

Transcript of Video Clip with Spencer Netherstreet

Spencer: Yes, in the April of '42 so quite a long period in fact. But I was on deferred service due to the fact I think that the signal schools were full up. They badly wanted signallers and they'd taken in quite a lot so you just had to wait your turn before you went in. Mind you, we were still examined to take – given a little examination to see if we were bright enough [laughs] and they accepted me. My god, you know, if they only knew [laughs]. And just to – I went in to No. 3 signal school at Compton Basset in Worcester. Well, all I knew about Calne was it produced pork. Actually, the signal school was as a superb organisation and I can't speak more highly of the tuition we had. We were crammed but, you know, going from Blackpool where the speed there up, we started at Blackpool and then came down to no. 3 signal school. You start off with your, di-do-di-do-do-di-di-do-do-di-di-do-do-do, if you didn't recognise that it's the first words of the alphabet, you know [all laughs]. But you never forget it, you see. Morse code is now no longer acceptable but I went through the sickbay in Compton Basset which was run by very lovely Queen Alexandra nurses.

Jack: Marvellous.

Spencer: Because I had impetigo and that was marvellous cos I spent Christmas there. That was the best Christmas in the forces that I ever remember but [laughs] and they taught me how to embroider, you know. So I'm very good at the lacy-daisy switch – stitch rather [all laughs]. I missed a posting for the invasion of Sicily cos I had volunteered by that time for combined operations services which meant cooperation with the Army and Navy. Oh, dear, never mind, Jack, you got over it [laughs]. And that lot – that particular class landed in Sicily where there was no protection and they all got captured including my pal, Christiansen. I often wonder what happened to him. He was a Danish fellow, volunteered, he came from Copenhagen. Lovely character. Anyhow, back to the next posting was with the third division of the Army in Kent and there was just two of us, Corporal Reiss and myself. Corporal Reiss was an extremely nice fellow, he was extremely able and very gifted volubly, you see, and he could put our case very well and he was acting corporal cos you only got elected acting corporal actually in the training school. He wasn't supposed to carry his stripes out to the army, 'Well, I think, Neddy, it would be jolly useful if I became a corporal, don't you think so?'. I could see there was a big advantage in this and it worked very well cos he had access to Captain Smart of the three divisional signals, so we were able to work all sorts of things. But including not doing an awful lot of duties and not being on guard duty and just watching the army and applauding them for the way they looked after their arms and at the same time did a little bit of signals training. We had deep contempt for them cos their speed was only 11 words a minute where our speed was twenty-two words a minute, no, sorry, eighteen words a minute. The navy was twenty-two, they were fast. Twenty-five was the usual operational.