his injuries, and then his entries evolved to include activities in which he participated and items that he was able to purchase.

Remembrance: The Interview

Many years after the war, Zschoche chose to produce one last record of his World War II experience in the form of an interview with his daughter, Professor Sue Zschoche. He constructed a memory different from the one in his diary. He provided a broad yet vivid account of his military service that included snapshots of his personal experiences. He discussed the adventures he had and demonstrated pride in his involvement in the war.¹⁴⁷ The overall tone of

the interview was optimistic, concentrating more on the positive outcomes of his war experience than on the challenges he endured.

He recalled combat by relating the missions that he flew but focused on his experience in Yugoslavia after his crew bailed out of their plane. Although he stated that he went on twelve or thirteen missions altogether, he only discussed four: his first two, his bailout, and his last mission. He described his first mission as "... a lot of fun. We didn't see any enemy planes at all. They threw some bombs down on the countryside over there. I guess that was northern Yugoslavia too come to think about it, the first one. And then we landed. And then the next one was all business from there on."¹⁴⁸ He recalled that while he was on his second mission an enemy fighter plane "came in out of the sun and he got the [our] lead plane,"¹⁴⁹ resulting in the mission commander being shot in the head.

Zschoche recalled the hesitation he felt heading up on each mission. He would wake up each morning and hope for a storm, "Oh it was dark out and you'd look up and [think] 'Please God, let it storm.'" He continued, "You would! Hell, we're not kidding about [wishing for a storm]. Nobody liked to go out and get shot at. But you'd look up and [it was] clear as a baby's butt up there on top, then you'd hear the engines where they were testing the engines for the run the next day. Well, next thing you know, someone would be beating you up [you would be in the air receiving fire]."¹⁵⁰

Zschoche also described his experience in a B-24 while he flew over enemy positions, "They'd shoot that flak up at us and _____ would go up and explodes up there."¹⁵¹ "It sounds(ed) like someone beating on [the plane] with a ball bat."¹⁵² Planes would return with holes in them from flak. He explained, "Well see, all you had was a--pieces of aluminum holding the ship together. And a steel frame of course."¹⁵³ In fact, Zschoche did not feel very protected

in the plane. He explained, "...Those little windows up there in the navigator's hole like this – one here and one here...you weren't any more protected down here than up here, but you kind of get away from that—that window you know, like it was really gonna do something."¹⁵⁴

The mission that Zschoche reflected on the most was his bailout over Yugoslavia. He recalled, they were "over in one of the big cities over in Czechoslovakia,"¹⁵⁵ when "...the flak knocked out the gas lines of our plane. We couldn't make it back over the Adriatic Sea back to Italy. So we had to abandon the airplane."¹⁵⁶ Zschoche recounted his parachute jump, "You take in everything. You look down—there's water down there, 'Oh shit! I don't want to land in that lake.' Well, you forget you're gonna drift as you—but you knew you were gonna fall in—right in that lake and drown. You knew that."¹⁵⁷

Zschoche also expressed a common fear airmen held about parachuting, the fear that a fighter pilot would spot them and shoot them as they parachuted to the ground.¹⁵⁸ This fear presented itself on the day of Zschoche's bailout. After he jumped from the plane, he noticed a fighter pilot, but it was an American plane. He recalled, "...[The pilot] saw that I was American and he just zoomed around me like this.... I probably waved so hard at him I damn near shook my left arm off."¹⁵⁹

Shortly after landing, partisans rescued Zschoche. He recalled, "...[S]ome little man—just a little—shorter than I was, he carried me down the mountains that day. Down to their camp or whatever it was...I'll never forget that—he was [a] little fellow."¹⁶⁰ Along with the partisans were an Italian nurse and doctor who cared for Zschoche's injuries. Although they did not speak English, he was able to communicate with the nurse in German.

The night of the jump, four or five of the men were reunited despite jumping at different times and landing in different locations, and within four days the entire crew was united under

the care of the partisans. Four of the men broke their ankles on landing, including Zschoche, who also hit his head on a large rock. Zschoche provided a great deal of description in his interview. He recalled how painful it was to ride up and down the "...very narrow trails up and down the little mountain hills."¹⁶¹ He reflected on the pain he suffered because of his injury. "One of the worst things that happened—most painful things that nobody ever knows about until you're there yourself. Here I was with a broken ankle and they had little mountain horses—or whatever they were, with the twigs and branches hitting his ankle as they "rode through very narrow trails up and down the little mountain hills."¹⁶²

His injuries were quite serious, but he was fortunate that the partisans had a doctor with them who was able to clean and bandage his wounds. Zschoche recalled that the doctor, "...did my ankle up real good. He knew what he was doing."¹⁶³ His head wound became infected, and the doctor and nurse were able to clean out the infection. The doctor "...used some of those forceps that go out instead of coming in, they go out like that anyway. One of my buddies, the bombardier who happened to be there at the time, he said the infection—the pus just *whoosh!* flew out of my head like that. I'm not looking for sympathy, I--I made it."¹⁶⁴

During his time with the partisans, they had to evade some Germans who were in the area. One night the partisans woke up Zschoche and his crewmembers and told them that "... 'the Germans were coming' and we got on the horses. This was in the middle of the night and [we] rode away. [The partisans] knew a different way [to go to avoid the Germans]. That [night] was the only time I saw a dead German... I saw one lying on the ground [and] that was the only time."¹⁶⁵

In addition to recovering from his injuries, avoiding Germans, and waiting for an evacuation, Zschoche also had to deal with bed bugs. He recalled a night when the partisans

...put me in kind of a shed or something and there...that's when I was hurt and they had some straw there. Well I got up the next morning I was so covered with bed bug bites it looked like I was diseased or something. So they fixed that. Do you know how they fixed it? They took the bed outside and put a fire to it. [Laughing] That took care of it. You know, clean up the bed bugs.¹⁶⁶

He and his crewmembers lived with the partisans for six weeks before they made it back to Italy. The day of his rescue from Yugoslavia did not receive much attention in his interview. The evacuation took place at night. He recalled that they were in a field on "higher ground," and there was a fire signaling the pilot where to land. Zschoche recalled, "All of us were ready to go, you know. Let's go home."¹⁶⁷ "We knew it was coming. They had told us and naturally we were glad when it finally went in the air."¹⁶⁸

Death and gore are not prevalent aspects of Zschoche's interview. He did mention a few incidents of death, but he did not include details about those instances. Part of this is because as an airman Zschoche did not witness hand-to-hand combat, and although he was shot at in his plane, he did not see as many deaths as some of the combat soldiers on the ground. He mentioned that the first plane in the group landing in Spinazzola, Italy crashed, killing all the crewmembers. However, that is all he says about that incident. Zschoche added that after the incident his superior assigned him the task of checking the clothes and remains of some of the men killed in the crash. He recalled, "It wasn't that big of a deal. Hell, they didn't have that much stuff to send home."¹⁶⁹

He also recalled two planes crashing because of poor leadership by a major. He recalled one day this major was leading a mission and the

son-of-a-gun didn't know what he was doing. And he felt that they were—he was in the lead plane—he had two planes with him here on his—but he didn't think the rest of them were assembling fast enough. So he dropped his wheels to give everybody an indication of where he was. Well, I don't know if you know anything about it or not, but when they drop those big wheels and they're big, it slows the plane down. They lost two planes just like that [smacking of hands].¹⁷⁰

This expressed Zschoche's negative feelings towards some of the officers and their leadership ability.

He also described the actions of the sergeant whom they had to force to jump out of the plane over Yugoslavia.

“Okay it's your-- Sarge, it's your turn. Go on – jump.” We were in the bomb bay this time which was nothing but a little walk way like this from the back of the plane to the front of the plane. But it was adequate. You could walk on it. It always had a rope on there too you know, to support yourself. One of the cute things about it was the old sarge, he didn't want to jump, but he finally had to. And he grabbed that rope and “Okay sarge it's your turn” well he didn't want to go [Laughter] [we] beat on his hands. [Laughter] Honest to truth we did!¹⁷¹

Zschoche recalled that he later overheard this sergeant in Italy describing his jump to the men.¹⁷²

“The funny thing about it was when we came back to camp to Spinazzola, Italy.... the sarge, our boy was telling how he figured out how to jump out of an airplane. [Laughter] We didn't say anything. Hell, let him live with it, you know. We just laughed and laughed.”¹⁷³ Zschoche held a negative tone towards this superior, as he did not perform in a manner that Zschoche respected.

Zschoche mentioned the actions of good superiors and officers as well. He expressed the great respect he had for Colonel Harrison. He described the colonel as “a good CO”¹⁷⁴ because there “wasn't any foolishness with him ...” and “he went on missions...”¹⁷⁵ Zschoche revealed that he respected Colonel Harrison because of his leadership by example.

After returning to Italy, Zschoche went to the hospital in Bari to recover. After about a month in the hospital, he returned to flying long enough to go on one final mission. After he stopped flying on missions, he spent the rest of his time in Italy waking up airmen before their missions each morning. He recalled, “We didn't mind it at all. Hell, there was nothing to that.”¹⁷⁶ Before he returned to the states, his superior offered him the opportunity to remain in Italy and become a lead navigator and a captain, but Zschoche turned down the offer. “I said I

was going home.”¹⁷⁷ Once he returned to the states, Zschoche served as an instructor before the Army discharged him in September of 1944.

Zschoche summarized his wartime experience, “...all-in-all, Charlie, I wouldn’t trade the experience for anything in the world.”¹⁷⁸ He explained, “When we came back from overseas, I got to go home and forget all of this.” Zschoche’s decision to summarize his experience in a positive tone aligns with the collective memory narrative, which largely ignores the harsh experiences of combat and instead emphasizes soldiers’ sacrifice. Zschoche continued, “...they sent me to Miami Beach, Florida for another week’s recreational leave; you know to settle down from that overseas shit.” Zschoche attaches value to the fact that he was able to rest and recover from his experience once he returned to the states. He survived the war, built a life for himself after the war, and was able to “forget” the challenges he faced during the war. When he participated in the interview he knew that although he had fought in the war he was fortunate because he survived and was able to build a life for himself, an opportunity many others did not have. This understanding perhaps shaped his comments that he “...wouldn’t trade the experience for anything,” reflecting both the influence of his changing perspective over time and collective memory on his narrative.

Evolving Memory

When comparing Zschoche’s remembrances, it becomes apparent that his memory evolved over the course of his life, since the purpose of his narrative changed, and various events were included or excluded.¹⁷⁹ His diary described his survival, while his interview provided a descriptive account of his adventures and emphasized the pride he felt in his involvement in the war. This alteration occurred as time passed and his perspective changed. Zschoche reflected

differently in his wartime diary than in his interview conducted many years later. The diary included details that were important to his immediate experience. He focused on daily activities and physical needs, revealing how he survived. However, in his interview, he offered a much more descriptive account focused on the role he played in the war.

In both accounts, the narrative included several of the same events. But, in contrast to his diary, in the interview Zschoche added more color and description to his narrative. For example, both accounts described his parachute jump into Yugoslavia; however, the narrative in his interview was much more exciting and included more detail as well as some of Zschoche's internal thoughts and reactions.

In the interview, Zschoche began his description of the jump with a story about how the men had to “bang” on a sergeant's hands because he would not jump out of the plane.¹⁸⁰ He went on to describe his personal experience jumping out of the plane, including his fear of landing in water and his actions to identify himself to an American fighter pilot passing nearby, as related above.¹⁸¹ In the diary, Zschoche omitted the events in the plane prior to the jump and listed what happened in a concise manner. He described his parachute jump as “very quiet going down” and the ground “coming up very fast.”¹⁸² He wrote that he landed on a couple of rocks and that his head began bleeding. He recorded that he had a cigarette and prayed before the partisans rescued him. He noted that two partisans arrived and one carried him “like a child to a horse.”¹⁸³ That night he recorded in his diary that it was difficult to sleep due to the heat, bugs, and smell of feet.¹⁸⁴

Both accounts are similar; however, the interview provided more detail about the moments before the jump. In his oral account, Zschoche provided more detail about where he landed and how he landed. However, he did not mention that he smoked a cigarette and prayed

before the partisans rescued him. He placed emphasis on the partisan who carried him down the mountain as a “little fellow” in his interview, which he did not note in his diary. Whereas the diary omitted his fear and the struggle with the sergeant and just wrote the basic facts of the event indicating the status of his survival, Zschoche’s memory of the event changed over time to incorporate more excitement and description.

The second event that Zschoche described in both his accounts was his overall experience in Yugoslavia. He recalled his journey in similar but also different ways. His diary provided more details about his daily experience, such as what he ate and how he slept, whereas the interview added details and introspection. External factors also influenced the content of the interview, such as the questions with which the interviewer guided him as well as his own ideas of what he thought that the interviewer might or might not want to hear. Zschoche’s diary is made up of minute details and not much more, and these details did not make it into his interview. He may have thought that the small details would be of no interest to the interviewer.

Zschoche indicated that he experienced pain in both accounts. Although he does not emphasize it in his diary, he did indicate moments of pain. In the interview, Zschoche recalled that the “worst thing that happened”¹⁸⁵ was traveling on a small horse on a mountain, with the underbrush all along the trail hitting his ankle, before the partisans bandaged his injuries. He also recalled in both accounts the infection that his head wound developed. In his interview, he recounted how his head wound became infected and when the bandage was changed, the pus flew out.¹⁸⁶

Zschoche’s narrative changed in his interview by omitting various incidents. For example, he documented his sleeping and eating patterns in his diary but did not mention them in the interview. In addition, in the interview he did not include his observations of the partisans

and their treatment of the horses. The diary provided the details that were important to Zschoche during his wartime experience, whereas his interview focused on the experiences that had a long-term impact on his postwar life.

Some events discussed in each recollection are similar; however, Zschoche was able to expand on those events in his interview. Zschoche documented action in the diary but provided no additional context or meaning to his descriptions. For example, on May 3, 1944, he noted “German sentry” and “machine gun & rifle shots” and on May 6th wrote “cannon and machine guns,” but did not provide context. However, in his interview he did provide analysis for these incidents. For example, in his interview he described the partisans waking him up in the middle of the night to evade the Germans, which added context to his May 3rd notes. Conversely, the information listed in his diary added additional details about events discussed in the interview. For example, in his interview, he did not mention that he heard “cannon and machine guns.”

As Zschoche’s perspective changed, so did his memory of the war. The recollection in his diary had a more negative tone than his interview. His diary indicated that there were moments that he had had enough and wanted to return home. On May 8 he wrote, “holding on for life it seems.”¹⁸⁷ However, his interview did not address his weariness and longing for his experience to end. Zschoche’s decision not to emphasize this aspect of his experience may have been a result of his self-censorship. Perhaps he chose not to discuss these thoughts in his interview because he did not think others would be interested in his discouraging personal thoughts. Additionally, emphasis on personal struggles and soldier and airmen weariness are not part of the collective memory of the war.

Furthermore, the effect of time and distance between the actual event and his later reflections may have affected how he described it. That is, understanding the circumstances that

surrounded the construction of each recollection provide insight into the differences that exist between the remembrances. Zschoche wrote his diary while he was engaged in the experience; which as Halbwachs argues, the individual constructs memories close to the time of the event differently than those constructed long after the event, since the individual does not have time to process events as they occur.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, the initial memory an individual constructs is devoid of interpretation, whereas his remembrances constructed long after the event incorporate meaning and interpretation into his memory. A person needs time to reflect and assign a meaning to events. Until the individual has this opportunity, he records only what he experienced that was important to him at the time. Zschoche participated in his oral history long after the war and therefore had had much time to reflect. Also, his perspective had changed in coordination with his more recent life experiences, influencing the meaning he attached to his long ago past. The process of constructing a personal memory versus a collective memory is, as Winter argues, a continuous process with each memory influencing the other.¹⁸⁹ However, when read together, Zschoche's two sources provide a more complete understanding of his experience.

Zschoche survived his wartime experiences and had time for the influences of society to shape how he interpreted his involvement in the war. What resulted was vastly different from his diary, which he penned when he did not have available to him the evolving collective memory. Zschoche did not know how the war would turn out when he wrote his diary, nor was he concerned with how his diary and his actions would be viewed by others. He was surviving a challenging experience and merely keeping a record of his time.

Further, pride in his involvement in the war was strongly expressed in his interview whereas it was not addressed in his diary. What is evident here are society's influences on Zschoche's memory of his wartime experiences as well as the impact of the accepted collective

memory of the veterans' role of World War II. The result of these factors was that in his interview, Zschoche expressed pride in his participation in the war.

There is not much room in the collective memory for an opposing memory or for veterans who choose to offer a counter-narrative not emphasizing patriotism, bravery, and humility. The narrative in Zschoche's interview reflects the collective memory of the World War II veterans' experience, as it existed in the late twentieth century, as he acknowledged that the war was challenging but also expressed his pride in his achievements and contribution.

This can reflect the influences from society and the accepted collective memory of the veterans' role on World War II on Zschoche's memory. Zschoche experienced a great deal of life after his time in Yugoslavia, and he survived the conflict. Accordingly, he had the influences of society to shape how he interpreted his involvement in the war, influences that were not present when he wrote the diary.

The processes of constructing personal memories and the collective memory are not separate. As Winter argues, it is a continuous construction, with both types of memory construction influencing the other.¹⁹⁰ The memories veterans construct about their war experience is influenced by the communities around them. American society has depicted the World War II veteran as a humble hero who fought in a battle of good versus evil and won the war with his bravery. Zschoche's narrative in the interview followed this collective narrative. He acknowledged that he did experience pain, but he did not want recognition for that. Thus, even though World War II was a challenging experience for him, Zschoche was proud to be a part of it. His personal narrative in the interview aligned with the accepted collective memory of the World War II veteran. This does not mean the narrative that he provided was not genuine or his

own; rather it is the duty of the reader to understand the relationship between the individual and the collective memory.

Although Zschoche's interview of the war was primarily about his individual actions, the collective memory is present in the meaning he gave to his personal experiences. Societal cues influenced the positive tone of the interview and the pride he attached to his involvement in the war. His diary expressed his weariness, whereas his later account completely omitted this and instead emphasized his pride. This indicates that over time he had distanced himself from the challenges he faced and had chosen to emphasize the positive aspects of the war and his survival as representative of his experience.

Many of the differences found in the remembrances are a result of the changes in vantage point that Zschoche had at the time that he constructed each recollection. For example, when he wrote his diary, he did not know how the overall war was unfolding, what the outcome would be, or even if he would survive. As a result, his diary dealt with his immediate situation. When he participated in his interview he was able to reflect on his time in World War II with a much broader perspective.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion: Reconstructing Memory

Richard Jepsen, Ralph Utermoehlen, and Arthur Zschoche had very different war experiences. Jepsen and Utermoehlen served with the infantry in the European theater. Zschoche enlisted in the Army prior to receiving his commission as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Force and served as a navigator while stationed in Italy. Jepsen spent nine months in combat, first as a messenger and then as a machine gunner, whereas Utermoehlen served as a scout. Jepsen returned to the United States after the war ended, serving for only a few months stateside before he was discharged in November 1945. This contrasts with Utermoehlen, who after three months of combat joined the Army of Occupation for the remainder of his military service, which concluded in March 1946. Alternatively, Zschoche spent six months overseas as a navigator on B-25s stationed in Spinazzola, Italy. He spent thirty-nine days in Yugoslavia after he and his crew bailed out of their plane. He later returned to the United States and performed as a flight instructor before the Army discharged him in September 1944.

Although the duration of their exposure to combat varied, as did the dates in which they were in theater, all three veterans spent time in the frontlines. Each veteran recorded his experience at separate times throughout his life. While Jepsen and Utermoehlen wrote letters home during their service, Zschoche chose to keep a diary while he was in Yugoslavia. Each of the veterans also participated in an interview about their World War II experience later in their lives. In addition to these accounts, Jepsen wrote a memoir in 1996.

The circumstances surrounding each veteran's entrance into the military were different. Jepsen was eager to experience combat, while Utermoehlen chose to give up his farm deferment in response to the social pressures he felt. Zschoche volunteered for the Army Air Force after enlisting in the Army before the United States was officially in the war. However, many years

later all three veterans centered their memory of the war on the pride they felt about their involvement.

Even though these veterans had very different experiences, the evolution of their memories was similar. Each of them reflected in his immediate accounts in similar ways, recording his experience in a straightforward manner with very little emphasis on his internal war, as outlined in Fred Allison's study.¹⁹¹ Their initial accounts focused more on their noncombat experience, as with Jepsen and Utermoehlen, who wrote mostly about their families back home rather than their combat situation. Zschoche's diary account was also straight to the point and did not offer additional details. However, their later recollections provided more detail and introspection. Their immediate recollections were accounts of their survival with little analysis and were more negative in tone than their later remembrances, which centered on why they survived and offered more interpretation.

In addition, the evolution in the veterans' memories reflects Jay Winter and Maurice Halbwachs's theory on the process of memory construction.¹⁹² Winter argues that memory is fluid and therefore is always changing as details are both added and omitted to the narrative. The veterans in this study all underwent a similar transformation in their narratives. In Jepsen's memoir, an added element of excitement for combat was included, whereas it was missing in the initial account. Conversely, the details surrounding the actions of the Free French were in his letters and memoir but excluded from his interview. Similarly, Utermoehlen included more specific detail about his actual combat experience in his later recollection than in his initial account. In his later account, he also omitted the concern he felt for his family and his obsession with events taking place in Kansas that he had emphasized in his letters. Zschoche's narrative also changed over time. In his later recollection he added specific details describing the moments

before his parachute jump that were not included in his diary account. In addition, in his interview he omitted details regarding the actions of the partisans towards the horses that he had included in his earlier account.

In their later accounts, the veterans omitted details surrounding their negative combat incidents included in their earlier accounts. Although death was included in later remembrances, it never proved to be the center of the memory. These changes illustrate a pattern reflecting the evolution of memories constructed by the veterans.

The meaning that the veterans attached to their oral testimony was similar. Furthermore, the narrative in each of their interviews aligned with the American collective memory and stood in contrast to their earlier recollections in tone. The American collective memory of World War II itself emphasizes the soldier's sacrifice and honor and largely ignores the challenges of combat that the soldier had to overcome. Each of the veterans' interviews adheres to this tendency to reflect on the war in a positive tone. Jepsen recalled, "It was a great experience, but I can live a long time before I do it again."¹⁹³ Utermoehlen stated, "There are different experiences. Not everyone had the same one, but I just finagled or was lucky enough to get a few little breaks at the end and I feel I deserved them."¹⁹⁴ Zschoche concluded "... all-in-all...I wouldn't trade the experience for anything in the world," and "I'm proud that I was there really."¹⁹⁵ Within each of these quotations are the values outlined in the collective memory: honor and sacrifice. The war came to mean something more positive and optimistic than the memories constructed during the war. The interviews were about the veterans understanding their survival through a narrative with meaning that reflected their self-image and the collective memory.

Although the three veterans experienced very different war encounters, there still were a few consistencies among their recollections. For example, Jepsen and Utermoehlen both wrote

about similar topics in their letters, wanting to share with their families that they were safe and still desiring to play a part in their families' lives back home. They both offered advice and asked for information about the events taking place back home. They also both enjoyed receiving packages and requested that their families write often. In addition, Jepsen and Zschoche recalled incidents of both good and bad officer performance.

A theme present in all three initial recollections but omitted from later recollections is weariness. Jepsen, Utermoehlen, and Zschoche expressed their waning desire to remain at the front in their wartime accounts, but they chose to forget this aspect of their experience in their later remembrances. All three stated in their initial accounts a desire to return home, and none of them mentioned this desire in their interviews; perhaps they omitted it because it seemed obvious to them. However, Jepsen and Zschoche recorded their growing impatience with their situation more than Utermoehlen. Perhaps this is a result of Utermoehlen's limited experience at the front as opposed to Jepsen and Zschoche's extended periods on the frontlines.¹⁹⁶

Jepsen and Utermoehlen followed similar memory construction in their wartime accounts. They focused on life back home and wrote to let their families know that they were safe. Neither soldier was reflective, nor did they offer explanations or interpretations of their experiences, but instead wrote in a matter-of-fact manner. Although the content of his diary was different from what was discussed in Jepsen and Utermoehlen's letters, Zschoche also recorded his experience by briefly stating facts and excluding introspection.

Largely missing from each of the veteran's memory is the gruesome aspect of his experience. However, in Jepsen's memoir, he did mention death sporadically, though he did not provide his reflections or reactions directly. Similarly, Zschoche perhaps was not involved in any hand-to-hand combat while in Yugoslavia or during his service as a navigator, but it is likely that

he witnessed death or its aftermath, yet he never commented on death from combat. He did reference the loss of life that took place when a few planes crashed during a flight by accident, attributing those deaths to the poor judgment of a lieutenant. None of the oral testimonies discussed death or the act of killing at length. Although death plays a large part in the combat experience, the veterans' inclusion of it was minimal in their accounts. The veterans included more discussion of death in their later recollections, but it did not dominate the accounts.

As one would expect, the three veterans had very distinct individual experiences during the war, and as a result, the details of their narratives are different. Perhaps one of the most notable differences is Utermoehlen's inclusion of his comrades in his letters as opposed to Jepsen's omission of comrades in his. Nevertheless, the process by which they constructed their memory through the letters is similar.

Jepsen and Utermoehlen discussed similar themes and styles in their remembrances. For example, in their interviews, Utermoehlen chose to focus primarily on his experience at the frontlines, while Jepsen concentrated on the generalities of his combat experience, essentially leaving out his individual experience. However, they both avoided lengthy discussion about the gore and death that they witnessed and instead kept their narratives positive in tone. They laughed as they recalled many of their stories and concluded their narratives by emphasizing their pride in their participation in the war.

Conversely, the letters are different in their emphasis on censorship. Jepsen, who experienced continual combat for longer than Utermoehlen, stressed the influence and importance of censorship in his letters. In fact, in a letter that Jepsen wrote under reduced censorship regulations, he still stressed the need for his mother to keep the information he shared

with her strictly between the two of them. Utermoehlen, in contrast, encouraged his parents to include lines from his letters in the newspaper to let everyone know how and what he was doing.

Jepsen's account differed from Utermoehlen and Zschoche's in that the latter two did not rely on information gained after the war to take over part of the individual memory. However, aspects of the collective memory are still present in their memories.

The changing perspective of the veteran can be attributed, in part, to the evolution of his memory. The vantage point from which the veterans recalled their experiences shifted as they became further removed from the war over time. The more time that passes between a veteran and his combat experience, the more his memory incorporates not only details of his actual personal encounters but also introspection about his participation. Additionally, he will insert information about the war that he acquired over the course of his life into his recollection.

During the war, immersed in their environment, soldiers did not know how the war would end or even if they would survive. Additionally, the emotional connection an individual feels during an event fades over time, causing the pleasant or negative feelings or both to become less potent in the individual's mind. In particular, this applies to the marginal role that negative experiences played in the three veterans' later remembrances. As their memory faded over time, the intensity they attached to those memories diminished, and as a result, they did not express those negative feelings as strongly as they had in their earlier accounts.

The three veterans wrote their initial accounts from a narrow perspective of the war and avoided interpretation. However, later in life when participating in the interviews, they recalled their experiences from a much broader perspective of the war after all of the life experiences they had since the end of the conflict in 1945. Winter argues that as an individual has new experiences, he compares old experiences to them, causing a change in perspective that alters the

way he remembers past experiences. This suggests that over the course of the veterans' lives after their service, they had new experiences, good and bad, that directly affected how they reflected on their war experience, including the meaning they attached to it. The continuously evolving meaning that the veterans' in this study attached to their memory supports this theory. The narratives in their interviews had a more positive tone than their earlier accounts, underscoring their pride in their contributions. The later accounts centered on the veterans' duty, their pride in their involvement, and the sacrifice of others, often leaving out the strong negative feelings they once possessed towards the war.

Furthermore, research suggests that as individuals get older, they are more inclined to speak about their past to fulfill a desire to leave a legacy and more likely to participate in interviews later in life. Nigel Hunt and Ian Robbins depict this in an important essay, "Telling Stories of the War: Aging Veterans Coping with Their Memories through Narrative."¹⁹⁷ Hunt and Robbins examined the effects of age on memory by interviewing twenty-five United Kingdom World War II veterans in 1993 and 1996. This study suggests, that the veterans imagined community of veterans as well as the narrative frameworks available to him influences the combat memory that he constructs. Changes in perspective affect how the veterans recalled their experiences at different times in their lives. However, perhaps the most influential factor regarding what narrative a veteran chooses is that of the collective memory.

The narrative perpetuated in the American collective memory of World War II defines the conflict in moral terms, as a fight of good versus evil, and ignores the horrors of war, instead emphasizing the heroic sacrifices of the soldiers. The American collective memory of World War II that exists today was first constructed during the war in an effort to gain support for the conflict. The narrative has not changed much over the years, partly because it supports

America's image of itself. The Vietnam War strengthened the good war myth. The American national identity faced a crisis with the unpopularity of the war, which American society considered a "bad" war that did not reflect the ideal image of the United States. As Winter argues, image plays a key role in the narrative that a community or individual gives to an event.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, during the Vietnam War, when there was disunity between the American image of itself and what the war appeared to reflect about the United States, a crisis of identity occurred. This resulted in a resurgence in the pride the nation held in its achievements in World War II, a war that American society widely viewed as necessary and portrayed the United States as a savior. In 1998, Tom Brokaw brought attention to this image once again with his widely acclaimed *The Greatest Generation*, which further perpetuated the myth of the World War II generation as a uniquely honorable and sacrificial generation.¹⁹⁹

The communities to which veterans belong influence the memories they construct about their war experiences. American culture has shaped the World War II veteran as a humble hero who fought in a battle of good versus evil, which he won by his bravery. In this study, each of the three narratives the veterans provided in his oral testimony followed the collective memory narrative. The veterans focused on the outcome of the war and their contributions rather than the struggles of the war and the uncertainty that marked their earlier accounts.

Jepsen's memory shifted drastically from a focus on his personal experiences in his letters to a concentration on general experiences of the war in his interview. However, the narrative in his interview concluded with his pride in his involvement in the war. Although Utermoehlen and Zschoche included their personal experiences in their interview more extensively than Jepsen, they too emphasized their pride, following the narrative found in the collective memory. Even though Jepsen and Zschoche had very different experiences with

veteran organizations after the war, both of these veterans were influenced by the collective memory and their later recollection of the war evolved to reflect themes present in the collective memory narrative that were not included in their earlier remembrances. After the war, Jepsen became heavily involved with veteran organizations and took on a leadership role, while Zschoche chose not to participate in veteran organizations or to attend reunions. However, despite these drastic differences in their postwar experiences both veterans followed a similar pattern in the evolution of their memories.

However, the collective memory does not appear to have influenced each of the veterans to the same extent. Zschoche's later remembrance does not reflect elements of the collective memory as strongly as Jepsen and Utermoehlen's remembrances. In fact, Zschoche has components of a counter-memory in his interview. He discussed aspects of the war experience that he believed the public did not know. He mentioned incidents that "you don't hear about." He gave an example of an officer who caused several planes to crash when he did not properly lead the planes to where they were to assemble. He stated that the people at home never learned the truth about the aviators who died in that crash, "I'm sure the people at home heard they were missing in action, you know, shot down in action."²⁰⁰

Perhaps this is because Zschoche's interview was a private event undertaken by his daughter without the intention of ever being released to the public, unlike the oral history project in which Jepsen and Utermoehlen participated, which was conducted with the expressed intent to share with the community and which was designed to "honor our nation's war veterans." Despite these differences in the interviews, the overall narrative found in all three interviews coincides with the narrative found in the collective memory. Given the circumstances of the three

interviews, the influence of the collective memory was likely to influence Jepsen and Utermoehlen more than Zschoche.

American society has selected the World War II generation in general and the veterans of the war in particular to symbolize all that is good in the United States, representing the ideals of justice, freedom, and sacrifice. Society bestowing this image on the veterans has instilled a sense of pride in them and encouraged them to participate in projects that perpetuate this memory.

Increasingly during the 1990s, American society sought to preserve the stories of World War II veterans, especially the tales of sacrifice and honor, to be passed on to future generations. The sponsors of these efforts were less interested in capturing the gruesome details of war than in emphasizing the patriotism and sense of duty that inspired the veterans. As a result, American society constructed a collective memory that embodied these very characteristics.

However, gradually society began to question the romanticized version of the war and made efforts to add to the narrative by providing a more realistic depiction of the war. Popular films such as *Saving Private Ryan* and the television mini-series *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific* sought to highlight the realities of battle and bring attention to the struggles soldiers endured. Although they included the gore and death of combat, the narrative still incorporated the collective memory and centered on the honor and sacrifice of soldiers and the images found in the “good war” myth.

Historians have and continue to rebut the American World War II myth that makes up the collective memory to include the harsh realities of World War II fighting. However, American society as a whole has continued to embrace the “good war” myth of the war and largely ignore the harsh conditions veterans faced during the war. Winter argues that although counter-memories exist within a community, it is difficult for them to be accepted. It is only once society

begins to ask new questions that the construction of a new collective memory is possible. For example, immediately following the war, American society was not interested in hearing from the soldiers themselves but instead chose to remember the romanticized version of the war produced during the conflict. As a result, many soldiers chose not to share their memories.

This suggests that veterans have limited narratives from which to choose if they participate in any veteran projects. For example, the veterans' oral history project in which Jepsen and Utermoehlen participated had the stated purpose of honoring the sacrifices of the veterans. With such an overt mission statement, it is less likely that veterans with different narratives or experiences would participate. Additionally, veterans who participate are more likely, consciously or subconsciously, to guide their narrative to fit the popular narrative of the war, thus providing a version of their experience that the audience was seeking and willing to accept.

The limited number of narratives available to soldiers from their society offers a possible explanation for Jepsen's narrative in his interview differing from his earlier recollections. As Winter argues, it is unlikely for a society to accept a counter-memory when it adheres to a specific collective memory. Therefore, veterans who want to participate in projects aimed at perpetuating a particular collective memory may feel pressure to construct a memory that fits into that narrative. For Jepsen, the narratives available to him were restricted if he wanted to participate in a project aimed at honoring the soldiers of the war. As a result, Jepsen's oral history included very little of the horrific elements of the war but instead emphasized the qualities found in the collective memory: pride in the division and pride in his contribution to the war effort.

Several factors influenced the reconstruction of memory that the veterans in this study expressed, although the most influential factor was collective memory. The restrictions placed on veterans through collective memory effected their remembrances, and as a result, the “version” of the war that society was willing to accept affected how scholars should interpret the abundance of World War II veterans’ oral testimonies that now exist. As Winter and Halbwachs argue, memory and image are connected. One of the most prominent events that affected the memory constructed of World War II was the Vietnam War. The negative images of the United States presented during the later war required a comparison, an alternative to what the real America was not, which the supposedly isolated case of Vietnam had come to represent. However, historians such as John Bodnar argue that, with the passage of time, even the negative memory of Vietnam is beginning to change and reflect more of the traditional heroic myth of the soldier experience.²⁰¹

Although the narratives followed in Jepsen, Utermoehlen, and Zschoche’s later remembrances align with the accepted collective memory of the World War II, that does not diminish the genuine and original narrative that each veteran provided. In these cases, it is the duty of the historian to understand the relationship between the individual and the collective memory.

This study suggests that there are patterns that World War II veterans follow in their process of memory construction and the type of narrative they choose to follow in their later recollections. The narratives veterans construct vary in detail based on the unique experiences of each veteran; however, despite these differences the narratives they give to their experience will be similar to one another because of the influence of collective memory and societal cues on memory over time.

All three veterans had different service experiences and participated in veteran organizations after the war to different degrees. Jepsen and Utermoehlen became active with veteran organizations after the war, and both attended reunions in Europe. Jepsen was an active contributor to the creation of the Veteran's Oral History Project, and Utermoehlen participated proudly in many veterans' parades with his World War II jeep. Although he served with the infantry, he purchased the jeep after the war in the 1970s, and it became a point of pride for him. Unlike Jepsen and Utermoehlen, Zschoche chose not to become an active member of veteran organizations, though he still maintained membership in both the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion. He stated in his interview that he never once attended a meeting with either organization, yet he belonged to both and sent in his dues every year.

The veterans in this study created both written and oral records, providing for the rare opportunity to study the evolution of veteran memory. Each of these case studies provides an example of the process of memory construction over time as outlined by Winter and Halbwachs. The veterans in this study followed the pattern outlined by Allison, with their immediate accounts focusing on the details of the moment while primarily omitting introspection and explanation of events. In contrast, in their later accounts after having time to process their experiences, they offered more colorful, descriptive accounts of their experiences that followed the collective narrative. In addition, the veterans began to intertwine elements of the collective memory into their personal memory, although Jepsen's interview followed the collective memory more directly by placing less emphasis on his personal experiences and more on the war in general. However, the identification of pride in their involvement and contributions to the war is present in all three interviews.

Furthermore, this case study is important because it identifies both the advantages and disadvantages related to memory studies of veterans. It distinguishes how veterans reflect on their experience at different times in their lives as well as under the influence of different factors, helping to establish the narrative and meaning behind the narrative that veterans give to their memory.

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Endnotes

¹ “Veterans History Project,” American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, last modified March 12, 2014, <http://www.loc.gov/vets>.

² Peter S. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam*. Modern War Studies. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003).

³ Gerald F. Linderman, *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Newport Beach, CA: Books on Tape, 1999).

⁴ Two works that question the good war myth are John Bodnar, *The “Good War” in American Memory* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) and Kenneth D. Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans In World War II* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012).

⁵ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 12.

⁶ Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, ed., *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also Lewis A. Coser, ed. and trans., Maurice Halbwachs: *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷ Lewis A. Coser, ed. and trans., *Maurice Halbwachs: On Collective Memory*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 24. Veterans incorporate elements of the collective memory into their narrative and leave out aspects of their personal experience. Similarly, the collective memory includes and excludes details about the individual’s memory. As a result, those silent memories are not recorded or preserved, and are therefore lost to future generations.

⁸ Fred Allison, “Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives Over Time,” *The Oral History Review* vol. 31, no. 2 (Summer-Autumn, 2004): 69-83.

⁹ All five quotations in this paragraph come from Fred Allison, “Remembering a Vietnam” Abstract and 7.

¹⁰ Fred Allison, “Remembering a Vietnam,” 7.

¹¹ John Bodnar, *The “Good War.”*

¹² Jepsen’s wartime correspondence is located in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, in its World War II Participants and Contemporaries Collection. Among these thirty-six letters, one letter was written to his sister, June 5, 1944, and three were

written to “Junior,” presumably Jepsen’s brother, August 4, 1944, December 23, 1944, and February 6, 1945. The rest of the letters were written to Jepsen’s mother. The letters begin on February 18, 1944 and end on August 6, 1945.

¹³ Richard Jepsen, *A Crusader in Europe* (Manhattan, KS: Richard Jepsen 1996; Revised in 2000). While writing his memoir, Jepsen relied not only on his memory, but also on his mother’s collection of his wartime letters and secondary sources, including the 30th Division’s history. The memoir covers his life in the Army beginning with training camp and ending with his discharge. Owing to this use of the wartime letters to aid him in writing, some of the content in his memoir overlaps with his letters. His use of secondary sources to inform himself while writing his memoir does not dominate his memoir, but it does provide context for the narrative. A copy of Jepsen’s memoir is available at the Manhattan, Kansas Public Library.

¹⁴ Richard Jepsen (World War II Veteran) interview by Jim Sharp, Manhattan, Kansas, "Riley County Oral History Project," DVD, September 2003. A copy of Jepsen’s interview is available at the Manhattan, Kansas Public Library. Jepsen’s oral history was conducted as part of the Riley County Oral History Project in Manhattan, Kansas, in September 2003. This project was organized and executed by several World War II Veterans. Jepsen was directly involved with this project and served as a chair of the finance committee. The project resulted in a total of 192 interviews. World War II veterans conducted the interviews. The goal of the project was to “honor our nation’s war veterans and to collect their stories while they are still with us.” Due to the format of the interview, Jepsen began by speaking briefly about his early life and from there moved to his basic training experience in the Army, his time overseas, and he concluded with a brief summary of his life after the war. For the purposes of this article, only the portion of his interview covering his service overseas is examined.

¹⁵ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)

¹⁶ Jepsen never held the position of instrument corporal, the position for which he received training before he arrived in Europe. He began the war as a messenger, then moved to second machine gunner in November 1944, and eventually ended the war as a first machine gunner.

¹⁷ The 30th Division disbanded on November 25, 1945.

¹⁸ Richard Jepsen (World War II Veteran) interview by Jim Sharp, Manhattan, Kansas, "Riley County Oral History Project," DVD, September 2003.

¹⁹ Jepsen (France) letter to mother, July 23, 1944, and Jepsen (Germany) letter to his mother, February 25, 1945. These letters are located at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas in the World War II Participants and Contemporaries Collection.

²⁰ Richard Jepsen, (Germany) letter to mother, February 18, 1945.

²¹ Jepsen, (France) letter to mother, August 24, 1944.

²² Jepsen, (Belgium) letter to mother, January 25, 1945.

²³ Jepsen, (Holland) letter to mother, September 18, 1944.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The next five quotations come from Jepsen, (Germany) letter to mother, November 14, 1944.

²⁶ Jepsen, (Belgium) letter to mother, January 30, 1945.

²⁷ Jepsen, (Germany) letter to Junior, February 6, 1945.

²⁸ Jepsen, (Belgium) letter to mother, January 30, 1945.

²⁹ All the quotations in this paragraph are from Jepsen, (Germany) letter to mother, May 2, 1945.

³⁰ On the subject of content overlap, see above note 12.

³¹ Of the eight quirks, two are mentioned here in the text. The other six include: when he escaped an incoming bomb (42), a bomb landing leaving a crater no more than six feet from his foxhole (42), escaping enemy fire aimed at his column (49), motor rounds splashing mud on Jepsen as the shells landed (49), a GI turning the truck lights on as a German aircraft flew overhead (55), and escaping 20mm fire (81).

³² Richard Jepsen, *A Crusader in Europe* (Manhattan, Ks: Richard Jepsen 1996; Revised in 2000).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 27. Jepsen was a messenger at this point in the war and often traveled alone delivering messages.

³⁵ Ibid., 31.

³⁶ Ibid., 86.

³⁷ Ibid., 74.

³⁸ Ibid., 65.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 81.

⁴¹ The next three quotations are from Jepsen, *Crusader*, 81.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ All quotes in paragraph are from Jepsen, *Crusader*, 67-69.

⁴⁴ The next three quotations are from Jepsen, *Crusader*, 46.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 79.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 74.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jepsen interview.

⁵³ Next two quotations from the Jepsen interview.

⁵⁴ When examining the differences and similarities in Jepsen's recollections, it is important to understand that Jepsen relied on his war letters and secondary sources, including division histories, to write the memoir, and that he participated in the Veteran Oral History Project after he had written his memoir. One thus can expect that there would be some overlap in the information presented in all three recollections.

⁵⁵ Jepsen, *A Crusader in Europe*, 35.

⁵⁶ Winter, *Remembering War*, and Lewis A. Coser, ed. and trans., Maurice Halbwachs: *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 53, 39.

⁵⁸ Winter, *Remembering War*.

⁵⁹ Kathleen M. German, "Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* Series and the American Audience," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (Spring 1990):244.

⁶⁰ John Bodnar, *The “Good War” in American Memory* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010). Bodnar’s first chapter entitled “Wartime” argues that the “human-centered perspective was America’s most utopian explanation of why Americans had to fight World War II, and it would be continually invoked not only during the war but for decades afterward as a form of remembrance.” (11)

⁶¹ Bodnar discusses the disconnect soldiers felt between themselves and citizens in detail in *The “Good War” in American Memory*.

⁶² Winter, *Remembering War*.

⁶³ Fred Allison, “Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives Over Time,” *The Oral History Review* vol. 31, no. 2 (Summer-Autumn, 2004): 69-83, Winter, *Remembering War.*, and Coser, *Maurice Halbwachs*.

⁶⁴ Due to the limited passenger space on vessels crossing the Atlantic after the German surrender, the military implemented a point system to determine the order in which soldiers would be sent home. The military awarded soldiers points for each month they served on active duty, for each campaign they fought in, for each medal they received, and for being married. A soldier needed a total of 85 points to return home.

⁶⁵ This study specifically examines the twenty-eight letters that Utermoehlen wrote during his combat experience, from February 1945 to May 1945. Although he did write a few letters during his time with the Army of Occupation, he wrote very few letters after the war in Europe concluded. Not all the letters had a date on them, therefore the author of this work relied on the date stamped on the envelope to determine when the letter was written. All of Utermoehlen’s letters are part of the Utermoehlen family’s private collection.

⁶⁶ Ralph Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 25, 1945.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 27, 1945.

⁶⁹ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 14, 1945.

⁷⁰ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 6, 1945.

⁷¹ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 19, 1945.

⁷² Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 14, 1945.

⁷³ Some of the letters where Utermoehlen made these requests include his February 15, 1945 letter and his March 14, 1945 letter.

⁷⁴ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 27, 1945.

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- ⁷⁵ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 17, 1945.
- ⁷⁶ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 14, 1945.
- ⁷⁷ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to grandparents, March 14, 1945.
- ⁷⁸ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 21, 1945.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ⁸¹ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 14, 1945.
- ⁸² Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, April 25, 1945.
- ⁸³ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 23, 1945.
- ⁸⁴ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 21, 1945.
- ⁸⁵ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 20, 1945.
- ⁸⁶ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 14, 1945.
- ⁸⁷ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 11, 1945.
- ⁸⁸ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 15, 1945.
- ⁸⁹ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, February 23, 1945.
- ⁹⁰ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, April 16, 1945.
- ⁹¹ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 17, 1945.
- ⁹² Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to grandparents, March 10, 1945.
- ⁹³ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 20, 1945.
- ⁹⁴ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, April 20, 1945.
- ⁹⁵ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, March 17, 1945.
- ⁹⁶ Utermoehlen, (Germany) letter to parents, May 10, 1945.

⁹⁷ Ralph Utermoehlen, World War II Veteran, interview by Larry Parsons, Manhattan, Kansas, "Riley County Oral History Project," September 2003. A copy of Utermoehlen's interview is available at the Manhattan, Kansas Public Library.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ One limitation of Zschoche's interview is that only a transcript of the interview was available, eliminating the opportunity to examine the dynamic between the interviewee and interviewer. Additionally, there was not an opportunity to clarify any of Zschoche's responses that appeared unclear to the author of this study. Some responses suggest that perhaps portions of the conversation were not recorded. Indeed, it appears portions of the interview were lost during tape changes. In the diary, not all of Zschoche's descriptions are clear. The diary was not written for an audience, and therefore, although it offered a unique account of his experience, it is at times limited in its clarity. For example on May 3rd he wrote, "straw roofs over skeleton house. Dust – Germans." What he meant by "dust- Germans" is unclear. Despite these limitations, the sources still provide a great deal of insight into Zschoche's experience during the war and how

he reflected on his experience. Zschoche's diary and interview are part of the Zschoche family's private collection.

¹¹⁵ Arthur Zschoche, Diary April 21, 1944.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Zschoche, Diary April 23, 1944.

¹¹⁹ Zschoche, Diary April 21, 1944.

¹²⁰ The first and second nights referred to in the text were April 21 and 22, 1944.

¹²¹ Zschoche, Diary May 4, 1944.

¹²² Zschoche, Diary April 29, 1944.

¹²³ Zschoche, Diary May 10, 1944.

¹²⁴ Zschoche, Diary April 29, 1944.

¹²⁵ Zschoche, Diary April 26, 1944.

¹²⁶ Zschoche, Diary April 30, 1944.

¹²⁷ Zschoche, Diary April 27, 1944.

¹²⁸ Zschoche, Diary May 19, 1944.

¹²⁹ Zschoche, Diary May 27, 1944.

¹³⁰ Zschoche, Diary April 23, 1944.

¹³¹ Zschoche, Diary May 7, 1944.

¹³² Zschoche, Diary May 14, 1944.

¹³³ Zschoche, Diary May 19, 1944.

¹³⁴ Zschoche, Diary April 25, 1944.

¹³⁵ Zschoche, Diary April 26, 1944.

¹³⁶ Zschoche, Diary May 3, 1944.

¹³⁷ Zschoche, Diary May 6, 1944.

¹³⁸ Zschoche, Diary April 26, 1944.

¹³⁹ Zschoche, Diary May 12, 1944.

¹⁴⁰ Zschoche, Diary May 13, 1944.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Zschoche, Diary May 8, 1944.

¹⁴³ Zschoche, Diary May 5, 1944.

¹⁴⁴ Zschoche, Diary May 10, 1944.

¹⁴⁵ Zschoche, Diary May 11, 1944.

¹⁴⁶ Zschoche, Diary May 28, 1944.

¹⁴⁷ Arthur Zschoche's interview was conducted by his daughter, Professor Sue Zschoche on February 7, 1999, in his home in Leavenworth, Kansas. The author of this study did not have access to the recording of the interview and relied on the transcript of the interview for this study. Mr. Zschoche's wife, Mrs. Shirley Zschoche, participated as an additional commentator during the interview. There are a few discrepancies between Zschoche's accounts and the official history of the 460th, such as that his mission was to bomb military installations and industrial targets (rather than oil fields) and that flak (rather than rerouting due to weather) caused the plane to run out of gas. Some of the dates that Zschoche mentioned in the interview were off, but the sequence of events was correct.

The interview covered his life beginning with his graduation from high school and concluding after his discharge from the Army in 1944. Although Zschoche's interview covered his entire Army experience, this chapter examines only the portion of his interview that dealt specifically with his overseas service.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid.

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid.

168 Ibid.

169 Ibid.

170 Ibid.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 Ibid.

176 Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ When examining the differences and similarities in Jepsen's recollections, it is important to understand that Jepsen relied on his war letters and secondary sources, including division histories, to write the memoir, and that he participated in the Veteran Oral History Project after he had written his memoir. One thus can expect that there would be some overlap in the information presented in all three recollections.

¹⁸⁰ Zschoche, Oral History.

¹⁸¹ Zschoche, Diary April 22, 1944.

¹⁸² Zschoche, Diary April 21, 1944.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Zschoche, Oral History.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Zschoche, Diary May 8, 1944.

¹⁸⁸ Lewis A. Coser, ed. and trans., *Maurice Halbwachs: On Collective Memory*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁹ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Fred Allison, "Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives Over Time," *The Oral History Review* vol. 31, no. 2 (Summer-Autumn, 2004): 69-83.

¹⁹² Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed., (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans., Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: Harper & Row, 1980)

¹⁹³ Richard Jepsen (World War II Veteran) interview by Jim Sharp, Manhattan, Kansas, "Riley County Oral History Project," DVD, September 2003.

¹⁹⁴ Ralph Utermoehlen, World War II Veteran, interview by Larry Parsons, Manhattan, Kansas, "Riley County Oral History Project," September 2003.

¹⁹⁵ Arthur Zschoche, Oral History February 7, 1999.

¹⁹⁶ Linderman examines the effects prolonged periods at the front have on soldiers. Gerald F. Linderman, *The World within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Newport Beach, CA: Books on Tape, 1999).

¹⁹⁷ Nigel Hunt and Ian Robbins, "Telling Stories of the War: Aging Veterans Coping with Their Memories through Narrative," *Oral History* vol. 26, no. 2 (1998): 57-64.

¹⁹⁸ Winter and Sivan, *War and Remembrance*.

¹⁹⁹ Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

²⁰⁰ Zschoche, Oral History.

²⁰¹ John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010).