

AMBROSE: Let's talk first about your generation. You were born?

HANKS: 1956.

AMBROSE: 1956, Ike was President. Your generation has really gone through a lot, the nuclear scares that were constant, the whole civil rights ferment and rebellion, and the war in Vietnam among other things. And I could've been your teacher.

That's the age difference between us. And so, I have watched the eighteen to twenty two year olds mainly through that whole period as students. And for many, and I may have to get into a lecture here if I keep this up, but for many of them, they never wanted to hear another thing about the U.S. government. They never ever wanted to hear about American wars. World War II, that's the one they use the atomic bomb, the most criminal act of all time.

You want to talk about Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence? What about Jefferson and Sally Hemmings? And so on. You watch these things go up and down, and the patriotism at its highest level in the second World War and stayed but came down and whomp, the Vietnam War, the civil rights crusade, just soured people on history. And that's your generation, to the point that students have come to me the first day of class and say, Doc, I've got to let you know I hate history. [laughter]

And I'd have to tell, no, you don't really. It's about people and people are always interesting in what they do and where they do it and so on. But now that generation of baby boomers, and that's a long stretch on the baby boomers, maybe a twenty year period, forty five to sixty five, can't get enough history. I watched this age group just do like that. And their attitudes towards the past, the fire from don't ever tell me about World War II, I don't want to know anything at all about it, it's the opposite. And that goes all through our society. Now, I think one of the reasons for it is people are becoming aware, if they didn't know before, that we live in the richest and freest nation that ever was. And somebody made this happen.

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: God didn't point his finger and say, U.S.A., you're it, and we, oh, and it's all for me. One of the greatest things in this shift is in the D-Day Museum, seeing a group of veterans and then a group of junior high kids. And they just are drawn to each other, and then talking and talking and talking.

Alright, that's much too long a buildup. How did you get interested in World War II?

HANKS: Well, the war was always there in a collective consciousness because, look, I grew up with mass media. I knew what time it was by what was on television. And throughout all of the mass media and television, and also movies, there was this epoch, there was this age of thought and motivation and a value system that was called the war. It was already referred to just like that.

It was either, and history was broken up into three very distinct eras: before the war, the war, and after the war.

And to be, you know, like to be five years old, six years old, seven years old, and be conscious of this box that is sending in our pop cultural history, you know, on a moment's notice every night, and then have that become more and more powerful and more and more omnipotent over our lives, and have it seem as though like the most important both export and sport of our nation seemed to be our popular culture as it was defined by movies and television and what not, the great stories, in every way, in great tales of morality were somehow centered around the war.

I mean, there were westerns and stuff like that, but by and large, war was, the war and talking about the war and recreating it on either a backlot or on a ship somewhere was this huge moneymaking enterprise that everybody did. And sometimes it was big impressive stories, and sometimes it was like minor stories about [unintelligible] blocking along the roads. But this huge segment of our society was represented in my house, and I couldn't quite fathom the fact that, wait, my Dad was in the war? You were in the war, Dad?

Now, my Dad was a machinist in the Navy. He had nothing nice to say about the war or about the Navy. It was not a grand adventure. And yet, he had adventures of it that would bubble up every now and again. And the war for my Dad when I would see his like Naval dog tag or I'd see some little trinkets that he still carried around with him, I remember he had his dog tag on his key chain.

And that's where I found out my Dad's middle name was Mefford, [laughter] M-e-f-f-o-r-d, by looking at the dog tag on his key chain. And that was like 1962, so we're talking about a key chain that's maybe fifteen, eighteen years old. The war for my Dad was he was a kid on a farm in Willows, [phonetic] California, as poor as poor could be, and yet this war put him on a ship and sent him to a place in the South Pacific where he stayed in [unintelligible] and so that he was part of this thing that I saw every night on TV or in the movies. And my Dad, he didn't [unintelligible] like, well, that was nothing like it was.

And I said, well, how could that be if you were part of the war and there's the war right on TV? So this idea that it was that for, what, four years, you know, from December, where were you, Dad, when you heard about Pearl Harbor? Well, he didn't even remember necessarily where he was when he [unintelligible] Pearl Harbor, whatever.

There was this period of time where everything was held in a status of stasis. Is that the right word? It was like everything was on hold until the war was over. And when you think about it as time goes by, this is, you know, for four years, that's as long as it takes to go to college. That's as long as it takes to learn a trade. That's as long as it takes to start a family. You could get married, have a kid, and be divorced now in the course of four.

You could go through the biggest changes of your life in four years now, and yet, for all of America for all this time before I was born, there was this time where everything kind of like stopped dead. And people made sacrifices without even thinking about it and were uprooted and moved all the way to the other side of the world for one reason and one reason only. Well, because that was during the war, you see.

And to me, to live in a time where, and I was growing up, and there was a constant state of social change, and I remember essentially being confused throughout all, most of the '60s and

through a lot of the '70s, because this aspect of being an American and taking part in the daily life of America like it was back during the war was turned up on its head and certainly the same rules and the same motivations no longer applied. It was disconcerting to me as a young adult when I got to be thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old.

And the idea of going aboard, well, what was it, what was it about the motivations of those people back then? What was it about this all encompassing burden on everybody's shoulders, the war, that seemed to bring out this willingness to suspend our lives for a long period of time, that demanded that we, that for four years, nobody really made, you could not, could you make plans for what your life was going to be after the war? I don't think you could because everybody was waiting to find out who won or not.

And even at as late a date as June, well, we were talking about this on Saving Private Ryan, look, even as late as June 7th, 1944, no one knew who was going to win this war. No one knew who was going to win this thing. It was still up for grabs, even though history shows that the end in Europe was only eleven months away.

So I guess for me as an actor, a guy who was fascinated by the things that people do in these stories that are larger than life and yet are still absolutely still plucked out of our daily life, there has been this fascination with the collective one damned thing after another that started some time in early December of 1941 and honestly had a finite date to it, it was over on a certain day, actually two certain days, it was over on VE Day, it was over on VJ Day, and yet, the generation that gave birth to me and that actually has impacted my generation as well, were never ever the same by that second era of history, which was the war because then you have after the war. And I would think how can people like my Dad just walk around with a little thing on his key chain now, and have that be the talisman that represents four years of his life that is locked inside a series of recollections, and by the way, for a guy who did nothing other than probably fix hydraulic systems and refrigeration systems on [inaudible].

AMBROSE: Everybody served.

HANKS: But everybody served. And yet, I said, well, nonetheless, Dad, you got your first trip to the South Pacific [laughter] out of it all. And yes, I did.

AMBROSE: It brought about great changes in course, it did, and the reversal in so many ways and so many things, but we really wanted to talk about you and how World War II looked to a kid born in 1956 that's eloquently and very well stated who, now I'm not talking about you as an actor, I'm talking about as a full person. How did you get interested in this war to the point that it's become a part of your profession? In other words, a couple other things, what you think about that, there's a lot of ways that you can be involved in World War II, just a reader, a researcher, a writer, a visitor, and so on, and you can do it via acting.

But if an actor, I want to get back to something you said, in acting, you're playing somebody else. Now, there's a lot of heroes out there that go back to before the Greeks. And all through all history, there's a lot of heroes to portray. But you said something that maybe you could expand and say something more about it, I mean, I just want to say it, I think you're absolutely right that at the time you grew, that war just permeated everything. And it was about sacrifice, and it was about four years of you put off the marriage or you don't get her pregnant if you do get married because who knows if you're coming back or not, and on and on and on and on. And the combination of those

two, I gather for your as an actor, and for me as a writer, is it's irresistible.

HANKS: I had a job, I was a bellboy at a hotel. And every day, a guy came and picked up the dry cleaning to be cleaned, and every afternoon, he brought it back. And I was nineteen years old, and I was convinced that things were harder on me than they were on anybody else in the world. You know, I was trying to get to school on time every day, I was trying to have this part-time job Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, it seems like I didn't have any time. I was trying to figure out where I was going to go. The war was both scary, I had a girlfriend, I was having problems with a girlfriend, and I really thought, I really thought the burden on me was greater than it's ever been on any nineteen year old in the history of the planet Earth.

And then, for one weekend in June, one week in June, the guy who came and picked up the dry cleaning, some other guy came and picked it up. And he was gone for a week. Then after a week, I'd remember the guy, I'll just call him Mike, at the end of the week, Mike comes back. And Mike's an older guy, he's in his forties or fifties. And hey Mike, where've you been? Oh, you know, I said, you take a vacation? He said, no, I get together with some old friends. And I might say this year was kind of sad because it seems like every year we get together, there's less and less of our old friends around.

I said, oh, where'd you go? He said, well, I went to France. Oh, really? Oh, that must have been great. And he says, well, it's nice but it's not great. It turns out, Mike, the guy who picks up the dry cleaning every morning, was the 82nd Airborne. He jumped in Normandy on D-Day. And this is where he's going every year. And the way he said it to me was, well, I was a paratrooper in wars [inaudible].

And I said, oh, probably I don't even remember what the phraseology was, but in maybe a seventeen second conversation, I pick up the fact that he jumped into Normandy on D-Day, he was probably nineteen years old when he did it, he saw his best friends killed in the course of everything. And somewhere in the course of an extended period of probably a hundred days of fighting the war, he was wounded, but it was only after probably a hundred days of hell or so.

And when he left that day, I had perspective on my life that I had not had prior to that. I'm thinking I'm having trouble getting to junior college and working a part-time job in a hotel for cash in my pocket, and I'm nineteen years old. Here's a guy who nineteen years ago, jumped into France and ended up standing on his feet and sleeping in a hole for a hundred days watching his best friends kill, and on top of that, he also mentioned that he had to kill other kids like himself at the same time.

That was a perspective on my life, and just as a human, I didn't even know what I was doing at the time, that was the seed of not just the first, the only seed, but was a substantial moment of a connection between two people that jumped across time. It was no longer a mythological experience that was hearing about. It was no longer a movie that had entered into the consciousness. It was no longer, you know, Tab Hunter [phonetic] or Jeff Holder [phonetic] or some other kind, or Van Johnson, you know, in the Battle of the Bulge. It was the guy, it was Mike who picked up the dry cleaning every day who should, I would have imagined, have been brimming with confidence, you know, bursting with a sense of accomplishment over his life. But here, time has gone by, and he's making ends meet and works for his own dry cleaning company. And every year, he goes off [inaudible].

So that experience alone made me understand that there was a great thing to learn about myself and a great thing to learn about my predicaments. There's great things to learn about the way I handled myself in this life in comparison to what these other folks have been through. And it didn't matter that it was forty years ago. And it doesn't matter that he was not an older man.

It didn't matter that we didn't really have much of anything in common, just by understanding this stuff made me put the present world into perspective in a way that up to that point had only really come through, you know, a different sort of artistic means. And here was a factual connection between somebody just telling a sort that sent me reeling for the rest of the day.

AMBROSE: Well, I was born in 1936. And so, I have memories of the war. But I felt, what you're talking about the same way, more or less the same time, I mean, about the time that you were born, I just saw what those guys had done was terrific. And I still do. And they gave up a lot. They gained a lot. Mainly they gained friendship. That's not true. Mainly they gained freedom for us and for much of the rest of the world that is now being spread and defended democracy.

But the main thing they found in the armed services is friendship. So I so often, the deepest friends, and this is forty five, fifty years after the events, and they're still like. They have nothing in common with each other, not their work, not where they live. One has a whole bunch of grandchildren, the other one has one or something like that. I mean, one is divorced twice and another one is a drunk and et cetera, but they're so close together.

HANKS: When you were eight years old and the war was still going on, right?

AMBROSE: Uh-huh.

HANKS: Did you think it would still be going on when you were old enough to, did you think that, you know, I'm going to have to join the Army at one point and go fight the war too?

AMBROSE: Sure. And we took that for granted, but not necessarily World War II, but there was, first of all, in the Spring of '44 or '45.

HANKS: Uh-huh?

AMBROSE: Germany surrendered. And my Dad was in the Pacific, and when VJ Day came, ecstasy, our Dad's coming home. Because we were old enough that we remembered him, but you know, I was maybe five when he went off, and but anyway, it was a very big deal.

HANKS: Let me tell you something else about for my generation. Growing up, well, this is my opinion, but there was a feeling in the air because of the Cold War, because of the Soviet Union, because of the nuclear arms race, whatever, but also because of the images that we were still growing up on, there was always this thing that was weighing in the future.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: That was called, we called it, well, World War III.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: World War III was going to happen.

AMBROSE: Yes, well, that's right.

HANKS: It was only a matter of time. World War III was going to come around and the best we could do was postpone it maybe for the length of our generation.

AMBROSE: Duck and cover in your school rooms.

HANKS: We had duck and cover. And we had like, say we had Star Trek things take place in the future, even on Star Trek, they would make references to World War III, in the, you know, Spock would go on and on, but in the million, two million people that died in your first World War, and the six million people that died in your second World War, and the eighteen million people that died in your third World War, we were all anticipating this another armed global conflict that would involve us all that would be a tooth and nail battle, and that would mean once again, we would have to go off to this other place, the battle lines would be drawn somewhere probably right along the same axis as the old one was.

It was going to be that Iron Curtain, so they would be back in Germany and Czechoslovakia. And we would be going. And in the Pacific, we'd be doing the same thing. Is Vietnam the first step towards what can become World War III? Are we going to be able to avert World War III?

That was part and parcel to what we were expecting because our father's generation had to, they went through World War I, and then they had to go off and fight World War II. We have knowledge of World War II, so we're going to have to go off and fight World War III again. And now, the extraordinary thing is there is, I think there is a direct connotation to the nature of the victory that was pounded out over the five years of World War II in this very strange and odd way, made us possible for us not to have to face the specter of World War III. Now, maybe it's just the advent of this horrible weapon that everybody got, and so no one dares go off and [inaudible] you know, and dares go off and [inaudible].

AMBROSE: That would be a long discussion.

HANKS: That would be a huge discussion.

AMBROSE: There's a lot of things that have to be considered in there. Let me take you back because I feel an obligation [inaudible].

HANKS: To our hosts?

AMBROSE: To our host.

HANKS: To our gracious hosts.

AMBROSE: To our host. In making Band of Brothers, what particular or general problems did you have? You know how to do it. I don't know how to do it. I know how to write books. I haven't seen any books that you've written on World War II. But you know, I don't know how to make movies. You know how to make movies.

HANKS: You've seen my version.

AMBROSE: How do you do this?

HANKS: Well, the first thing I think you have to have is this intangible goal of what you're going to create, how you're going to start, what the confines of the entire enterprise is going to be, what are you going to try to communicate in the course of this, this either two and a half hour movie or ten and a half hour miniseries? What is the one thing that you want to be able to impart to the audience? You know, it's not about terror and it's not about tragedy, it's not about the details, it's not about the uniforms, it's not about the planes. That's all part and parcel to it. But what's the one thing that you want the audience to understand when it's all said and done, when it's all over?

And for me, it was scope, the scope of geography that you start off in this place called Teculah, Georgia that no one knows where it is, but you know that it's in Georgia, enough said. [laughter] Not a pleasant place. And you go all the way to some place called Zelanzee, [phonetic] Austria. And if you looked at it on a map, it'd be a bunch of lines, it'd go like this, but yet it stretches halfway across the world. That's one brand of scope.

The other scope is time. You're starting in 1942. You go to 1945. That's only about, well, it's from July of '42, '43, '44, '45, you're talking about three years out of somebody's life, that's actually a substantial enough amount of time that you can, that could bring perspective on your lives. Then you also have the scope of the cost in some ways connected to the characters that you recognize.

You take that as the goal that you shoot for, and then you start doing, then you start crunching the numbers and going through the deck of cards. I think every one of these stories is like two and a half decks of cards all jammed together. And you've got to go through it one by one until you're just down to the right fifty two with the right number of suits and the right number.

And with Band of Brothers, the first thing that we ran into, I mean, everything was right there in a different way than, say, Citizen Soldiers was, which is, you know, that's as broad as the entire era. Well, who do you focus on and how do you lay on it? Are you actually going to go back to general's point to maps up on the thing and with pointers and those ladies with the headphones pushing around ships and stuff like that in order to keep track of where everybody is?

But you had it right here with Easy Company and the guys that, you know, got together in July of '42 and [inaudible]. But then you have, well, how much of it, how much of Operation Market Garden can you really show? And how many of the guys themselves can actually land in the consciousness of the audience when you come across? And so then you start getting into a degree of bitter compromise it seems sometimes in order to get it. But you can still maintain this sense of the geographical and chronological scope of what it is. And then after that, it's just which detail makes it. You know? Which ones of these fascinating little nuggets of information can we get? How do you show how cold it was in Bastone? How do you do that?

AMBROSE: That's just what I was thinking?

HANKS: Well, we got, it's we loaded up with all this. We loaded with as much as we can stand. And then you just keep running it, then you constantly keep testing the material over and over again. Then we also have the confines of, now let's understand each, these have to be like a cohesive story, each one, that dovetails into the next, but it can't be the constant, it can't just be the same format over and over again because then you'll run into the same pitfalls. You know, you've got to come out in something of a brand new way. And that's means you've got to like go off and get other perspective of what the guys went through. And there's an awful lot of trust, too. You end up working with, well, for example, the actors whose lives are altered by the making of this thing in microcosm, but still their lives, a lot of these guys are not the same because they played these paratroopers.

AMBROSE: One hears that about you and your fellow actors in Saving Private Ryan.

HANKS: Well, that's true for me. I can't speak for everybody, but it's definitely true for me.

AMBROSE: And I don't want to spend a whole lot of time talking about a show that I have only seen two parts of so far anyway and you're sitting on top. I mean, we can't. If you want to talk about the [unintelligible] you want to talk about [unintelligible] I'll talk and ask and so on. But I

wanted to congratulate on I thought an absolutely genius, to start off showing [unintelligible] out there doing some looting was just perfect. Just perfect. And then you don't, there's no overvoice to it or any preaching, nobody's saying those damn Nazis and look what these sons of bitches, nobody's doing any of that. You just go, which is exactly what happened to Dick and to the others. You just go. And I figured you'd do a good job on that scene, but it was better than I had even anticipated. But I thought that combination just worked perfectly.

HANKS: We get into those things like, well, now, do we really want to show our boys, [laughter] you know, taking stuff from, out of a part, essentially looting? Do we really want to show our boys in uniform, you know, doing that kind of stuff? And you say, well, you know, we have to be true to what went on. There was actually sometimes that you, do we really to show it, even, okay, if we're going to show the looting, do we have to show it like that? But what else is it really? It's not much more than I'll take that in the pocket. And you know, in your books, we always say, well, what is the Ambrose? You know, we talked about the source material, and we'd call it the Ambrose.

What does the Ambrose say about this? Well, the Ambrose says everybody did it for crying out loud, and everybody's, here's one of the things that we're very proud about this series, Hubler [phonetic] and this Luger, this [unintelligible] that's one thing I got right. I mean, I remember when I was a little kid, if we bought a squirt gun, it looked like a Luger.

If anybody, there was just something about a Luger, it was a cool looking weapon, it was evil looking, it had a malevolent design to it, and the bad guys in the movies always carried Lugers. So every time, you know, any time we'd play squirt gun or whatever it is, we would always get Lugers. And that's one of the first things I read about in all three of the big books. Man, everybody wanted to get a Luger.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: Can't wait to get a Luger. Hey my kid wants to get a Luger. I'm going to get a Luger for him. I'm going, how much for this Luger? We even had a bet. We cut it from the episode [unintelligible] because it was the truth was so inexplicable, we couldn't make sense out of it. We talked to, we got a story about of Alley, [phonetic] in the episode I directed, he gets thirty seven puncture holes in it from a grenade, and he disappears for awhile. They send him back [unintelligible].

And Dick Winters is walking through Paris, and he come across, Alley shows up. He's still the [unintelligible] he was in a hospital, somebody stole his Corcoran and jump boots and all he wants to do is either get into Paris, then get back to his unit, and so how does he raise the money in order to get there? Well, he sells the Luger for fifty bucks. So it's like barter and trade. It's those are the kind of details that we try to find.

And some we sweat over like crazy, like do we really want to show our guys taking watches off of mantelpieces and stuff like that? But you know what? It's something that everybody would recognize and say, well, shoot, of course you're going to do something like that. Of course you're going to do something like that. You've got this blend of extrapolating and then just extrapolating what went on so the gist of it is palpable to the audience [unintelligible] let's just do the grunt work and make it exactly what happened [inaudible].

AMBROSE: And from what I've seen and from what I've read in the script, you're doing that wonderfully well. One of the things that has become a theme of mine, I had a big class in World

War II, my swan song at my alma mater, the University of Wisconsin, I don't know, four years ago or five years ago. Anyway, so I'm telling these kids about World War II, and I had them not just leaning forward to make sure they didn't miss what's going to happen next, but their jaw is dropping.

Now this was an eighteen year old [inaudible]. This is Jack Lucas. [phonetic] He enlisted in the Marine Corps at fourteen. He received the Medal of Honor at age sixteen. This is George McGovern. He was a B24 pilot, thirty five missions at age twenty. And they'd just go, then they'd come up to talk, and a lot of them, Jesus, Doc, do you think we could do that? Or the old men will come up, Doc, you think those kids could ever do D-Day again?

HANKS: Yes, yes.

AMBROSE: And obviously, no, they're too soft, they're too all the things that they're complaining about the [unintelligible]. My answer to them is, you're goddamned right they could. They are the children of democracy, and they'll fight for democracy if they have to. Now, that's not going to be their challenge. We're not going to have any more big wars. And the weapons are just too vast now for that to take place. But there are going to be plenty [unintelligible] you're damn right they're going to do well at it.

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: Of course they will. Well, let me get over to, we've already covered that part. Oh, are you envious of Dennis Tito [phonetic] this week? [laughter] But you've already said something in public on that, I was told that you did want to do it.

HANKS: Oh, I don't want to pay \$20 million for it.

AMBROSE: Well, somebody told me they read somewhere in a paper that Tom Hanks said, yes, I'm going to do that.

HANKS: No, no. That's probably, I don't know, I have mixed feelings about this whole Dennis Tito thing. Look, if the Russians want to do it, that's great. And by the way, the Russians are good at that, man. They've been using the same equipment. They've got it down. Those, they know how to get guys up there. They've been doing it the same way since 1961 for crying out loud with probably some of the same equipment. They're good at that.

But there's something, I don't know, there's just something about a guy being, we're not at the place yet where just to get to go up there and take snapshots and wonder at the joys of, oh, look, my candy bar is floating in front of me before I actually get to eat it. There's other reasons to go up there, I guess. I wonder how the actual spirit of give and take was when you're actually in the International Space Station? I'll tell you one thing.

[off mike conversation, inaudible]

HANKS: I admire how much space he got to float around in. You know, I talked to John Glenn briefly. I said, how was it? How was it when you first got to float around the cabin there on the Space Shuttle like that? He said, because look, he goes up in the Mercury capsule, he's got a windshield right in front of him right there, he didn't get to float around inside there. It's just like as cramped a space, you get not exactly the joy, glorious freefall of outer space.

He didn't get to enjoy it much, maybe got to see his pen float around a little bit, but that's it. But he unbuckles in the Space Shuttle, he gets a whole room to float around. And they went up there

with the, what is it, the Space Lab thing, you had the other module, that must have been fun. But Tito, that guy, he got everything, man. He got to float around the biggest [inaudible].

AMBROSE: Trip of a lifetime.

HANKS: Yes.

AMBROSE: It sure sounds like.

HANKS: The biggest cubic space, you know, to float around like crazy. It must have been nice.

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: I guess it was twenty million bucks well spent.

[End Side A]

[Start Side B]

AMBROSE: I was saying I can do this better than that. But [laughter] you have often played this independent male character, this man on his own. We all know there is in real life no such thing. Well, I'm not sure that I agree with that.

HANKS: Fine.

AMBROSE: Independent man?

AMBROSE: [laughter] Who in this, now we get to the point, who in your life is the person buying the person, the one who gives you the support to be who you are, do what you do? And how does she do it? [laughter] Sound byte.

HANKS: Yes, I guess I've got to have this down in seven words or less, don't you? Oh, man. You know, I'm not as nutty a guy as Eugene O'Neil was, but you know, his wife, I remember Carlotta Monterey, [phonetic] she was this lady who just said Gene's going to do his thing, and I'm going to protect it so that Gene gets to [inaudible]. I think my wife does that. I mean, I've got, she makes sure that I don't live a life of total frivolity, but when it comes down to, you know, pursuing the things that I do, she protects me as far as making sure I have time and concentration ability.

This is tough, this is not an easy gig in the heart of the school year to be off in Chicago living the life of a guy, you know, with a certain amount of time on his hands, but she puts her head down and says, okay, when will you be coming home? And because it's the give the take like that, I live up to all the responsibilities that I can given the work schedule. I don't know if that answers the question or not. But I don't know, I married the right woman, you know? We have this, this is what we do, you know? This is our life.

AMBROSE: I going to have to interrupt you and tell you we were riding in from Midway Airport, and I was looking these over. And I was reading them aloud to [inaudible]. No, that was this morning. Stephie was taking us down to the airport. And we looked at that question, and we said, well, he married the right woman. What the hell do you think? That's the answer.

HANKS: And end of story. End of story. Everybody gets that.

AMBROSE: And I do, too. And so it's just wonderful. How do you find yourself having it all? How do you balance it? What is your secret, or is it not as simple as it seems? And before you answer, let me tell you having read that, my answer, well, I'm not Tom Hanks obviously, but I've had a fair

amount of this sort of thing happening to me. And how do you do it? You just do it. I don't know how.

HANKS: It's one damned thing after another, you know? [laughter] Just never stops. Deal with it, it's like the world's longest game, you know, it's a game of hearts that never ends, man. You're just always trying to shoot the Moon, and sometimes you win, and sometimes you don't. But just keep it going. Yes, I did, is there a secret? Gosh, if there was, I'd pay money to get that, what that secret is because it's kind of like that guy that, oh, I've discovered the cure for the common cold, here's how you get rid of a cold. As soon as you get a cold, you just drink a lot of fluids and get as much bed rest as possible. There you go. I'm going to patent that and charge millions of dollars for it because in the old days, you know what you had to do when you get a common cold? You'd have to just, you'd have to drink a lot of fluids and get as much rest as possible, but now that I've discovered this other way of getting rid of a cold. It's just one damn thing after another.

I was in an elevator once, it was like one of these things I'd been working on, working on some project for eighteen hours. And you know, I thought I was going to get home at 5:30 at night, and instead, now it's quarter of ten. You know, and I've got a huge thing of papers and stuff, and I've got to get up at 6:00 in the morning and fly somewhere off. And I'm just an absolute wreck, just exhausted, going down an elevator. And a woman got in and says, oh, you're Tom Hanks, right? Yes, ma'am. What's it like? [laughter] I said, well, I said, let me get a good night's sleep on it, ma'am, and I'll try to get that answer to you first thing in the morning. I had no clue.

AMBROSE: Well, we're in Chicago, and people recognize my face, obviously we're aware of the differences, but people do recognize my face, so.

I say, I was out with Tom and Steven pushing Saving Private Ryan, and Tom came into the hotel in the morning and said he'd seen a movie the night before. And this is me telling the tellers, and so I looked at him kind of strange and said, Tom, how the hell do you do that? And you said, well, you get a hat and you bring it down low and you put on dark glasses, and oh, you get the local newspaper under your arm, and they always think you're a local. And you get into the theater, and then it's dark. And I've used that. [laughter]

HANKS: Did I say walk with conviction because that's another thing that's important? Don't linger, man. You've got to get that paper under your arm and you walk with conviction, and no one will stop you, they might holler at you.

AMBROSE: Yes. This is what it says. Are you comfortable with your public image? And how far off is it from your private or from the private you? Do you hate sometimes being thought of as Mr. Nice Guy?

HANKS: I don't have any problems with it.

AMBROSE: This one I've got much more interest in. And it's a question about patriotism, and patriotism takes many forms. And again getting back to your generation and mine, the rejection of all things in America by never a majority, but by a significant part of the population between thirty and ten years old at that time, was huge. You lived through that, and you got through that. And now you are our leader in your acting roles and in your advocacy for the World War II Memorial. And I think I'll start by saying how it affects me, my patriotism has gone up a lot as I get older, and part [inaudible] wise but partly it's because things have turned out so well for the world. And because I am very keenly aware we won the Cold War, and we won World War II.

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: We won the first World War. We threw the Kaiser and we threw Hitler and we threw Tojo [phonetic] and then we threw Stalin successors into the ashcan of history. I make my living with the words, and I almost get tongue-tied trying to talk about how great this country is.

HANKS: Yes.

AMBROSE: And then it seems like Dad, you're just, my daughter told me this, Dad, come on. It's not all that good, and so on and so forth. What is it she calls me? A triumphalist.

HANKS: A triumphalist?

AMBROSE: Triumphalist. [laughter] If you're going to do western history nineteenth century, you should be out there crying for the Indians all the time.

HANKS: Oh, yes, yes.

AMBROSE: But anyway, that's a kind of a sound byte on how I explain to myself why I'm so patriotic.

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: How do you do it?

HANKS: Well, first of all, you're talking to, look, I've been able to take the way America works and turn it into something akin to winning the lottery for crying out loud. You know, here's the country that I grew up in. I grew up in a country where it seemed to be built on not just the second chance, but the third chance. I mean, look, my folks pioneered the marriage dissolution laws for the State of California, it seems like to me. [laughter] They were getting divorces way before it was hip and way before it was fashionable. So I grew up in this country where right away, there was no, almost no stigma attached to the idea of being from a broken family because I didn't know anything other.

It didn't mean anything to me. This was just the way things were that where you could throw everything in the back of your car and take off and start off all over again somewhere else and maybe make it stick, and there was no stigma attached to that whatsoever. It was itinerant, but at the same time, it was very intimate for us as a family, and that when the time came where in other places and in a lot of other cultures, you have to decide the direction that you're going into.

And that decision is going to have a decades-long influence on where you're going to be and what you're going to be doing. And here in America, we don't have to do that, you know? You can if you have the passion to drive it. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I had no clue, but there's this long period, there's this line, actually there's this line that, oh, Lawrence of Olivier says to Dustin Hoffman just before he's about to torture him in *The Marathon Man*, you know the movie, it's as though you're a student, I understand. Yes, yes. Oh, hell, I envy you your college days, the one time in your life when truly nothing is expected of you. [laughter]

And you know, that's opposed to saying, I'm going to become a machinist or I'm going to be something, and I'm going to wait until [inaudible]. So this country that I grew up in, it seemed to be fraught with nothing but what do you want to do? How much passion do you have for pursuing it? Or do you want to just take some time in order to figure it out? So right there, there is this freedom that is not unique only to use, but nonetheless, it is built into our national psyche.

And I've talked to people from England now, and one of the things that they love about America

is that it's so wide open. You can go anywhere. You can talk to people from, I remember meeting some Russians, you know, back when the Soviet Union was still going on. I said, so what do you like best about America? They were from the Russian circus. What do you like best about America? And they would say, freedom, freedom. Like you said, I've become tongue-tied when you try to explain it despite all of us.

We examine our failures more than any society in the world, it seems like. And we beat ourselves up about them. And we passionately swing back and forth across a spectrum of morality. And even though it seems like life is going to hell in a handbag over and over again, there is this, there's always this thread that is engrained in us somehow that somehow, we still respect our neighbors to a degree. And a lot of times, that falls apart. And a lot of times, tragedy ensues. But by and large, you know, when the lights go out because there's an earthquake or the blizzard comes in and it shuts down the city, the next, suddenly you're knocking on your neighbor's door saying, is everything okay?

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: And it's almost to the point where the lights come back on, it's like, oh, what a shame. The lights are back on now, so now we've got to go back to our own life. But there is a kind of, there is a spirit of pulling together that, what is it, you're a triumphorist? What is it?

AMBROSE: Triumphalist.

HANKS: Okay, triumphalist. Okay, and now that might be the same brand of naiveté that I feel about where we're going because I remember when we were down at the opening of your museum. And he goes on and on about what's going to happen in the third millennium, and it was the most hopeful, optimistic, and I went and told Steven, listen, look at that little kid up there talking to us about how great it's going to be. People would laugh at it. He says, you know what's going to happen? The world, by and large, is going to embrace democracy because you know what, time has proven it's the only thing that makes sense. And he said, yes, there's always going to be these pocket wars with these pocket little dictators in places like East Timor.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: And you know, we're always going to have that. But you know what? We really are slowly figuring out how to get along. Now there's good stuff, and there's bad stuff. But there are probably going to be too many [chain restaurants] in this world, I agree with you. And that's not a good thing. And globalization and what not, and I don't need to go to Jakarta to see fast food restaurants or anything like that, but at the same time, you know what? We all are figuring out how to get along because here in the United States of America, we figured it out first.

AMBROSE: You're right, absolutely.

HANKS: Despite all of our differences, it really comes down to like you know what, we have a racial division here that is, the best you can say is it's slowly ebbing away. It's not ebbing away as nearly as fast as it should.

AMBROSE: Listen, when I was born, there were no blacks in professional sports. And there were no blacks playing in white schools like the Big Ten didn't have any blacks playing in it at the college level. And it was thought to be beyond the pale. Jackie Robinson set off a revolution in sports so that today, our number one sports hero in America is an Asian, African, European American named

Tiger Woods.

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: We are the world. And the best thing that's happened in this country in my lifetime is winning World War II, and then second, winning the Cold War without tearing this country apart. And the third best thing, what we've done in opening ourselves to the world, you couldn't get into this country if you were an Asian in 1935. It was almost impossible. Nobody from the Middle East, nobody from the Far East. And on and on and on and on... And the change is so remarkable, striking, whatever the word, that you could look right out this window right now, and I would guarantee you're going to see a black boy and a white girl or a white boy and a black girl walking hand in hand, and nobody's looking at them.

HANKS: No one's going to say boo.

AMBROSE: Nobody's going to look at them. And you're going to see an Asian kid down there with a Mexican American or an Asian kid with a white European or whatever, anything, everything.

HANKS: And that's just looking at it from the point of view, the most crass point of view that you could, and that's from sheer numbers. Just going to look at the statistics.

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: But you know what? If you're just looking at that, it's overwhelmingly possible.

AMBROSE: That's why everybody wants to come here.

HANKS: This is what I've been going through, this is another reason why the whole thing about history gets me over and over again because the year 2000 for my generation, it was the end of everything. It was supposed to be by the year 2000, this is going to have happened and that is going to have happened. And what happened was we go to the year 2000 and the number turned over, and that was it. And [unintelligible] what we discover, it's one damn thing after another. That's mine, put that on my tombstone. Life was one damn this after another.

I apologize to my friends and family because I say it all the time, but if you had told me in 1966, that I'm an actor and I make movies, I would have thought you were insane. But personally, that's to the truth, if you told me in 1966 I'd be married for thirteen years and I have four great kids, I would never believed it.

But if you had told me in 1966 that the world would be operating the way, that there would be no Soviet Union, I would have said, you sir, you have the imaginative powers of Walt Disney because that just ain't going to happen. No way is there not going to be a Soviet Union. Now, the Soviet Union's in bad shape. But isn't Poland going through some economic miracle?

There's a section of old Yugoslavia that is going through some sort of like economic miracle without the religious and ethnic strife that the other parts are going through. If you had told me in 1966 that a city like Chicago is going to be cleaner than it's ever been, you know, more bustling [inaudible].

Now, if you had told me in 1966 that there's going to be within pretty much walking distance of any house in America, a store that will sell you a legal addictive stimulant for \$2.65 in a cup, I would have said, well, that sounds something like out of Aldous Huxley there. [laughter] You know? And yet, here it is, you know? And we can go off and get our boost of coffee any time we want to, and

there's absolutely nothing wrong with it. It perks us up, it tastes good, it makes us feel better, and you know what?

I look at the United States of America now — underneath that beautiful stars and stripes banner and all the hokey stuff that goes along with it — and I just think, despite this myriad of problems that we have and the constant strife that we're going through, we are just undeniably at this place as a country and as a people and as a philosophy that is better than it's ever been, and it's because of who we are. It's because of this, whether it's the Promised Land that if you're lucky enough, you can get to, you can remake yourself.

My in-laws are like that. My grandfather, my father-in-law was tortured by the Communists, for crying out loud. And he did everything he could to get to America. He came to America, and you know what? He was nothing other than a bartender at the racetracks for twenty two years. And he's got three kids, and he's retired now and he's got a nice little plot of grass. He could be the happiest man there. And you know what? That's still this concept of we are the Promised Land for the entire world, and it'll be good news, the best news is always that it's actually spreading out to other places. You know? You can even look at a country like Mexico and say, my gosh, there's actually something good going down in place like that.

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: So I can't get my tongue around this word, triumpharist, I guess.

AMBROSE: Triumphalist.

HANKS: Now, to go back to relatively the subject at hand, you go back to as little as fifty five years ago, and you know what? We fought this great war with...

AMBROSE: A segregated army.

HANKS: ...a segregated army.

AMBROSE: Sure.

HANKS: And then we fought this war in which on one coast, because people were Japanese, the worst was assumed. And they were herded in.

AMBROSE: Oh, worse, [inaudible] moved them inland.

HANKS: Terrible.

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: Terrible. So even then, you had it. But who goes back?

AMBROSE: Now, you said something earlier about that.

HANKS: Well, analyze it.

AMBROSE: That's right.

HANKS: We'll examine these.

AMBROSE: That's right.

HANKS: These weaknesses.

AMBROSE: And it is a very powerful part of America that we are so self critical, and that includes

looking at our past. I don't think you'd find an American that's going to stand up for slavery. You'll find plenty that'll stand up for the rebel yell and for the stars and bars and the old confederacy, but you know, you'll say, wait a minute now, you know, what you're fighting for is slavery.

But this is southern rights, et cetera. But we examine it. And [inaudible] I was out here at [unintelligible] which is the first U.S. Army, the first infantry to be made into a museum. Colonel McCormick was its leader in the first World War, and that's why it's out there on his big estate. And it's a wonderful museum. But they're having a session of historians from around the world, and I was a part of it, and one guy got to talking about, he was just really knocking American troops for their moral actions.

And I don't even remember what the hell the detail was, but I said, now, just a minute. I guarantee you this has been studied by the United States Army, and it's available in public print. And we're here in Chicago, and there's a mural right over there with some black troopers in the Korean War, I want to tell you that what has gone in this city really sends World War II with the mass influx has been reported everywhere in the United States.

And we are working on it, and we are trying to get men of goodwill together. And so, that's not, this was several years ago, that's not happening in Moscow, that didn't happen in Hitler's Germany, and so on. So we're very much different from the Japanese on this. The Japanese, there is some movement in that direction now, but generally speaking and overwhelmingly really, they don't want to know anything about anything that happened after 1931.

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: History ends in 1931, and then all of the sudden, this is what they're taught. And I exaggerate, but not by a lot. All of the sudden for no reason are we ever going to ever figure out the American stopped dropping atomic bombs on us from the skies.

Now, history picks up again. But they just want, German scholars have been fascinated by how could our grandparents have done this? And they put a lot into the scholarship, and they're examining and they're aware. They don't even come that close to the United States. I mean, we are that far. We're so far ahead of everybody else on this. There's self criticism, and there's a lot to be critical of, slavery and the first law of slavery. But it's so much else. And there's a lot of things today. And we do it. I mean, that's what the hell politics is all about.

Somebody's got to complain, and you take it to the politicians. But it'll be covered. And that does set us apart from everybody else. It was Thomas Jefferson that said if I had to choose between a free government and a free press, I'll choose a free press.

HANKS: I look at stuff that from again, if you had told me in 1966, these are the most, I don't know how important they are, but from my generation, here's two big things that didn't exist prior to us coming into adulthood. Number one is a lot of people smoke cigarettes, and much fewer people smoke cigarettes right now.

And over the course of twenty years, however long it's been, it's all been about education, it's all been about information, it's been about some pretty good responsible aspects of, you know, banning advertisement and stuff like that. The government's stepping in and just saying, hey, you know, you can't do that, so that now, you can go into a nightclub that is smoke-free.

I'm talking like stand-up comedian friends of mine. Some guy that did comedy in the '60s and

'70s says, the biggest difference in the clubs now is nobody smokes. You know, that's okay. That's what I'm saying. We got smart, by and large, not that people don't smoke, but you know, a vast majority, much fewer people smoke now than smoked then. Another thing, too, is this concept of recycling, of understanding that it's good for everybody if you recycle your glass, you recycle your newspapers. And now, almost every house has [inaudible].

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: Now, it's small stuff, but you put it into the context of that, it enters into the national fabric and everybody starts doing it, or by and large, enough people start doing it, so it actually makes a difference. You would never, I would have thought that in 1966, wait, you're going to tell me that there's going to be special things you do with aluminum cans? And I would have thought, well, that's like something out of the Jetsons. That's something that you go off and do that. Now, it's not big stuff, but it actually has entered into the stuff that you don't ask questions about anymore.

AMBROSE: I think the best thing that my generation and your generation have done aside from winning, defeating its totalitarianism and ensuring a future for democracy that's going to be spreading within that, is that we have raised a generation now coming into age, coming to power who don't agree with my Economics 101 professor who started by telling us, this is in 1952 I think, he started by telling us in economic life, the two most important factors of all, elements of all, come for free, air and water. We've raised a generation that knows that's not true.

You don't get clean air for free. And you don't get clean water for free. And they're going to put their demand on the floor, clean air, and for clean water and for a sustainable and for the saving of scenic places and historic places, they're going to put that first.

And how it's going to work out in practice, I don't know whether there's going to be a drilling in the north slope in Alaska or not, how the hell do I know? But that mood is the predominant mood. And in the twentieth century, the predominant mood was or theme to conquer nature.

Henry Ford starts the century, Bill Gates ends the century. In between, you've got Enrico Fermi [phonetic] and you've got the atomic bomb and you've got all these great weapons. And you've got all the other conquests [unintelligible]. The twenty first century, the theme is going to be and what the best minds are going to work on is how to restore nature.

HANKS: Now, it could be as subtle as next time, one of these years, you're going to fly into Los Angeles, and you're going to look down on every roof, there's going to be reflective solar panels on every roof, not just on people who are thinking about it.

AMBROSE: Absolutely. The sources of power are going to be the genuine sources of power, wind, sun, and tides.

HANKS: Not in totality.

AMBROSE: I think by the end of this century, every house is going to have its own electrical plant. And it's going to be a disk. And they're going to have little spinning things in the top.

HANKS: Yes, yes, yes. Something like that. A lot of things are going to be going around and around, and every time they do, it's going to be a good thing. And the cell fuel technology is going to come into it because [unintelligible] they're working on cell fuel cars right now, which is like, let me get this straight, you're going to put hydrogen together with something else, and it's going to produce water and electricity? That sounds pretty damn good. [laughter]

HANKS: Let's examine this some more.

AMBROSE: Bill Ford told me at dinner a month or two ago, by the year 2020, the Ford Motor Company is going to be selling only vehicles powered by hydrocarbons. And it's not that far away, 2020.

HANKS: I'll see it.

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: I might. Let me get a little more exercise, and I'll be fine.

AMBROSE: [laughter] Are you an optimist?

HANKS: Yes. Shamelessly so.

AMBROSE: One of the most important things in a soldier's life is camaraderie. What kinds of friendship bonds do you enjoy in your life? And what do these bring to you?

HANKS: I think one of the reasons that I reacted so specifically to the recreation of this era in *Saving Private Ryan*, *Band of Brothers*, is because it's not unlike being an actor in which you're suddenly thrust together in very intimate and impassionate ways and for a long period of time with people who are not like you. But you're actors, and so you just learn to love and respect them despite the differences. Not unlike being in a company of actors, you know? What time is the company coming? Well, the company's called at 8:35, and every now and again, there's a few bad love affairs and some fist fights go along with it as well, but by and large, you get likeminded people who are all there for a common purpose.

And there is that pride of, well, we're part of the company. Hey, you're not part of the company. Hey, you're new to the company. Shut up, kid. You can't mouth off yet. You've got to do a couple of things on camera before you get here. And it's like that. I think that I look now over the best friends I have now come from friendships that I made on jobs fourteen, fifteen years ago, and you know, we speak the same language, we pick up right where we left off when we haven't seen each other for awhile.

And it's based on just the fact that we did it. You know, we did it together. I mean, making movies is a pretty goofy enterprise a lot of times, but I could come across, the best friends I have, friendships I've made is we were like sitting in a bus somewhere in Mexico for far too long a time. And we have that to always go back to over and over again. So it's the same kind of thing. But we went through, I tell you, what we went through on *Saving Private Ryan*, which has now entered into like, you know, moviemaking myth in some ways, so it seems like we were out in the woods for forty days and forty nights. It turns out it was something like six nights. It wasn't that long.

But we were in an environment where in a lot of ways, the antithesis of being an actor is that by being an actor, you carry the stuff all around in your head, and when the time comes, you summon it up and you like regurgitate it out. And it's a very personal journey that you go on. And nothing is really expected of you except that as long as you can deliver that, nothing much is expected of you. You get free haircuts, and people bring you a sandwich any time you ask for a sandwich. And they might say, he's taking a nap. Don't knock on his trailer, he's taking a nap.

But when we went through that on *Private Ryan* and we suddenly had this, we had things demanded of us, you know, in which we couldn't complain and couldn't get out of, and it was

actually part of the, quote unquote, “rehearsal process,” to make ourselves available to be exhausted and be tired. You know, it wasn’t that hard, but for us actors, when we’re going to go off and rehearse, that means we go to a nice room with a nice tray of food and people have pencils and notebooks for us, and everything is looked after, so our minds can go ahead and slowly evolve the way that they’re supposed to evolve. And here, it was just the opposite. We were cold and we were tired and we were always hungry, we were confused, we were kind of scared. But we were also stripped away of any sort of self-consciousness because we’re all such dumb clucks when it came down to this stuff. **AMBROSE:** It’s also because you were all in it together. And the part about as an observer of how these movies get made, and I’m also an observer and a commentator on how wars are fought, that is what is notable to me is you guys couldn’t do this around [inaudible]. I mean, the Oscar nights are marvelous and everything else, but it’s very nice when Eisenhower gets the keys in the City of London, but he knows goddamn well that that’s going to the whole forest, that’s not just for him, you know.

HANKS: Yes, yes, yes.

AMBROSE: And that is more so than many other professions, maybe most others, I’d have to think that through, the requirement for teamwork, I go with Jim Mall [phonetic] and I watch him set up films to shoot for his documentary and people have to know each other intimately. And they have to know what that gesture means and what that gesture means. And when he really wants a cup of coffee or whatever.

HANKS: And there’s some guy, I don’t even know who it is, but his job is to go into this little room and put his hands in the sleeve, and he’s literally got to load the raw stock into this magazine perfectly. You know? And he’s got to get it all in, and he’s got to deliver that. Now, that guy or girls is as unsung as anybody else is on the thing. But man, if they don’t do that job right.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: Everything we’ve done is worthless. And that’s the case with so many. And everybody makes fun of even like the drivers, you know, the teamsters. I’ve got news for you, those guys, they are the first come and they are the last to leave. And when a generator goes out, who are you screaming for? You know? Some teamsters, the teamwork, sometimes even still, I sit back on a movie set and say, look at this thing. The uninitiated would come and have said why is everybody standing around doing nothing, but the fact is, man, you’ve got people that are sweating bullets and doing superhuman feats all so that, even though it’s just me and my haircut it seems like sometimes, it’s like if they don’t do it, it’s like it all comes down to [inaudible].

AMBROSE: Yes, of course. Yes, absolutely, yes.

HANKS: It is teamwork. And what’s amazing to me, too, is that this concept of morale or this concept of fatigue permeates everything. You can walk onto a movie set and just say like, oh, man, everybody’s tired today. And you can see it, you can see it. And then, you know, something can just happen, and it spreads like wildfire. Then everybody’s [inaudible].

AMBROSE: And sometimes one of the things that happens is that a person walks in, now Eisenhower had an ability, he walked into a room, and everybody noticed him immediately and everybody was [inaudible] all their experience. Ronald Reagan had that in a different way. And to a different extent.

HANKS: Steven has it. Spielberg. He walks onto a movie lot and the word goes out on the wire.

AMBROSE: And everybody becomes...

HANKS: [Inaudible] everybody perks up, yes, yes.

AMBROSE: And then some people might say you've got that quality.

HANKS: They might sometimes. There's a bit of a responsibility with being number one on the call sheet.

AMBROSE: The question is there's a lot of responsibility that goes with that. Eisenhower once remarked in his first command at Gibraltar in November of 1942, he said it hit him hard how quickly optimism or pessimism spread from the supreme commander. Up or down, and it just has a miraculous impact if you come in and we're going to do this and so on, and you come in and, you know, [inaudible] so you said I learn to save all my doubts for my pillow. [laughter] It's a nice line.

HANKS: That's a nice line.

AMBROSE: Yes. But that phenomenon is very apparent. And some people have it. A baseball manager. Or an industrial supervisor in a plant or a President of the United States. Or a director of a movie or whatever.

HANKS: Yes, it's whatever it's going to be.

AMBROSE: Whatever it's going to be.

HANKS: The guy who runs the coat hangar factory can do it.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: I mean, I haven't had a lot of jobs outside of show business because, you know, I was fortunate and was able to pursue it. But there's a bell captain at a hotel I worked at, he was just the greatest guy. And he was the guy that was in charge. And it just made everything, you know?

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: It was different because he was the boss, and it's a very powerful thing when you come from one job to another [inaudible]. Then Dale Dye. [phonetic]

AMBROSE: Yes, I know Dale.

HANKS: The head of Warriors Incorporated.

AMBROSE: Yes?

HANKS: Because I had done Forrest, he was the military advisor, he had done Forrest Gump, and you know, we had a substantial amount of stuff, we went through there, we'd done Saving Private Ryan obviously. And when we were beginning Band of Brothers, [inaudible] well, you know, there's a number of things that are going to have to happen I think on this, Dale, is number one, we're going to have to get all these guys together for the duration. You know? They're going to be on this thing for ten, eleven months. And even though they're going to come off as glorified extras sometimes, we've got to have them in the background of this.

We've got to hopefully see it so that by the time you're done with hour ten, you can go back to hour one again and say, oh, my gosh, there everybody is standing in the background. He says, well, yes, we're going to have to, how are we going to get these guys to do this? And he looked at me, it was like, you just let me motivate him. You know, he knows that there is a way in order to get

guys excited about coming to work every day.

And there's a number of things that you dangle from them, but there's also a number of ways, you don't trick them, you get them invested. You know? And I must say, he's miraculous in that fashion. In the episode that I directed, we were, you know, the nighttimes in England in summertime only last about four and a half hours long, so we're trying to get the shots, and literally these guys are going off to Bastone at the end of the episode. And we've got trucks and we've got atmosphere and we've got wounded guys, it is a maelstrom of a mess.

And the thing that was key to the episode was that no orders had to be given. We didn't get into this kind of thing, alright, you men, get out of that truck, that thing that guys do in order to bolster their parts or make it look like, you know, guys are in charge of stuff like that because I had spoken to Herb Seward, [phonetic] a guy who was in the Easy Company for three weeks, came in just as [unintelligible], and next thing you know is he's in the Battle of the Bulge, and he got his legs blown, legs broken. So his memories of being there are very key because it was only about twenty one days long or so.

And so he said this thing that was amazing [unintelligible] they were professionals, and when we got to Bastone, it's like nothing had to be said. The scouts went out, the columns were formed, and they walked out, you know, whispered quiet. Nothing had to be said. So we're trying to get this same thing here in the course of, you know, the sun is coming up in an hour and a half. And Dale and the guys from Easy Company, you know, the word just went out. And they just made it all happen so that it's almost like I didn't have to stage it, we just had to make sure we got it on film or something. And that comes from pride of being in the company, pride of being friends with the guys and also being able to trust that.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: That everybody's going to find their place the way they're doing, it's not a matter at that point of, you know, what about my close-up here when I get [inaudible] wasn't a part of it so much so that if the sun was coming up, I see at the end of the road after the last shot, they're all gathered around, Dale's up there, rah rah rah rah rah, East Company, and dah de dah de dah de dah de dah de dah de. And at the end of the workday, bigger smiles as they're heading off at the end of it as we had at the beginning of it. It was an extraordinary thing, and it's palpable. And you're right, it can turn on a dime. And if you're approaching the day like, oh, what are we going to do, it would have been a mess.

EDITOR: Mark Callon's [phonetic] a friend of mine.

HANKS: Oh, yes.

EDITOR: And he's talked a little bit about the documentary he's making. And one of the things that impressed me is just how fresh all of his memories seem to be of these guys, that they still get tears in their eyes when they think about people who died, that they summon it up and it's like they're back there.

HANKS: Oh, well, you know, yes. Let me, I was talking to Mark about this. An extraordinary thing would happen. Mark would, and he could probably tell it better than I would, but you know, they'd make the date in order to go off and talk to Shorty Powers [phonetic] or the whole gang.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: And they'd get there, and it would almost be like a family reunion was going on. Grandkids, aunts, uncles, nieces, the whole thing. And they'd set up the cameras in one section of the house or in the backyard or whatever, and everybody else would be over. And he said, well, are we in the middle of something here? Are we coming in? And I said, no. I was saying, Grandpa's going to talk about something Grandpa has never talked about before. You know? It's not necessarily a real glamorous enterprise, a video crew [inaudible].

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: There's a little bit of excitement that would go on. Oh, the Hollywood people are in town. But it's not the same as a movie going on. But they were there because Grandpa was going to talk about something that he probably never, ever talked about before. And the problem is that time goes too slow. [laughter] They talk in real time. You can't get more than three hours of stuff out of him. You wish you could get nineteen hours out of him, but you just don't have it.

EDITOR: Why have they kept it inside until now? Or is it just that we never gave them a chance to talk? Why have they kept it inside until now? Or is it just that we never gave them a chance to talk?

AMBROSE: Well, they were making their careers. First of all, most of them came home to think, I just wasted the best four years of my life, which was the title of a big, '46, I think, Hollywood movie, *The Best Years of Their Lives*.

HANKS: *The Best Years of Their Lives*, yes.

AMBROSE: And they had to get to college or whatever and get married, get raising kids and make a career, and they don't want to think about that goddamn war. I've heard this quite a few times, the only thing the Army ever taught me was how to shoot a machine gun, and I never did figure out how to make a living out of that. [laughter] Well, of course, the Army had taught him a lot more when you get going, but for a long time, that was they just were busy with their careers and raising their kids, and they didn't want to talk about it. Now that's changed, and they're finding out their kids really are interested and they're finding out that there is a big public interest in it.

And I see this all the time now. They're going around the high schools, eighty five year old men, eighty year old men, or they're going around in the seventh grade or the eighth grade, and they come from the local area, and here's what I did during the war. And the kids are just fascinated by it. And the veterans love to talk. I've gone in, I had a cache, and when I was doing interviews, I could always say, I'm General Eisenhower's biographer, and that helped a lot.

Well, they talked to me partly because I was [unintelligible] and partly because I knew their divisions, I knew their regiments, I knew their weapons. And you know, you can start telling me, and it wasn't just sit down and say, tell me what you did during the war, Daddy.

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: And that's the one that would shut them up. And they usually make some bad joke or another [unintelligible]. But I would have guys saying to me things that they hadn't thought of in all that time. And then they'd get up and they'd go to the bathroom or the makeup, and the wife would sometimes want to sit in and she would be there, and she would say, do you know, I have never heard those stories. I've never heard them. But they are now very much more open. They're also dying a lot faster pace now.

And they're much more willing to talk, and the part of it is things worked out so well. I mean, we won the war, and then we won the Cold War, and here we are, and that's just great. And that's a part of it, too, certainly. But it's mainly that it happens to old men. Old men's minds go back to their youth. It is not true, by the way, and Shakespeare says that old men will remember with advantages the deeds they did that day. They don't. You almost always, a veteran will tell me so and so did this and so and so did that, or whatever, and then maybe they did something, but they almost never will brag on themselves.

AMBROSE: And then, you want to see a real hero, [unintelligible] you want to go to the cemetery because that's where [inaudible].

HANKS: Yes, yes, yes.

AMBROSE: [laughter] There is a hidden interest in World War II, and that comes about because the fiftieth anniversary has played a role, but it's obviously lasted past those fiftieth anniversaries now. And it is this new generation that wants to know the heart. The other month, a couple months ago, The New York Times bestseller list, five out of the top ten books of the nonfiction were on World War II.

HANKS: Yes.

AMBROSE: And at first, people seemed to have had the impression, well, it's all the old folks that are buying these books. And I think, it's not, it's the kids. And the veterans are realizing this. And also, I mean, they knew what they did was important, but fuck, there were twenty five million men in the armed forces of the United States. What the hell is one going to make any difference?

HANKS: Uh-huh.

AMBROSE: And now, they're looking back thinking, you're damn right I was there. [laughter] And I did good.

EDITOR: Tom, is there one thing that you learned there between Saving Private Ryan and Band of Brothers about the war that you didn't know? One surprising thing?

HANKS: Well, look, I'd have to say that I don't know if it's something, I can't say [inaudible] that I learned, but that I'm more fascinated by now and that is elusive understanding that I don't think I'll ever actually be able to grasp, and that is these guys afterwards. I think that it's, and I don't even know if this is true or not, but okay, it's 1951, okay? And you've got a job now as, you know, your machine phalanges at someplace and where you're selling insurance or, you know, you're living in a trailer somewhere, just got out, you got a four year old daughter, you got a three year old boy, and it's Christmas Eve and you're trying to put the electric train together around, underneath the tree so that when they get up, they'll think that Santa Claus brought it.

And you know, you're tired of your wife, and you're probably making \$6,000 a year, and you think you're doing great, you know? And five years earlier exactly, so that's the five year anniversary of some horrible shelling that happened, you know, in the [unintelligible] outside of [inaudible], how did these guys make this quantum leap from that to that? How did they do a million, number one, how did they put it all behind them? How did they have this very [unintelligible] you know, I was one of twenty five million guys, it's the last thing I want to think about. And yet, it's got impact on every single day of their lives when at the beginning of this I saw it...

AMBROSE: Through their lives.

HANKS: ...through their lives.

AMBROSE: Down to today.

HANKS: I'm telling you, I'd watch, I don't know who it was, but I'll find it because it's somewhere in Mark Callon's biography, a guy is saying he's now probably eighty years old. He's saying, look, the best thing that ever happened to me in my life was hearing about this thing called the airborne and raising my hand so I can go off and go down to a place called Taculeh, Georgia, hotter than Africa is hot, more miserable than the most miserable swamp is miserable. And yet, the best thing that ever happened to me was getting through that and going through the war.

Now, this is a guy now, he went to college, he's got grandkids, he's seen the greatest history in the duration of all of mankind. And what he's saying is the best thing that ever happened to me was I got the stuffing kicked out of me in Taculeh, Georgia, and I jumped out of airplanes and broke my leg at one point, and I had to kill a bunch of fifteen year old kids who were on the other side of the field from me. And I saw horrors beyond that I don't even like to talk about even now. But you know what? It's the best thing that ever happened to me.

That is, if I was to put down, if I was to say to you the best thing that ever happened to me, it would probably be a romantic, you know, obtuse connection, and here, they're talking about instead this chapter of their lives that was called the war in which it was dumb luck as well as, to me, almost Herculean accomplishment of getting through the very first [inaudible]. I love this great story in the book. I don't know who it was, but they looked up at [unintelligible] and they said, hey, I bet you they make us run to the top of that mountain at the end of our training here. And they were doing it within the next forty five minutes, you know? You get that kind of thing. That to me is the thing that I keep coming away from and slowly trying to glean from everyone.

Now look, I've lived a pretty glamorous life, man. I've done things that nobody, very few people get to do. And I have seen the world from places that, you know, very few people get to see the world from. And I don't know how I can ever truly grasp some of the things that I've done and experienced, and I never saw anybody get killed, and I never had to kill anybody. And I never had to put myself in any real bona fide danger. And I think to a degree, I'm affected by it still in my daily life, and I put it in perspective. But I go back to this concept of a Christmas Eve in 1951 and a guy just trying to make sure that his kids are going to believe in Santa Claus, and I wonder, does he look out of the window at night and still, pooh, yes, it was five years ago. Man, that was cold. I sure am glad I'm inside right now.

AMBROSE: Sure they do. And they think about a lot of other things too. And it is the defining moment. And I don't care if it's Teddy Roosevelt and go on to be President of the United States.

HANKS: It's different from where they came from because where, you know, it's like you don't get to really choose that. You came from where you came from. That's kind of like fated by God. But where these guys, where they went afterwards, there were some choices involved.

AMBROSE: Oh, sure.

HANKS: There was a value system in place now. There was the confidence that comes from survival and getting over it. There was all that kind of stuff. And you look at it, you look at the very nature of what everybody did just from Easy Company. I mean, you got guys like Buck Compton [phonetic] who...

AMBROSE: Put Sirhan Sirhan in jail.

HANKS: ...put Sirhan Sirhan in jail, and he had another guy who runs a glassware company and got somebody else's pretty much been fishing ever since, you know, hunting and fishing ever since. It never strikes me as [inaudible] fascinating.

AMBROSE: That's the thing that you're talking about that is not so much a surprise to me as just a reinforcement of my admiration for how good they were. I mean, I played big time football in college, and I've done a lot of sports and so on. And at one point in my life, I was in pretty good shape, but I never could know what these, the sleep deprivation and always tense, day after day after day.

HANKS: [Inaudible] citizen soldiers that was extremely evocative, if I'm an actor so I kind of look for this, and you talked about it's freezing cold out there, but they've got to pick up, you know, look it, and look it, just an assistant barman has to carry a ton of stuff, and it's all heavy. And he's not even carrying the weapon, is he?

AMBROSE: That's right [inaudible].

HANKS: He's carrying the gear that goes along with the weapon and the ammo cases. And you're talking about guys in freezing cold weather who have to get up out of a wet hole and move two and a half miles, by the time they get there, they've got a sheen of sweat underneath their clothes that as soon as they stop moving, is going to freeze up on them, and then they don't get to into warmth, they don't get to build a fire to get warm, they don't get to have a cup of hot coffee in order to soothe the soul, they don't get to do anything but either dig another hole and set all that stuff up again and maybe get ready to go again. And the physical exertion of the speed with which they have to do that is as equal to somebody being in a football game that day.

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: And there ain't no shower at the end of that.

AMBROSE: [laughter] Yes.

HANKS: I've been skiing sometimes, I've been cold. You know what I do? I get off that damn lift, and I go have a cup of hot chocolate and I sit there and read the paper for the rest of the day.

EDITOR: Now, what's going on with the monument?

AMBROSE: Ah, ah, I have not had much in the way of, I was in D.C. last week, and I did an op-ed for The Wall Street Journal saying that this is just absurd what the people are now doing. This is, of course it's sacred ground, which is exactly why it ought to be right there between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, I mean the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, and here's the twentieth century right in the middle. And it's a marvelously fitting monument, and you can't handle a monument like you could in the nineteenth or the eighteenth century to one man because there was one man who was indispensable.

But it's not true in World War II. Not even Franklin Roosevelt was indispensable. Not even Winston Churchill. I'd have a lot of argument on that, but that's what I think. In any event, it's the people of the United States, and that's what that monument honors. And I don't even know if they ran or not because I've been up in the mountains, but I ended up by saying, look, another commission, are you guys out of your minds? You've had so much in the way of testimony, and if

you want to get it out of these goddamn conventions and just put it up to the Congress, make the Congress stand up and vote. If there was ever a nonpartisan issue, this is it, and get the House and the Senate to vote and build the goddamn thing starting with yesterday. But I don't know where it's at right now.

HANKS: It's been approved and gone through site approvals, the whole bit. You know, when Mia Lin [phonetic] did the same thing for the Vietnam Memorial, it was a firestorm of controversy.

AMBROSE: Oh, I know. And that's right.

HANKS: And it was to say I hate this design.

AMBROSE: Yes.

HANKS: It's a sin. It doesn't represent what really went on. It's desecrating the mall. It's within the gaze of Lincoln himself and how in the world could be [inaudible].

AMBROSE: It's one of the four or five most popular monuments in America and even in the whole world.

HANKS: Thank God they put it there, and it's right where it should be.

AMBROSE: Well, so is the World War II. And I hope that it's going to happen.

HANKS: You know, when we were there for the ceremonial groundbreaking, in which we weren't actually legally allowed to break ground, which was, that was comical, I was standing, and you know what? That mall, it swallowed up ten thousand people like it was a marshmallow. It was, you saw, there were ten thousand people there, and there was nothing but grass and sky everywhere, everywhere you looked. It was like you could put six Rose Bowls in here, and you'd still have [inaudible].

AMBROSE: It's awfully big.

HANKS: It's mighty big. And I think [inaudible] at this time, I think, or any time you're going to assemble something that number one has some public attention on it, and number two, has asked for people's emotional investment in it. You get a lot of squawking about it. I think it's sad.

AMBROSE: Uh-huh.

EDITOR: Last one, for me at least. Do you have a son who is now an actor?

HANKS: Uh-huh.

MALE VOICE: He's in Band of Brothers?

HANKS: Oh, yes, yes, he is, little punk. [laughter] He plays, well, we find out this, he plays Lieutenant Jones, guy who graduate from West Point on June 6th of 1944, which that's one of those inexplicable things that we can't, we couldn't have written it better. We almost don't dare, you know?

[off mike conversation, inaudible]

HANKS: Almost don't dare to write that in there. And part of the West Point Benevolent Protective Association or the WPPA?

AMBROSE: That's it [inaudible].

HANKS: And it was interesting trying to do the research in order to find out as much as we could about these three lieutenants that came in sort of like anxious in order to get some of the war under their belt. And boy, to come in when they did at Haginow, [phonetic] I don't know where the [unintelligible] was in the spirit of these guys or their exhaustion or anything like that, but to get into that, I think they walked into a circumstance that I think was very, very different from what they imagined, you know, being a lieutenant in the airborne was going to be like. So yes, yes, that's mine, that's my lad. Tony Toe, [phonetic] who is a co-producer of it, that was the last episode that we shot, and he got to cast [inaudible] did a good job.

AMBROSE: Do you take your kids around to Gettysburg or Plymouth Rock or [inaudible] places?

HANKS: Yes, yes. As a matter of fact, my son, Colin, when we first started doing, when it looked like we were going to do Private Ryan and I was over in Paris, we took the cars up, said we've got to go see these places.

AMBROSE: Good.

HANKS: So I pointed to Hoke and saw the cemetery and visited Omaha Beach, which was a very different experience before making the movie as it was afterwards. That was, you know, here's Sunday, here's Sunday, this is another of these kind of things that I couldn't have done this, but I had a prop map, you know. I was always trying to say, what do I do? I can't just walk around. And you got schooled on the fact that, you know, if you're leading up, essentially the guy in charge is always pulling out that map and always shooting something and always trying to figure out [unintelligible] because if you get lost, that's bad news. So every time, every time we're doing anything, out comes the map, out comes the compass, out comes shooting the thing, I would say, come on, it's ten degrees here.

So this map, I just got it from the prop department, they just handed it over to me. Here's a map. And I just kind of like folded it the way a map was supposed to be, and I still have it. So I'm walking around with this thing, and duh da duh da duh. And it goes through the whole movie, and I keep it with me, then I have it in a drawer. And we start doing Band of Brothers, and we get in the meat of it. And one day, I'm trying to figure out, we see all the research of the maps and we've got them all up over the place, and I'm saying this looks like one, this looks like [inaudible] my prop map from [inaudible] go find that thing. And I got it out, and it wasn't exactly the same map, but I'm looking at it.

And you know, I'm flipping it around, and right down there in the corner of this map that I looked at through all this movie, Breakhort [phonetic] Manor. Right there, there all the time. And I look at it right where, we're trying to figure out, you know, where the guys drop. We're trying to figure out where everybody landed and this road here, and son of a gun, if right on the edge, we can figure out, and he says, hey man, that's probably right around where Lipton came down. This is probably right around where Winters was. And it was, he goes, I got it, I got it. It's up in a frame right now. Had no idea what I was carrying around with me.

AMBROSE: I got a frame, but this was a map on the scarf that the P51 pilots, and this guy was shot down, and he used that map to [inaudible] and he said he gave it to me. I said, I don't think I can get my way from France over to Spain on this map. I said, yes, you [unintelligible].

HANKS: You know, one of the nuggets that we were trying to work into this is this order that came down by the time they were in Austria. You've got to turn in those silk maps. [laughter] Can you

imagine? Can you imagine that? Now listen, those maps, you guys, had for D-Day, they're made out of silk and they're very valuable. And you've got to give those back. Otherwise every man will be fined. Well, okay, kiss my ass. I don't know if we got it in there now or not, but it's one of those things you can't imagine. Also the concept of the points. You know?

AMBROSE: Yes, yes.

HANKS: A guy was it?

AMBROSE: [Inaudible] cared about him.

HANKS: But hey, man, I made every jump, fought in every battle, and I never got wounded, so I don't have enough points to go home. That's extraordinary.

EDITOR: Okay, gentlemen, thank you very much.

HANKS: Thanks.

[end of recording]

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