

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Veteran's Name: Frank Bever

Meyer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

Date of Interview: Kansas City Reunion, September 10, 2017

Transcriber: Carol Slezak

Transcribed: June 1, 2021

Frank Bever: Preach peace. Because I've seen the other side, and it does not work. The other side being conflict, killing, a multitude of death.

David Meyer: What do you think now of the world situation? I mean, because when I went to the World War I museum, and they had that twelve-minute film at the beginning. It was reminiscent of what goes on today.

Bever: Exactly. I thought that was well done. I saw it yesterday and we saw it today again. Another son's wife came down; they hadn't seen it. They've been with me here today. And yes. My problem, and I struggle with that, it sounds to me like it's the same routine that was going on back in the time they made that film. It could happen ...

Meyer: It could happen. What do you do to preach peace? How do you do that? What do you do?

Bever: That's a good one. I don't know, other than verbally. I think, well, we've got a couple preachers in our church now that does it. I think that they do—the mere fact that our church is noted for that, my friend just indicated a moment ago, but that's one reason I think we're still struggling.

Meyer: Struggling financially, you mean?

Bever: Well, we try to think of the best way to preach it. But these people in positions of authority, representing a country or whatever, it seems to me like they want to have dominance. And the slightest provocation leads to, okay, I've got the troops now, we need to conquer this country. We'll show those ...

Meyer: We'll show those X, Y, Zs...

Bever: Yes, and I think that is coming out of a couple of our leaders now. And I may be wrong, but boy, I'm frightened. I'm thinking, the second coming? I think of—that necessity existed. And I don't know what that might amount to. If he shows up we're going to be a different world. And I got a ways to go on trying to understand...

Meyer: So, do you go to church every Sunday?

Bever: About two months ago I lost my wife.

Meyer: I'm so sorry.

Bever: That is a prominent factor. [unclear] But we had put into, our old original church of the brethren closed, that we was at fifty years. We transferred our allegiance to a smaller church nearby, Manchester. We have been there every Sunday for a long time. With her it's a different ballgame, but I still try to maintain going up there.

Meyer: What do you do to keep your spirits up?

Bever: I don't know how to answer that. It's difficult. But I've got five sons. One of them is usually there, sometimes, or more than one. Those kids dropping in is a positive. And they have worked between them, I think. One of them is too far away to drop in, Nebraska. He's here today. He's [unclear] He's closer than we were to our meeting place here in Kansas City. So, it was good to see him. But they have kept my spirits up. And I have been associated with the Church of the Brethren for probably fifty years anyhow now, and that has been long enough to realize what it amounts to.

Meyer: Sure. Church of the Brethren, is that sort of Quaker-like?

Bever: Yeah, I think Quaker is noted as another peace church, as I recall. Yeah. From that standpoint, I think they'd be virtually identical. We're not a big church, but...

Meyer: During the war, were you a praying man?

[Time 5:00]

Bever: To start with, no. Our unit was scheduled to cross the Moselle River outside of Metz. We were on a hillside there. I look down and see that water going through [interruption, other people talking]

Meyer: So you're looking down.

Bever: And that river, oh, God, that's impossible to get across there. The Germans are on the other side!

Meyer: And was it flooded?

Bever: It was at the highest level they said it had been in, I don't know, X number of years. I can't get across there with my buddies. I tell you what, Lord, you get me across there, if I make it home, you get me home, I'm a church person. He made that promise. I kept the promise.

Meyer: You kept the promise.

Bever: And I feel gratified, grateful to my Creator, that he made and stuck with his. And that was the first promise that I got from him. Second one was going into Saarlautern a month later than that. And there's infantry on each side of a big tank of ours, going into Saarlautern. In

comes a German 88 shell, bursts right on the tank. Five injuries, one fatal, on that deal. I got my face all chopped up. To this day, I carry small items of shrapnel in my body. They took me back to Metz, where I'd originally come out of, and put me down on white sheets—I hadn't seen white sheets in many months. But anyhow, they operated, dressed my face up, and took that big chunk of shrapnel out of my right knee. That was the second time I was fortunate; the lord was still with me.

Third time was, I didn't think much about that till another guy mentioned it the other day, was when our whole unit, the whole 95th, was due to go back pretty quick after the end of the war in Germany and France. And we were scheduled to help invade Japan, the 95th, in spite of a lot of recommendations—the 95th writing to their congressmen. It didn't work. We were still scheduled. And I was walking in the streets of, I believe it was Camp Biloxi, and after we got a month's furlough—

Meyer: Oh, Shelby? Maybe. But, anyway, in Mississippi.

Bever: I should remember that. Anyhow, it was a nice August day, and I heard over the PA system, Japan had been invaded.

Meyer: You mean bombed?

Bever: Bombed. And then shortly after that, it was invaded. I thought oh, boy. He saved my life again. Of course, the whole division was grateful for that.

Meyer: Did people cheer or anything?

Bever: I don't recall that happening. Of course, I wasn't in the midst of any great numbers.

Meyer: So you were just walking by yourself?

Bever: Yeah, out there. I don't know, just passing time waiting for our month to be [unclear] our unit would be back together. We were going by the whole division, scheduled for Japan. Invasion. And they were fanatic enough that you know, we would have never gotten on that island. Or a lot of us wouldn't. So that was another uplifting factor of my...

Meyer: So is that in retrospect, or after each of these times did you feel like God saved you?

Bever: No. I didn't feel any different. I felt, well, I don't know. It's hard to say. I had to think. I had to. Since Saarlautern. He must be.

Meyer: So in retrospect you looked back. Sort of in retrospect you look back and just say?

[Time 10:00]

Bever: I think that retrospect in later years as I realized what indeed, it was taken for granted. I think that I didn't put enough emphasis on my life being saved. Which, well I had enough of my friends and buddies I'd been with over three years, that was wiped out.

Meyer: I remember. I remember we gave a toast to them a while ago. You know when I talked to you before [at another reunion], you gave a toast to some of your buddies. What were their names? What were some of your buddies' names?

Bever: The two that had been coming to about all of the reunions: Al Kerr, K-E-R-R, from New Jersey I believe it was. The other one was Jim Beardsley [phonetic], from Sam Bernardino—

Meyer: California?

Bever: Yeah, he was from California, but I'm not sure, San Bernardino. But anyhow, he's from California, a good buddy. Replacements. Indiantown Gap. They shut down the special officers school that they'd been—

Meyer: Yes, it was ASTP.

Bever: ASTP, yeah. I made friends, I don't know how that all developed. But those two guys were basically emphasized in my life. They were similar approaches. And I could talk to them, and I agreed with them. And they latched on to our infantry platoons, and we went through a lot of training together, prior to going over. And I have seen them after the war. We went to nearly every reunion—

Meyer: Do you still talk to them?

Bever: They're both deceased.

Meyer: They are? Mr. Beardsley, too?

Bever: That's right. I don't have anybody from my company here anymore. There's your death thing entering into the picture. I'm ninety-six years of age! And they weren't that old. I know, why am I still here?

Meyer: Why do you think?

Bever: I haven't done something yet that I was supposed to do. He's giving me more time.

Meyer: Giving you more time. What would you like to do? Do you know what that thing is?

Bever: I'm working on it.

Meyer: Do you have a hint? What do you think it's about?

Bever: The only thing I can get, you keep going to church. You'll find out. If it's one given item, yeah. Well, I don't know. It's a contrast, the peace approach and well, a year ago, for instance, in April, I went on my first honor flight trip, to D.C., our nation's capital.

Meyer: Oh, you did? How was that?

Bever: It was outstanding. Mike, my son that's here tonight with me, went as my guide, or one to lean on. We had a good time. It was a one-day affair. We visited a lot of the official government buildings. Run across Bob Dole when we first got there.

Meyer: Did you run across.

Bever: Well maybe that's part of that payback. Talked to him briefly.

Meyer: You know, Bob Dole was ASTP.

Bever: Was he?

Meyer: Yeah, Bob Dole was. That's in that thing I gave you, the Metz Hour? Jerry Schwarz [phonetic] in his talk back in 2004, he mentioned ASTP and said Bob Dole was one. So you get there, and you meet someone who's ASTP.

Bever: Okay, yeah. I talked to him, just briefly, but I recognized the name. He's a big political man. I talked to him briefly. I don't know how he happened to be there. And Joe Donnelly. He's involved with the vets today and an official in DC. Talked to him briefly. Those two guys were there the day we were there.

Meyer: So you fly in, do you go to Congress—where did you meet them?

Bever: They were sitting, had a chair, each of them had a chair. They were at the area where all the [statues?] were, around that water? Whatever they call that. They were out in that general area.

Meyer: Like at the World War II monument?

Bever: Yeah, you know, it's beautiful. They have the big waterway clear up to the—

Meyer: Sure. Yeah.

Bever: That's where they were. But I treasure that. The church asked me after I got home for about a month from that, "Well, I think you ought to stay here sometime when we have a meal and talk to the church people about the trip to DC." But I just [unclear] that was a couple of my high points. Just to touch the [unclear] guys that had [unclear]

Meyer: Well, you know you're right. Bob Dole, I get. You have people who know war, and they're not so casual about it. They know, like you know, the cost of it. Like this joker we have now, I don't think...

Bever: A million bucks don't mean anything. A million dollars. You feel the same way. That joker. But I think he's learning a few things now. With this [Burma?] I don't know. I hope that wakes him up.

Meyer: That's what I'm thinking. Well, you know, the thing is, he'll claim he doesn't believe in global warming. But then, I live in Bermuda. And Bermuda has a lot of insurance and reinsurance companies. So just after he was elected, this guy from a reinsurance company was sponsoring a lecture on science, deep sea science. He said, "Why would an insurance company be interested in deep sea science?" He said, "Because we have to know what's going on, because it will affect our rates. For example, global warming, that affects our rates."

So my wife, who hates the current president, said, raised her hand. She said, "Wait a second. So you're a reinsurance company, so you insure the insurance companies." He said yes. "And you believe in global warming."

He said, "It's not a matter of belief. It's just a factor. We have to consider the factors." He said, "Because, you know, there's more flooding in Florida."

So my wife said, "So the current president-elect doesn't believe in global warming, but he has companies that he insures with your insurance company, true?"

He said, "Yes."

She said, "He might not believe in it, but his companies believe in it because they're insured with you."

He laughed. He said, "Well you could say that." So he's a hypocrite. I think what he only cares about really is his money. And that everything else, from healthcare to everything else, it could go one way or another, but he wants to eliminate programs so that he can get more money.

But anyway, so you go to the church, because this thing with peace, that's a hard job being a promoter of peace.

Bever: It could be a fulltime job.

Meyer: That's a fulltime job.

Bever: It could be.

Meyer: How do you tell people, well, you tell people that war doesn't work, because you saw it.

Bever: I have pretty much convinced at least a couple of pastors at my church—well they knew it to be, they were brought up in the peace aspect, really. They didn't need my input, but they know I was concerned deeply with that. Mainly because I'd seen the other side and it does not work.

[Time 18:45]

Meyer: Sure.

Bever: For any period of time. Okay, we had a victory in Germany, or ETO. And I have seen nothing but wars or conflicts since that time.

Meyer: That's right.

Bever: Our church is strong in Nigeria. And they send missionaries over there to work and to preach. And that country is in bad shape. ISIS has destroyed a great proportion of the Church of

the Brethren churches over there. And a good friend of our present-day church that goes back pretty regularly to help the natives for a week or two weeks, whatever it is, to help rebuild, get the material. And supposedly they're getting a good foothold in there and they are indeed rebuilding it. But I can't quite figure how the Creator will allow those ISIS people to go around and put a match to those. But he didn't stop World War One, which we just, you've been out there.

Meyer: Yeah, yeah.

Bever: We went back again today. [to the World War I museum].

[Time 20:20]

Meyer: Yeah. Yeah. And what about the museum impressed you? Did any special thing strike you?

Bever: Boy, they lingered, my two boys, some of them, for an extended period of time. Really impressed with the buttons. I don't recall any [unclear] this afternoon, the majority of our group went up in that huge tower, could hardly look away.

Meyer: No, it's sort of scary.

Bever: But that was a factor, but I don't see hardly how that relates to any religious experience. I've got to say now, only one of our five sons attend any church. I don't recall them being in any problems. And the fifth one, after probably a high school graduation period of time, the Jehovah Witness got a hold of him. Do I need to tell you anymore? They worked him over. He's a preacher in it now.

Meyer: Is he?

Bever: He goes out every so often and preaches. How's that working? I can't apply that to that. But they did that, one of the five got involved with that. And he has visited twice, the Jehovah everything.

Meyer: Oh, sure, just talking about Mr. Bever and what it's like to be peace-oriented and this sort of thing. Did you look at this thing yet?

Bever: This thing? No, one of our sons has it. I did look in it, but I haven't page by page.

Meyer: And where did you enter the war? You came over in Normandy, didn't you?

Bever: No, about three months after Normandy. We went in on Omaha Beach, D+ 90 days.

Meyer: What did it look like?

Bever: It was strewn with disabled halftracks, those small jeeps. At that time, even. I stood there. Of course, we were under fire. Up above a huge cliff, ninety feet. I can understand how they mowed our boys down going across that particular beach, and I did not take kindly to that. Why have wars? It didn't serve any purpose there. Other than those leaders, these leaders are 90%, trying to outdo one another. Hitler, for one, people didn't agree with him. And I see that in some of the present-day situations. I'm [prideful?], and I don't know. If we get out of here, I'll be a stronger Christian. Without a war. We're close, I think, right now.

Meyer: Do you remember, did you ride on the Forty-and-Eight trains?

Bever: Yep. I don't know where we went to and from, but we were—oh, I think after we landed in Northern England, we took that down to our, closer to London.

Meyer: I know you got on them in France for a while.

Bever: This is before we even went over the Channel. We landed up here, and come down.

Meyer: Okay. Winchester.

Bever: Is that—

Meyer: So this is England. Winchester.

?: Winchester is here.

Bever: Let's see.

Meyer: Yeah, take a look.

Bever: Oh, no, that's [unclear] We were over in England.

Meyer: Yes, this is the bottom of England.

Bever: Well, okay. We probably went down, but we went across the channel. We were also—

Meyer: This is Normandy here.

Bever: We stayed in South England, for three weeks, probably, after we landed up here. As a [formed invasion?] We already had, all over the [US?] [unclear] channel after [unclear] time in southern England.

Kay Grosinske: Once you landed, how did you move into France? Did you do forty-and-eights there?

Bever: No. That was foot power.

[Time 25:53]

Grosinske: Really? You walked.

Bever: Yeah. We didn't make a big push to the front. We were there about a month or two before we ever entered—

Meyer: In Normandy.

Bever: Everybody got nervous. They wanted to get into combat.

Meyer: But not you?

Bever: I don't recall too much about that. I thought, well, we've trained for that. We ought to be prepared if we're ever prepared. But I don't--

Meyer: Were you staying in apple orchards?

Bever: Yes, we played a lot of volleyball. I love volleyball. I'd get Nicholson, my old West Virginia buddy, I'd get on the other side. We'd bat one another [unclear] We had a great time. Two of us in a tent. And old Nick was gung ho. Big, tough kid. Well [laughs], before we went overseas. Rainy day in Pennsylvania. Indiantown Gap. Okay, Nick, we can't go outside. Get those boxing gloves out. He was twice my size. And he landed a blow on you. I knew he could do it, but he treated me easy. I had the gloves on and he had the gloves. It didn't last too long. But it was interesting, because I knew what he could and would probably do. But anyhow. And this was a long deal in getting up to the Metz area.

Meyer: Yes, so here's Metz, over here [looking at map].

Grosinske: You walked all that way?

Bever: That's not really supposed to be our—

Meyer: Yeah, that's supposed to be your movement.

Grosinske: Yes, that is how you went.

Bever: Okay. Well, somehow or other, I remember coming through here.

Meyer: Saint-Lo?

Bever: That city was 100% destroyed. Another reason why I should thank peace. You can't have war! And that's what coming down if we're not careful, if those wheels are done. But there was a road through there that our infantry could walk, or they had the huge tank, with the blade in front.

Meyer: Oh, to clear it out.

Grosinske: To clear the rubble?

Bever: Yeah, the rubble, in order to get another vehicle through. Well, the small, well, it wasn't too small. Wombat-size, or something like that. And to get through there. But that stuck with me. And that is another reason that peace is absolutely necessary. One of those can destroy a city anymore. That guy in North Korea says.

Meyer: Yeah, I know.

Bever: Get that taken care of. One of those big bombs. Anyhow, we got through that.

Meyer: We got through that. So were you awake when you went through Paris? Did you march through Paris?

Bever: We didn't go that way. We didn't go through Paris. Well, it looks like we did. No, I had no clue of going through there. Maybe.

Meyer: I heard that you might have gone through at night.

Bever: That may be and the whole reason I didn't remember much of that. It probably was in those four by—what's the name of those trucks? Four-for-four?

Meyer: Yes.

Bever: I can remember one occasion being in the truck. We were going from one area to another area. It was cold, and it was midnight, it was black. And dark. We'd sit in there half asleep. I was holding an M-1 up and down, cramping my hand. That was torture. It was torture. Because another thing, we didn't know where we were really headed towards. But, since the end of the year, that's—I don't remember a thing about Paris. It could have been.

[Time 30:02]

Meyer: Now speaking of which, yesterday I didn't feel too well. All of a sudden, something came upon me. And I thought, Did you every have any sick days? Did you ever feel sick?

Bever: I didn't miss a day in the military by going on sick call.

Meyer: You didn't?

Bever: I was fortunate. Maybe that's another God-given thing leading up to what I'm finally asking him to be merciful to me, a sinner. But no. A lot of my buddies went on sick call for various reasons. Or get into trouble, they'd put them on KP for a week or two, you know. I never was subjected—I was a model soldier [laughs].

Meyer: You were a model soldier.

Bever: And I got, oh, they give me the good conduct medal. I probably mentioned something to you in that other interview. I was one of the first to get a good conduct medal. I felt like throwing it back. "Sergeant, take it. I don't need that!" As days turned to months, I wised up. That's a great badge to have. I put it proudly, at a later time, above some of the other medals. Red. Red with the black stripes. Good conduct. "Why did I get it?" "Well, Sergeant, I ask you to do something, it gets done." And a multitude of other items. But, in a nutshell. Not to create my own pat on the back, but yeah, that part I remember. Why? I don't have a clue!

Meyer: And you were still on duty, you were still in the service when you got--when was that? Before you were in Metz? After? When you got--

[Time 31:52]

Bever: I think we were fighting to get into there, quite frankly.

Meyer: And you won the good conduct medal.

Bever: No, that was independent of that time. I had that done in the States, the good conduct, before we went overseas.

Meyer: Oh, you did.

Bever: Yeah, yeah. But of course, over there conduct means diddly.

Meyer: Do you remember any slang from back there?

Bever: Oh, maybe not slang, but the present day I've seen it, it's a book, it was everywhere I went over here in the States, it's that "Kilroy was here."

Meyer: Did they really?

Bever: Yes! I'd see that, West Virginia mountain maneuvers. Horrible ... to climb. You'd get up there and there'd be a flat rock or somebody had either in stone or chalk or something: Kilroy was here. We saw it the first roads up. That was everywhere I went.

Meyer: Everywhere you went. They really did do that.

Bever: Do what?

Meyer: I didn't know they really did that.

Bever: That was a permanent thing. Frankly, it, after we come back, it was the West Virginia area. I was on West Virginia maneuvers when I heard of the invasion, June six.

Meyer: In 1944.

Bever: And I thought oh, God, that's another one. I missed that. The lord is protecting me by being in this big division. And we didn't go over until two or three months after that. And that's about the main place that I remember seeing anything that, Kilroy was here. I never did find out how [unclear] I mean, who he was. I saw his name elsewhere, and I can't come up with it.

Meyer: Son of a gun.

Bever: Unless it was out in California—oh, that's [unclear] to California. Shortly, well, a year ago, what's that camp, whatever camp we were in, the 95th was in.

Meyer: Camp Coxcomb?

Bever: Yeah, Coxcomb, I think it was. They did, they went out, they found the location, all that was there. Just a sign: "Former Home of the 95th Division." That's all that's there.

Meyer: That's all that's there.

Bever: That was the only marking they had to indicate where we were.

Meyer: And that was a big camp?

Bever: Oh yeah, the whole division was out there.

Meyer: That's, what, 15,000?

Bever: Fifteen to eighteen, I've always heard, yeah.

Meyer: And what was your job in the service?

Bever: My main job was carrying that BAR, Browning Automatic Rifle. Did they mention that out here?

Meyer: sure.

Bever: For, ooh, maybe two or three months. That thing was killing me. Heavy.

Meyer: Did you carry the whole thing yourself?

Bever: Yes.

Meyer: So it wasn't divided up like a mortar.

Bever: No. That was it. Maybe another infantryman might have been carrying some of the ammo for it, but I don't recall that. Had a big white belt to put the ammo in.

[Time 35:28]

Meyer: And so you carried it on your back like a pack?

Bever: No, had it—

Meyer: Had it over your shoulder.

Bever: Yes. Yes. Carried the same way as the M-1, but it was about twice the weight. Twenty-one pounds, I always heard.

Meyer: Holy cow.

Bever: In contrast to nine pounds, the M-1. And then I'd hear stories, "Better get rid of that thing. That's the first thing the Germans look and listen for. The automatic firing." You pull the trigger and as long as you're pulling the trigger that thing is shooting 20 rounds in complete magazines and shells at one time. And the Germans either lob a shell or send a man out looking for that to kill him.

Meyer: Were you concerned about that?

Bever: I probably was concerned and scared. I don't know yet how I got rid of it. But I did.

Meyer: You got rid of it?

Bever: I got rid of it before we went overseas, fortunately. And I don't know who got it. I have a struggle with, lord, why have I been so vividly able to portray and remember certain items, and other items—I think it's the fact that natural, in-built characteristics, as the way of thrusting those in the back and [unclear] after I got home and was married. We had a house of our own in Wabash. The wife would kick me in the side, 12 o'clock at night, 3 o'clock in the morning, Wake up. I was fighting some of those battles again. Now that's, probably if there was a negative, that would be a negative. To lose sleep over that.

Meyer: When's the last time you dreamed of it?

Bever: Oh, I don't think it lasted over five years.

Meyer: About five years?

Bever: I would say. That's a long time.

Meyer: That's a long time. That's sixty-five years, sixty-six years you dreamed of it.

Bever: And I don't understand why some of these guys coming back with half a brain, or whatever you want to call it now, that have seen combat in recent years. That's another negative of war.

Meyer: How was it when you got back? Was it easy for you to fit in again?

Bever: No problem whatsoever. But I've heard more congratulations in the last year than I've heard in my first seventy years back.

Meyer: Why?

Bever: I don't know! You tell me. The only thing [unclear] that tower yesterday. A lady and her husband come up there. I was sitting in the shade. We went up to the top of the tower, looked out over the town, and I got lightheaded or something. I went to sit in the shade. Here was a man and a woman come up and get to talking. And our sons were there. And backed up some of my comments, and made good friends with them. They said they were coming; I should have watched for them tonight. But anyhow, that's a sidelight. And she was asking me all about my association in the 95th. And, well, it was a pleasant visit while another son was going up to the top of that tower.

Meyer: Do you remember going over in the troop ship? What ship did you go over on? Was it the Mariposa or the--

Bever: Oh yeah. USS—

Meyer: Was it the America?

Bever: No, it wasn't the America. West Point. West Point. I went over on the West Point. And come back on the—

Meyer: Mariposa?

Bever: Mariposa, perhaps. There again, it's a little shaky. Oh, eight days, I think.

Meyer: Eight days. Were you sick?

Bever: Four-high in a bunk. All men on port side went for chow on the port side. Six-thirty in the morning. Take our mess kits and go out there and jump in line, eat a little breakfast. Go back to our room, nothing to do.

Meyer: Nothing to do.

Bever: Not going overseas. I think we were allowed to get out of our area and go near the side of the ship. And they didn't say a word going over, but I heard afterward that the Nazis had some U-boat, and that created a different approach.

Meyer: A zigzag.

Bever: Did you hear it?

Meyer: Yeah, they had to zigzag to get there.

[Time 40:26]

Bever: Well, it took eight days one time, and to come back nine days, I believe it was. Or vice versa.

Meyer: And you weren't seasick at all?

Bever: No. Maybe that's [unclear]

Meyer: Maybe.

Bever: No. And there was a lot of buddies that did. Over the [side?]

Meyer: Yeah. I'll bet. Oh, that's bad. That's bad.

Bever: Did you get, were you over there? You said your dad was.

Meyer: My dad was.

Bever: What unit was he with?

Meyer: He went about the same time you did. I'm not sure which ship he was on; he was in the 379th so I think he was on the Mariposa.

Grosinske: This is the Mariposa, returning, with the 378th. My father is somewhere on this ship at this time.

Meyer: So that's the Mariposa.

Bever: I got that, and there's West Point on the wall in my bedroom. At home. Now.

Grosinske: You do. And he was on the West Point going over.

Bever: I do not know. That doesn't confirm who else might have been on it.

Grosinske: Well, he was on the West Point one direction and the Mariposa the other.

Bever: Okay. Okay. I think going over we was on the West Point.

Grosinske: West Point? So was he.

Meyer: So, was the boat crowded?

Bever: I'd say it was crowded, yeah. There were GIs about everywhere. I heard there was eight or ten thousand on that West Point. Which would have been half of our division.

Grosinske: Like this [unclear]

Bever: Yeah, but that wasn't that way all the time. They had to be assembled there. Three or four stories. I don't know, do you call them stories? Or whatever.

Meyer: Sure. Yeah. Decks.

Bever: Decks. And similar numbers on each deck.

Grosinske: Did you get to sleep at the same time, or did you have to hot cot it?

Bever: I'd say we all slept at the same time. Like I said, we were four high.

Meyer: And where were you in that four high?

Bever: I don't know.

Meyer: But you know you weren't on the bottom.

Bever: No, I don't think so.

Meyer: And you weren't on the top.

Bever: Probably if I'd guess I'd say third one high [laughs]. I don't know. Guesswork. I'm trying to be truthful.

Meyer: That's good to be truthful.

Bever: It's good. Absolutely.

Meyer: How did you like the food in the army?

Bever: First, I got to go ahead of that and say I don't ever remember missing a single meal, whether we were in combat, whether we were in the States. They got the food to us, it might have been midnight, sometimes on maneuvers here. It was dark, you'd go through the chow line, you'd hear a clunk in your metal mess kit. You had no clue what it was until you tasted it [laughs]. But they had the food there. And you'd eat it or suffer. But they'd give it to us in combat, in some fashion, eventually, in the 24-hour day.

Meyer: Was there any food that you hated afterward?

Bever: Oh, shit on a shingle.

Meyer: S.O.S. Shit on a shingle. Chipped beef.

Bever: That's the thing I remember. We had a lot of that, but it was a meal. I think in Indiantown Gap we had a lot of that.

Meyer: Shit on a shingle.

Bever: Named by some of my buddies that had it too many times, and they had to be abusive to that, categorizing [laughs]. Compared to my present-day [unclear] meals, it wasn't a good meal. But I'm taking for granted the stuff that I eat this day—and I don't think it was healthy. And I don't get the ingredients. And I'm supposed to go back to my doctor after I get home in two weeks, and he's going to take some blood samples, so forth, to see what I really need [unclear] what is important. Further questions?

Meyer: When is the first time you were aware of the war, or combat?

Bever: For the war?

Meyer: No, I mean, when's the first time you heard shelling, or knew you were about to get into it.

[Time 45:27]

Bever: We were probably five miles from the front line. A long, well, a long time being two weeks. Carl Evenden [phonetic], my buddy from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was in my foxhole with me. Manufactured by the 5th infantry division, who preceded us in that area. And as I said, there was some distance from the front line. They put us there in the holding position. And the 5th finally moved out. But being there overnight, [imitates mortar sound] constant lobbing of mortars and 155 shells, all night. The Germans were throwing over our heads. I don't know what the target areas were, anyhow, that was really impressive, because it was so constant. And you could just tell by the sound that was.

One other occasion, we were out in the open. And the Germans were manufacturing that shelling of England over our heads. What they called buzz bombs.

Meyer: Oh, sure. So you hear the buzz bombs go.

Bever: And they did buzz. And I can think oh, boy, wonder where those things will come down in a big city.

Meyer: Can you make the sound? What did they sound like?

Bever: (laughs) It reminded me of a tractor, I reckon. A Fordson tractor of yesteryear. But they had a distinct—I don't know what propelled them, whether it was a gasoline engine of some kind.

Meyer: I think so.

Bever: But something got them over there. And the English people were in a situation worse than we were. They never knew where the—

Meyer: When you were in England did you have any leave to go to London?

Bever: I don't think—what would have been the city nearby? We were outside of London.

Meyer: You were in Winchester. Some people were near what was it? Camp Barton Stacey. Were you there?

Bever: We were there.

Meyer: Okay, you were there.

Bever: Our son and his wife saw fit to follow the track of our son's father.

Meyer: Which son? The son with the mustache?

Bever: Tom. He's not here. But he's been over there. With his wife [Ruth Ann?] in recent—

Grosinske: He got a grant for that, right?

Bever: Yeah. A state grant.

Grosinke: Yeah, state grant.

Bever: As a result of fifty, forty years as a teacher?

Grosinske: A teacher. Yes. Do you know about that?

Meyer: No, what?

Grosinske: Tell him what Tom did. It's excellent.

Bever: He had, the state of Indiana. Tom was a teacher for twenty years, I suppose. Later years he knew that a grant existed from the state. He applied two or three times. Finally he wrote, after I [inaudible] of course, and we talked a little about it. I never talked about this at all. But he found out where we were, a rough idea of the area.

Meyer: Of your movements.

Bever: Yeah. And applied, and wrote enough information, and in a manner that people reading it could understand it. And they wrote back maybe a long time later. And he did get a sizable amount. I don't know, five thousand, maybe? I don't know that we ever talked about that. Him and his wife also was a former teacher.

Meyer: So they went over so they could teach about it better, or what did they do?

Bever: Just to be in a foreign country, and give him [a place to follow?] And a lot of places, they got, yes, indeed, they saw an aging man or woman. Asked about it.

Meyer: Would then?

Bever: Yeah, I remember the 95th coming through. And they did go to Barton Stacey, north of London, among the first stops. They went across the channel over through, I think they met the nice lady that used to attend our reunions.

Meyer: Elizabeth Gozo [phonetic], you mean?

Grosinke: Elizabeth. Yep. Yep.

Bever: And her husband. She took them all around Metz, trying to repay a little about what they were subjected to. And finally free to do as they wanted.

Grosinske: It was like a self-enrichment thing.

Meyer: A what?

Grosinske: A self-enrichment. So it wasn't that they were going to be teaching it. It was like a reward for teaching so long. To do something that would enhance their own enrichment.

[Time 50:23]

Meyer: Oh, that's great. So after you got rid of the BAR, where you a rifleman?

Bever: Yeah, just a regular M-1. And after that, nine pounds in contrast to about twenty-one. That will give you a [warped toe?].

Meyer: Did you like the M-1?

Bever: Well, I liked it better than the BAR, yeah. I got to tell you. I got an M-1 as we speak, in my closet. Don't tell anybody. Don't tell anybody. [laughs]

Meyer: I won't tell anybody.

Bever: Three months ago, we head out to my buddy's house, west of Manchester a little ways. We got a big mound of dirt, because it's cold. We had a lot of shells. We were firing.

Meyer: You fired it again?

Bever: Stupid Frank, I laid down on the ground to fire that, no ear protection. I didn't know that thing was so loud! I about put my ears out! And I'm [unclear] and I couldn't get back up. [laughing] It had been a few years since I fired it.

Meyer: Yes, it has. Oh, boy.

Bever: Well, we all [unclear] couple of [unclear] And Dave [unclear] was there. He's the one that invited us out. And Mike, he's down there now. He went along. He's a great supporter of the 95th. And he had a fire, and he's the one that got me out there. But stupid, boy, that thing. I about lost my hearing. I should have had a covering on.

Meyer: But when you were in combat, nobody had covers on.

Bever: I don't recall any problem with that. Of course, it wasn't every day that we would have to fire it. Because that's a giveaway, and the Germans were constantly on alert for anything of that nature.

Meyer: Where did you enter Metz? Did you come in from the north?

Bever: No. The river was instrumental in that. That riverbank I was on the side, looking down in the late evening.

Meyer: The Moselle.

Bever: Moselle.

Meyer: The Moselle.

Bever: Tom calls it the MO-zel, after being over there. Mozel and Moselle.

Grosinske: It's the difference between the French and the German pronunciation.

Bever: French and the German, yeah.

Meyer: French and the what?

Grosinske: German pronunciation. Mozel versus Moselle.

Meyer: Oh, I didn't know that.

Bever: He picked up on the German pronunciation.

Meyer: Did you go over in boats?

Bever: Only thing I can think of. We did go across. There's another void that I cannot put-- I'm wondering if I'm dreaming, if I went across that thing a time or not.

Meyer: Well, you had to get across somehow.

Bever: Had to, because Metz was on that other side, and it was defended by the Germans. And was the river at a higher level? And the Germans over there. How we got across, I do not know. We got across, or I did. And a lot of fellow infantrymen.

Meyer: Was the city abandoned? Did you see any natives?

Bever: I think [unclear] looked down and said, "Don't you guys fire." How else can we get through that line of lead? "I don't know" is the answer to some of those. All I know is we kept moving in.

I rejoined oh, whoops, story there. We had to cross that field in our initial jump off. After no comment before. Out in the middle of that big so-called Patton [?] Field, huge shell hole. In it was Ron Bleaker [phonetic]. New Jersey. Replacement at Indiantown Gap. He had been hit in some fashion. Don't ask me where. All I know is I had one of those Red Cross rolls of tape. Put around him. Or it was, parts of his body. By the time I got out of there, after ministering to him. Look around, nobody's there. The company has already pushed on. They couldn't stop for a single guy.

[Time 55:04]

Meyer: No.

Grosinske: How did you rejoin them?

Bever: That's a secret. It kind of answers his question. I got [no business in the hole?] I can't go back there and fight this thing on my own. I went back to where we jumped off from that morning. It was a kitchen area. In safe borders. I went back there, and I think I stayed around two weeks. Couldn't get back. Near the kitchen there's some more of that food. I was well fed for at least two weeks. And then finally there's a break in the action, I guess. A lull in the action. I got back to my unit, and by then they were preparing to go into Saarlautern. And that's where I rejoined, and got almost knocked out entirely by that German shell that came in and hit our tank.

Meyer: Was that in Saarlautern?

Bever: It was on the way in. That was the second time my life was spared. Because the man across the street, near this tank—big, strapping—immediate death. I know that because Jim Beardsley, my army buddy, was following him. And he heard him suffering, knew he was fatal. And that was the second time. And I rejoined them there. And was [unclear] Browning [unclear] again. And said, "Welcome back, Frank." And I thought, oh, boy. I'm really lucky to get back into that combat. (laughs) Do you hear what I'm saying?

Meyer: Yes.

Bever: “Lucky” in quotes.

Meyer: Lucky. Yes.

Bever: But it was good to get back in the [unclear] well, it wasn't all [unclear] because [unclear] either injured or dead.

Meyer: How long was it before you got back to them? A couple of weeks?

Bever: After I was injured, they put me in a C-47, flew me across the channel to a recuperation plant north of London again. That's all they had in there was injured GIs. First they take me back to Metz into a huge building, laid me on a floor covered in white sheets, white pillows. I hadn't seen any good, clean bed forever. What a treat that was. And then that's where they operated on me, taking what metal they could find out of my body.

Meyer: What's the longest you went without taking a bath or shower?

Bever: Part of that time, going overseas, I dreamed about having a shower on that boat. I can remember that stupid thing! (laughs) You tell me how I can remember that and not how we got across that river, I don't know.

Meyer: You dreamed of taking a shower.

Bever: Yeah, that shows the importance of it.

Meyer: I was wondering. You guys, you're not bathing, so everybody stinks. Do you know that you stink?

Bever: No. I don't know. Probably did. So what? Everybody else did.

Grosinske: What were your thoughts about having to shave every day?

Bever: That wasn't a requirement.

Grosinske: It wasn't?

Bever: No, not then. After we got over there. Probably after we got down in a wooden barrack here in London Again, I have no recollection. But what [unclear] Did I carry some kind of shaving equipment? I do not know. I had my mess kit, I know that, on my back. On this side was a sort of a dagger sword or whatever.

Meyer: Like a bayonet?

Bever: Fitted on a rifle. Slipped that down. And we had an awful lot of practice with that thing. I don't ever recall of any one instance of that type of combat happening.

Grosinske: Really?

Bever: No.

Meyer: So you never knew anybody who used it?

Bever: No.

Grosinske: [To a second woman who has approached the table]: This is the infamous Frank Bever.

Bever: Don't let them kid you.

[Second woman asks Frank Bever for his autograph.]

Grosinske: You're famous!

Meyer: You are famous.

Bever: You tell me why after seventy years I get this attention.

Grosinske: Because you and your comrades were the ones that won the war.

Meyer: You what?

Bever: It wasn't worth repeating.

Meyer: What did he say?

Grosinske: So Frank was part of the backbone of the army. And if they hadn't had you, and the men like you, we never could have done what we did.

Bever: Well, Mom and Dad would be happy to hear that. If they were here.

Meyer: Do you have a pen? Okay, you know Judy.

Bever: I don't know. I do now, I guess. (laughs)

Grosinske: Judy was the very first person that welcomed me into the 95th family. There was this amazing command sergeant major that was standing there in this awesome uniform. And she said welcome and she gave me a hug in Oklahoma City. (laughs) She's my hero.

Meyer: Joe Napier.

Judy: Joe who?

Meyer: Remember Joe Napier?

Judy: Remember, yes.

Meyer: You know what happened to him?

Judy: No.

Meyer: Died in a car accident with his wife.

Judy: No! When?

Meyer: Yeah. Two years ago, I think.

Judy: I didn't know.

Meyer: Maybe it was last, we found it out on [unclear] so I don't think he's ever been mentioned formally. Because it's just happened, the news [unclear] wasn't on the list.

[More people approach table, chat, ask for autographs.]

[Time 1:01:52]

Meyer: Oh, Judy, what sort of question would you like, as being in the service, what would you like me to ask Mr. Bever?

Judy: What would I like to ask him?

Meyer: A rifleman from Company what?

Bever: F

Meyer: Company F.

Bever: 379th.

Judy: My first battalion was 379th. When I first came in the army was 379th. But it's when we were located up in the panhandle of Oklahoma.

Bever: We had a reunion in that area, didn't we, at one time?

Judy: Up in the panhandle? In Guymon?

Bever: Oh, no, not in the panhandle.

Judy: No, you're thinking of Oklahoma City.

Bever: We was over Oklahoma City.

Judy: I probably helped put that one on.

Bever: Sure. I remember going out to that.

Judy: And did you go down to the memorial at Fort Sill?

Bever: Yes.

Meyer: Yeah, sure.

Bever: Talking about memorials. You will never find a better memorial, even though I quit before I come out here, I don't want anything to do with World War I. I want World War II, that I'm familiar with. But after spending two days down there, you cannot beat that.

Judy: It's a beautiful memorial.

Bever: I don't care who opposed that.

Judy: I get to go down and work on it more, pretty soon.

Grosinske: He means the World War One memorial here.

Judy: Oh, the one here. Okay.

Bever: Here. Here.

Meyer: Have you seen it?

Judy: I haven't.

Meyer: You should take some time tomorrow. It's pretty nice.

Bever: [unclear] recommended it to him. [Ruper?] division ...

Judy: Okay. Well, you know what, this has been an awesome place to come to. Maybe we can come back.

Bever: I agree. I didn't even think about this place to start with.

Meyer: Kansas City? I thought, What the hell is Kansas City?

Grosinske: I know. It's a great city.

Judy: Yeah, plus it's in the middle of the U.S. People are flying from the east, can drive in from the south—

Bever: Well the river flows on one edge, and over on the other side, Kansas City, Missouri, Kansas City, Kansas.

Meyer: That's right.

Bever: I thought we'd get here and see a big river. We [unclear] dinner, got out here last night. But the night before, it was dark, so it wasn't too good.

Judy: You didn't see any river, probably, right?

Bever: No, I didn't even see a river. Still haven't.

Meyer: Missouri River? A big river.

Judy: We're not too far from it. I'm going to get this back to General Dollars. So.

Bever: Oh, that won't be recorded any of it, will it?

Grosinske: It all will be recorded [laughs].

Meyer: Let me ask you this, I heard it rained a lot. Did it rain a lot while you were there? Or was it cold?

Bever: The place I remember was before we got overseas, mainly on maneuvers. In probably north—

Meyer: Louisiana?

Bever: No. Just before we went overseas was—

Grosinke: I don't know.

Meyer: Indiantown Gap and then up to—

Bever: Well, we went from there down to West Virginia, wasn't it?

Meyer: Oh, then to West Virginia maneuvers. The mountain stuff.

Bever: At 4:30 every day in West Virginia guaranteed, get your raincoat, Bever, you're going to need it. Wasn't disappointed. We were on the mountain for two weeks.

Meyer: Holy cow.

Bever: And that is the biggest rain, kind of rain that I can recall.

Grosinske: How long did it rain when it did that?

Bever: Well, it rained a heavy-duty shower, and it was over. But it was irritating as heck. And if you didn't have your raincoat—oh, we had a guy in the outfit, Deacon Moler [phonetic], all the GD raincoat is good for is siphoning the rain. In other words, we're getting soaked; the big chunks of water remain out.

[Time 1:05:27]

Oh, he hated that. Then we'd spend that night, usually soaking wet, under some of the fir tree, but under the fir tree, that was covered with that dropping. It was dry-looking, and that made a pretty good—

Meyer: That was a good bed?

Bever: --place to put our bags. Well, tents. But I don't remember too much about any rain in California.

Meyer: Not California. How about in Metz? Because I know the Moselle--

Bever: I don't recall that being instrumental in any of our--

Meyer: But it got cold later on that winter.

Bever: But I was gone by then. Back on my recovery of the injury. There's another higher power looking in. The Battle of the Bulge. I was just getting recovered, able to walk again. And that was taking place for--

Meyer: And when did you rejoin them? In the Ruhr Pocket, or where?

Bever: On the Rhine River. Dusseldorf.

Meyer: Oh, in Dusseldorf.

Bever: Sergeant Browning [phonetic] was there. "Glad you're back, Frank." "Browning, you don't know whereof you speak." [laughs] How about that? Browning was an outstanding squad leader, platoon leader, and he made non [collegiate?] He was very like [unclear] And I corresponded with that man, indefinitely, until he died at Emporia, Kansas.

Meyer: What made him a good squad leader?

Bever: He wouldn't tell you to do something he wouldn't do, or hadn't done. Or he'd go with you. For one thing. But his general countenance indicates, I'm with you. I'm for you

Meyer: Okay. I'm for you.

Bever: When we went across the field initially, where I worked on my buddy in the hole.

Meyer: Yeah, sure.

Bever: He said, “Come on, come on, close it up a little. Home by Christmas. Home by Christmas.” As we’re going through a big gateway, up to that open air. I remember that. You tell me how I’d remember that?

Meyer: Home by Christmas. Home by Christmas.

Bever: Home by Christmas.

Meyer: So he’s trying to cheer you up.

Bever: I guess. Entering combat with a smile. Whatever you want to call it.

Meyer: Well you know what they say. They say, we don’t remember days, we remember moments.

Bever: Moments. Okay. That would probably be a good explanation.

Meyer: That’s why. So that’s when things count. Do you remember things like this? Like walking around with guns, holding guns up? Or being cautious?

Bever: No. I don’t think we had too much of that. Of course we had to get in, but since we took the 5th Infantry Division, that helped a lot location-wise and it was important to have a line of resistance.

Meyer: Were you in Hamm at all?

Bever: If we was, it was towards the tail end. We had a lot of clearing out to do.

Meyer: So this is a picture of people walking through Hamm. Did you see that sort of destruction?

Bever: Oh, I saw that in St. Lo.

Meyer: That’s what St. Lo looked like.

Bever: That’s the only place. They had to run a bulldozer through there to get the streets to look like that. Otherwise, a jeep and other wheeled-vehicle could not get through St. Lo [trains?]. That was on our way to the front.

Meyer: Sure. So it was all destroyed.

Bever: Completely. There’s another reason that I say, war [is bad].

Meyer: Were you around when they found the concentration camp, any of the camps?

Bever: We was around, but I was spared that.

Meyer: Did you hear about it from the other men?

Bever: I heard about it from my company. But that did not register too heavily. But we had to be nearby. Before that, we were there maybe a month after the armistice was signed. I remember one morning we were toward the tail end. We were posted on the German line, if you want to call it a line at that time. It was a frosty night in April of '45. We went up through there, and the Germans had just gotten out of their shell holes, or out of their overnight whatever.

Meyer: Yeah, like a fox hole, something.

Bever: The frost was on everything, but down in that hole, where they had spent the night, you could tell that they had been there because there wasn't any frost there on the sides and the top of that hole that they had, seeking safety. But that was a cold night and we were there. And from then on, kind of a peaceful weather set in.

Meyer: How did you find out the war had ended? How did they announce it that Germany had surrendered? Do you remember that?

Bever: I don't remember much of a celebration. I remember that prior to that we spent a whole, probably a month, cleaning out homes in the area.

Meyer: Cleaning out?

Bever: Well, so-called. Invariably, Germans would leave a sniper somewhere. It was in the home, in individual homes. They'd get up in the top elevation, chance to shoot an incoming [soldier] with an American uniform. They would shoot out. We spent a good amount of time in H-A-M-M, Hamm, Germany. That's a pretty good-sized city. That was indeed necessary to make sure that they weren't in [unclear] there. I don't remember shooting anybody. I remember a lot of our company had to, we usually used a sidearm to go in there. Instead of the rifle, which is too heavy to get into the house.

[Time 1:12:13]

Meyer: What kind of sidearm would you have?

Bever: Probably that .45, I think. A lot of the guys in the infantry now, the heavy weapons that used the mortar, the ones they carried, basically to protect themselves.

Meyer: Okay. Do you remember being shot at?

Bever: Not particularly. If I was [I'd already be dead?]. But I don't really remember. No.

Meyer: Because my father one time used to tell a story about when he got into Saarlautern. He had to cross the street. They said, “Earl, run across the street to the building.” He said, “Oh, lord, Dave, I heard these—” [makes noise of weapons going off]

Bever: Well, whistle.

Meyer: This whistle. And he said, Oh Lord, keep me safe, they’re shooting at me.

Bever: Well, yeah, it’s a situation. Oh, that will always happen to the other guy, it won’t happen to me.

Meyer: I know. So did you clear out houses?

Bever: Yeah.

Meyer: So how would you go about it?

Bever: That’s all you did. You’d knock on the door. [unclear] There usually wasn’t any, I don’t recall running in any house that there was indeed a German soldier in it. Look on the walls, here’s a picture of them. The lady that’s probably in there, son or two or three.

Meyer: Yeah, sure. And they’re all in their uniform.

Bever: About the closest homes I think I’m in over there that corresponded to ours at home. It made me think about stupidity again.

Meyer: Do you remember Germany surrendering?

Bever: About the last day or two before the treaty was signed, we were on an autobahn. Hitler was great on building a few outstanding roads. Get those weapons of wars through. But looking out and down, kind of, onto one of those autobahns, was filled completely with German GIs that had become aware of the fact that armistice is nearby. They gave up.

Meyer: They gave up.

Bever: And they were coming to the U.S. side to go into an encampment, probably. And they knew they were safe. They were ready to call it quits.

Meyer: So they were walking underneath the autobahn?

Bever: Well, the autobahn was just a road. They were walking on it.

Meyer: They were walking on it?

Bever: Yeah.

Meyer: So this whole group of--

[Time 1:15:05]

Bever: And then looking overhead, a moment of joy. Huge planes were coming, heading toward the former German line. Beautiful, April 1945, spring, with emphasis on spring, morning. Wave after wave of huge bombers. B-27s?

Meyer: They could be B-23s, B-52s.

Bever: Well, anyhow, they had the star on them. Immediate identification. One of the greatest sights I ever saw in combat. That was uplifting. Especially after you saw all those German POWs. [Another taste of remembering?], and I'm confident I wasn't dreaming. Because I saw them.

Meyer: That's a great sight.

Bever: That was a great sight.

Meyer: Could you talk about the war after you got home to anyone?

Bever: You don't remember.

Mike: Oh, no.

Bever: Much questioning.

Mike: No. We questioned him, but he wouldn't talk.

Meyer: What would he say to you?

Mike: I asked him one time when I was like ten or twelve years old, and I asked him, "Dad, what was it like over there?" Because I saw something sitting on his desk, some kind of 95th, something from 95th. And all he said to me, "War is hell."

Meyer: That was it.

Mike: He didn't talk to me about it again until I was thirty-something. Twenty-some years went by. And Michelle just recounted this a little bit ago. There was one night, my wife, we'd been married like a year. And we went out to eat with him, and she asked him something about the war, and he answered her. And I about fell out of my chair. Because it was just a matter of it had been established long ago that we didn't say anything about it. We didn't ask about it.

Bever: That's another healing approach, I guess. I don't understand. Maybe that's for our own protection.

Meyer: Maybe. A question right now, one of the first persons I talked to, Fred Love [phonetic], told me that when he got back war preyed on his mind. He got his old job back, he took someone's position, and that guy was resentful. So he wanted to talk to him about the war, and the man said, "Fred, all you World War II guys come back with your stories, you're all full of crap." And Fred said, "I didn't talk to anyone again for twelve years." Was there anything that you remember when you got back and you think you tried to talk about it?

Bever: Yeah.

Meyer: What was that like?

Bever: One time we had company. Tom was there with his first wife. They got to talking about something. Anyhow, it dealt with war. And I started talking about my departed friends from World War II, and I couldn't finish. I got up, wiped the tears out of my eyes, and I did not go back and finish dinner there. And I don't know what set me off. That was [unclear]. I couldn't talk.

Meyer: And was that early after you got back?

Bever: No, it was after one of our sons had married. It was probably thirty years.

Meyer: So even then—

Bever: But I remember that specific location it happened. But it's been easier and easier ever since then. That's the only time I actually remember it, you have an instance of inability.

Meyer: Last time we talked, we took a little time to remember your friends. We even toasted them. So if we wanted to toast them again, who would I toast? What are some of their names?

Bever: I've already mentioned two of them, Jim Beardsley and Al Kerr, and Harvey Nicholson [phonetic], that's my old West Virginia buddy that put the gloves on.

Meyer: He's the one that hit you.

Bever: We went down to visit there one time, at his home. You talk about a primitive place. Back streets to get there. Kind of mountainous. And his life was publishing a newspaper, a weekly newspaper. Nick would sit down in kind of an entranceway, and not allow anyone back into the printing department. It was [unclear] passing him. And you don't want to mess with him. Because he still had those gloves. Anyhow we went down there, and talked to his wife, Virginia. I subscribed to the paper then, I still get it, once a week, due to dedication to Nick, though he's been gone for ten years.

[Time 1:20:15]

Meyer: So you still subscribe to it.

Bever: Yes. A weekly. Nothing in it. That don't make any difference. Every time I see Nick, miss him. [unclear] What's Nick's [?] last name? Nick.

Meyer: Yeah, I forget.

Bever: I do forget. I'll think of it here in another ten minutes. Oh, I'd better get out of here, you're ready to leave.

Meyer: No, no, I'm not ready to leave.

Bever: No? Okay.

Grosinske: You know something that I think is really amazing is that you know the first name, the last name, and where they were from. You still repeat it frequently today, and through you their memory is still alive. I am right, because I heard you do it all the way, and it's incredible. You've never forgotten.

Bever: You've been through instances like that with a gun, it makes a difference. He had my back; I had his back. That's about the only way I can explain it.

Meyer: Sure.

Bever: Life depended on my buddy. To a great degree. But again, it depended on your sense of what to do, just like when I got out of that shell hole. Should I go back, looking for my company? Can't see anybody. Or should I go back where I've been for a week?

Meyer: Sure. And so you did the smart thing.

Grosinske: Do you know if that soldier survived, the one you stopped to help?

Bever: Yes, we've been to reunions together.

Grosinske: Oh! Awesome.

Bever: I had a heck of a time getting him run down. Ron Bleaker [phonetic], at that time he signed my little book before we were discharged. New Jersey.

Meyer: New Jersey, that's all.

Bever: A city in New Jersey. Yeah, he had a city there. I'm not too sure whether he ever wrote any before. But that was [erroneous?] The war ended, we all come home. He enrolled in Michigan State University, across the border of northern Indiana. Okay, I didn't know that until real late. At a reunion time one time I went to our reunion president, and said, I think he had some of that modern day equipment that helped locate individuals, printed or whatever. And I gave the name of him, and he published it in something or other.

One night about, after dark, we had a call in North Manchester, from Mrs. Bleaker, from Michigan. Wanted to know if I was the one that ministered to Ron. Yeah! And one thing led to another. I invited them to the reunion coming up, and he had been to three or four, both of them. And then he finally passed away. She once in a while comes down from Michigan with her daughter, who is out in Kansas I think it is, somewhere, for a visit. And one time at a reunion we were near a beautiful, forested area, flowers were out, and there was a little tree starting up in kind of a park area, and they were going to take Ron up there to go through that, and they invited us. My wife had to go, and we did. And there's your memory again. I remember him being in a wheelchair, I pushed him through that. It was concrete walkways. He was in a wheelchair. One of my greatest pleasures was pushing my buddy through in that wheelchair. Simple but effective to me, and he enjoyed it. And he came to three or four reunions. It was in Toledo at the time. Ohio. In that beautiful area.

Meyer: When? The last one in Toledo, in Perrysville? Or was it earlier?

Bever: No, this is, well, I'm not sure about Perrysville.

Meyer: There was one that the Shawn [phonetic] family threw, in 2007, I think. Or this is bf that.

Frank Bever: This had to be close to that. I thought this was it, I thought it was the same place [unclear]

Grosinske: No, they called it Toledo. They called it Toledo. But it was really Perryville. It was right near it.

[Time 1:25:00]

Bever: Another thing I remember about where we were in Toledo, we signed up and they called us, they had a baseball team. They called us down. We lined up. Third base. That's another remembrance. I clearly remember that. We're all lined up, third base into home.

Grosinske: And somebody got to throw the ball out right?

Bever: I think that's correct.

Meyer: That's right. So when you got discharged did you go back home? Or where did you go?

Bever: Yes.

Meyer: To your parents?

Bever: Yes.

Meyer: Did they know you were coming?

Bever: Yes.

Meyer: What was it like to come home, see them again, and you're out of it?

Bever: Special feeling. You can't beat home. I mean, how could you not want to go home? That's what I was afraid of, though, I was going to be there for a month. Go back and reorganize and go to Japan. So that's why it made it so joyous to hear that announcement.

Meyer: About the bomb.

Bever: Even though that took multiple lives.

Grosinske: So can you please tell me what you felt? When you heard the bomb drop, what did you feel?

Bever: I'm guessing I took a deep breath and said, I'm going to be out of here in a short time. I don't know. That's a [unclear] How else could you feel but elated to know that you're going to be—

Meyer: You're going to be free.

Grosinske: This is your story, but can I tell you what my dad told me?

Bever: Yeah.

Grosinske: So my father, he talked about the war very little. But one thing he did say was, "Kay, the day I got married was very important in my life, and the days you children were born were very important in my life. But the most important day of my life was when they dropped the bomb on Japan, because I knew that I was going to live."

Bever: Same deal, but I also think of the recipients of that bomb. [unclear] it's a mortal enemy.

Grosinske: They would never have stopped. They would not have stopped.

Bever: I don't think so.

Meyer: No.

Bever: And I talk to people today that have been over there. Got a good friend in [inaudible] as we speak. Spent two years there with his wife in an area where they minister to visitors in Japan after the war, of course. Being there with souvenirs and whatever. Trying to tell the incoming people where such and such a building was and what the bomb did to the area where they were. That's helpful.

Meyer: Yeah, that is. With your commitment to peace, what do you do when you run into something like the Japanese and the invasion of Manchuria? Where you get something like that, how do you, with your commitment to peace, how do you stop that? What do you do?

Bever: I don't know if I went into that clear or solid in that, but we talk about it. But that's as far as it goes. I tried to think of something that I can do with this, that the ministers at the church may hear in recent days, months. But really, I don't know. But he ended up with a two- or three-page booklet with a message to him was two words: Preach peace, preach peace. And emphasis.

Meyer: Okay. Well, that's what you do. You let people preach it.

Bever: And I'm not too sure how to handle that, either. But I did speak at one time shortly after we got back from our Washington trip and that deal. He had me come up, and we had a good time with my fellow church members. But his son, I told to him one time, who he's married, two small kids. He was on a trip with his son here recently. He said oh, Andrew told him that Grandpa said, preach peace. He remembered that! That's important. Maybe that's a way to do it. I don't know.

Meyer: You pass it on to somebody else.

Bever: Pass it on.

Grosinske: And how old is Andrew?

Son [Which one?]: He's 31. ...

Bever: He's a schoolteacher.

Meyer: So he's a schoolteacher.

Bever: He passes it on. He sees twenty, thirty kids a day. And he works with those kids. He's an awesome teacher, too.

Meyer: And so he's an awesome teacher and that you've taught to preach peace. So there you go.

Bever: That's a start.

Meyer: It's a start.

Bever: I didn't expect he'd ever remember that, but he did, he told me.

Son: And you used to come in and talk to my class, and you'd say the same thing.

Bever: And I noticed a hand grenade out there today, used in the World War I, that looked almost identical to the one that I got [unclear]

Meyer: Which are what kind, like a German or American?

Son: It's a practice grenade. Same weight, shape as the real one, for practice. That's what I tell [unclear] Can't use a real one to practice.

Bever: Well, yeah, it's a [unclear] We don't know what some of these actually probably hold. But I'm limited. I'm penned up up there with 325 other people.

Grosinske: But you still shot an M1 a couple of months ago. I think that's pretty cool.
(laughter)

Bever: You can say that, but my ears still ring.

Grosinske: Next time, take ear guards.

[Time 1:30:50]

Meyer: Okay. Do you recommend service of some kind? Would you recommend a CCC? Because it looks like you can't recommend military service, to preach peace. What do you do?

Bever: That's a good question. And I have not convinced myself if I was tapped on the shoulder at fifty years younger, well probably fifty years younger I wouldn't have known about the church that preaches peace so heavily, but I would—I felt obligated then, I guess. That was service.

Son [Mike?]: What did your dad have to say about that?

Bever: He didn't have a word. I don't remember Dad saying anything. He was not--

Grosinske: Did you have siblings also in the war? Or were you the only--

Bever: Coming back from England, I had a youngest brother going over for military—

Grosinske: Occupation?

Bever: Occupation duty. A year over there. In Germany. And he had some stories, even at that late date. But that's ironic. The only one of six boys and a girl in my family.

Son: So did they come and tap on you then? How did you get involved? Was it just the draft?

Bever: Yeah, you had to sign papers.

Son: And your dad, Grandpa never had a thing to say about that.

Bever: I don't recall ever getting into it.

Son: But there's one photo of you sitting with your dad, right before you're ready to go, and you can tell—I thought you said he wasn't very happy about you going. Because there's a picture of you guys at a picnic where they said they're saying goodbye to you. And it's a picture of you and your dad kind of on like a picnic table. And it tells the story. You're not looking very happy and grandpa's not looking—

Bever: Oka, I don't recall that.

Son: That's fine. I just wanted to—

Meyer: That's okay. No, that's good. That's good. How about your mom? What did your mom say about the war?

Bever: I don't remember too much about that. It's a necessary thing, go and do it.

Meyer: Did they give you anything to take, a Bible or anything for good luck or anything?

Bever: I don't know that we ever had an open Bible in our house prior to going to the service.

Meyer: Did you have a talisman, a lucky charm or anything?

Bever: I don't think so. I don't remember any.

Grosinske: What are your memories of getting mail?

Bever: [unclear] at least in the States, all the time. It was look for the item of the day in the States. And they done a pretty decent job, I thought, overseas. It's a lot like the food you just talked about. What's the use of griping? It don't really solve anything. And I think I thought that way about receiving the mail. That's a long distance between Indiana and—

Meyer: Yeah, sure.

Bever: But I think they done an outstanding job of getting mail. But some of them would be two weeks behind from when they mailed it, but Mom and Dad—well, Dad never, I don't ever remember Dad writing a letter of any kind. Or signing a check. Well, he didn't sign a check because we didn't make any money, for one thing, on the farm. Until we bought the new John Deere tractor. I preached a lot about that. And then we started showing a profit at the end of a year's time. I don't remember suffering with five brothers and one sister and myself. Seven kids in that family.

Meyer: And where in Indiana?

Bever: Wabash. Just south of where we live now.

Grosinske: Did your mom write to you regularly?

Bever: Yes. And my grandmother did.

Grosinske: Your father's mother or your mother's mother?

Bever: Yes, my father's mother. I think [unclear] Dad didn't, I think, probably Dad didn't even know where England was.

[Time 1:35:10]

I still don't know where some of these foreign countries are today that you read about in combat, fighting, whatever.

Meyer: Did you have much contact with the natives, the French or the Germans, once you were out there? Can you fraternize? Did you fraternize?

Bever: They didn't recommend that at all.

Meyer: But did you?

Bever: I don't think so. Toward the end, in those warm spring first days, there was opportunity to see a lot of—they were great churchgoers in one of our cities where we finished. That's another case of remembering the city name. But there was a lot of believers, if you want to call them that. I wondered how—Catholic was a big-time religion, I think, in Germany.

Meyer: Yeah, there are German Catholics.

Bever: But then, I don't know, I didn't even question it then, when I was a small fry. It was high school. Didn't think it was unusual for not having to get up—Dad never would work on a Sunday, he had that from the Catholic. Dad was a Catholic, Mom was an outstanding Protestant. Mom's mother could tell you for any scripture, open the Bible to that scripture in no time. I saw her do that, her mother. But Mom didn't inherit that trait. Well, she probably had it, but didn't want to incur Dad, a possible negative relationship.

Meyer: When you got back did you talk to your parents about the war?

Bever: I don't think so. I don't recall any--Oh, I sent a little souvenir, maybe.

Meyer: Like what? What did you send them?

Bever: I got in my room today, as we speak, a covering with one of our camps here in the States. It's just a fancy covering you put on a pillow or whatever. And I think it had "Dear Mom" on it, or something like that, and then a Bible verse. I think, I kind of studied that, I can't remember where I got it. But I know I sent it to Mom. And it was on her passing I got it in my bedroom. Yeah. That's a good point.

Meyer: That's nice. Well now, sons, what do you think about your father's service in the war? What do you feel like when you go to these reunions? I mean, after ten years when everybody's, or twenty years, when everybody's gone and you're teaching it, how do you think you can you keep history alive? That's a question for you guys.

Son [which one?]: Am I in this interview?

Meyer: Yeah, I'm pulling you in.

Son: It's about him.

Meyer: Well, sure.

Son: I think he's always done a good job preaching to us peace. And that's an easy takeaway. You just have to study history and you see the continual repeating of history. And anybody who doesn't learn from history is doomed to repeat it. So, yeah, Dad's always been good at, well that's the point. It influenced our family, like we said. He didn't talk about it for a long time. It really—it was something he was dealing with, you could tell, for a long time. And so, it's been good that we've been able to get him to talk about it. And so, I think the takeaway is that we're extremely proud of him for what he did, and—yeah, we're extremely proud of him and we come here to support him in that way. That's the reason why we're here. But the peace thing, he's always made very apparent. We believe in that, too. But we also—we understand why he was involved, too, we understand that war—yeah, we believe in peace, but then again, we also realists, I think. That's a way of putting it, too. If we'd been in similar situations, we'd have done similar actions.

Son [teacher]: I was just going to say that as a teacher, I've been taking his memorabilia in every year, Veteran's Day, every now and then December 7th, I'll take it in and talk to a class. My daughter-in-law, she teaches second grade. I've gone in and shown them, oh, his medals. I use his medals as a guideline for the war. He was in the European theater. There's the Bronze Star, which means, and this is, and I run through all the different things. And then I talk about his war experiences, and I show that hand grenade he was talking about. And what happened in the war in the years, and I do a little history lesson. The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. I talk about that. Because kids don't know about this stuff. And he used to come in and talk to my class.

Meyer: Did you?

Bever: Yeah.

Son [teacher]: Until it got to the point where, you know, doing the trip--

Bever: He lives about an hour and a half from home.

Son [teacher]: --and Mom got to the point where she couldn't make the trip. And so I took over. I just come and get his stuff. And the kids—it's always good to show things. You talk to them, they go to sleep.

[Time 1:41:20]

But if you show them stuff, it makes a point. And I'll hand certain ones around and they can look at it. They're looking at seventy-year-old stuff, because he's got some old medals that are pass-aroundable. That I keep track of. So I talk about antiques and I talk about, oh, what is it—

firsthand, what do you call it? Primary sources. You know, primary sources. This is from World War II. You're not just reading about it in a book. You're seeing the actual stuff. So, it's neat. So I go in, do a little lesson. And so that's how I plan on continuing on. Continuing on his legacy, I guess it could be called. And like my brother said there, yeah, kids, they're going to ignore history unless they know about it.

Meyer: You wonder what you've done. You've passed it on to your sons, they pass it on to others. So that's a lot, Frank. You've started a movement.

Son: That's right. It continues to spread.

Bever: It's positive, and they're educated, that means a lot. Through good old Manchester University in our hometown. I didn't know until after the fifth one had graduated that my army insurance, so-called insurance, would help with that.

Son [which one?]: I'm the only one. The only one that took advantage of it. Gee. [Laughing among family.]

Bever: That's water down the drain, wasn't it?

Son: I was the only one smart enough to work it out.

Son [which one?]: I worked my fingers to the bone to get through college, and this guy, he had a free ride [laughing]...

Meyer: That's okay. That's smart.

Grosinske: Did they fight growing up, too, Frank? Your sons?

Bever: Oh, disagreements, I think, might be more—

Son [which one?]: Dad, we fought. There were some wild exchanges.

Son: That's a good point. I didn't even know about—

Bever: Probably. I'd get up in the morning, eat breakfast, and go to work. They'd either be in school, or collegiate time to go. And consequently—well, Olive was working, my wife, and basically in the last several years of you guys' life.

Son: You mean at home.

Bever: Getting up and getting ready, and going to either school or college, which was in our hometown. Convenient. I don't feel like I had a part, other than that my actions spoke louder than my words. I think. In that case. I wasn't thrown in jail every other week, or get in the pub on Main St., and google down a couple of beers, and go wobbling home. They were watching. So I didn't contribute to that [unclear]

Meyer: Well, Frank won the Good Conduct Medal before he went over to Europe. And you said you wore it?

Bever: Yeah. Before, yeah.

Meyer: So that's something.

Bever: I can picture the color and design of it right now.

[Time 1:45:00]

Meyer: And then you got a Bronze Star, and you got a Purple Heart?

Bever: Yeah.

Meyer: What else?

Bever: I don't know for sure what that Bronze Star derived from. That's an important--Maybe it was from going out there with Bleaker in that open—I don't know. Somebody had to send it in, and they know I'm the recipient of it. Or it's an automatic action of some kind.

Meyer: If you still have it, there might be a note in it that says for meritorious action, or for valor.

Bever: Well, but that don't tell me much.

Meyer: No, it doesn't. In fact sometimes it's wrong. But it will give you a clue.

Bever: Okay. You've been there. Your dad.

Meyer: No, Dick Schone [phonetic], one time, he was upset. They said, "Oh, you won the Bronze Star." He said, "Oh, yeah, that thing." I said, "What do you mean that thing?" He said, "They said for meritorious action in front of machine gun fire." And he said, "It wasn't machine gun fire; it was mortar fire." I went, "Well, Mr. Shone, that's still something." And it turned out that part of the reason was that when they were in, I'm not sure whether it was Metz, there was a slag heap. He was a medic and he had to go up this slag heap to get some bodies one time. And the Americans took it and the Germans took it back. And I think he had to go up and try to get it. And there was a German machine gunner who just put a line of fire in front of him twice. And he said, "That German machine gunner could have killed me, but he didn't. He just told me, 'Don't go any further.'" So he had respect for the machine gunner. And I think he thought the Bronze Star was messed up because they defamed machine gunners.

Grosinske: He had a really specific reason.

Meyer: He had a specific reason. He had a big, like machine gunners are decent people. You could see why. Okay.

Bever: He made an impression with you to the point where you was investigating, or wanted to talk to him more.

Meyer: Yes, all of you. You do. That's why I thought you know what, in these days when North Korea is saber-rattling, we're saber-rattling, I thought, now you have this commitment to peace. Not an easy thing to do, preaching peace.

Bever: Back to your dad. He never said anything that you remember of a train on a track in Central Germany that was loaded down with planes, did he? They didn't happen to have any, they were shipping planes, I don't know whether they were all complete or not, but I can recall going through there at that time. And I think that F Company had a bearing on either controlling the equipment, unloading the planes, or whatever. But your commentary reminded me that that happened.

Meyer: He was in H Company, so no.

Bever: In 79th?

Meyer: 379th.

Bever: Okay, well that's next door.

Meyer: So he was right next door. So he was radio man for a mortar company.

Bever: Okay. [unclear] mortar company.

Meyer: Yeah, so. Well, do you guys have any questions, now that this door is open?

Son [which one?]: Well we ask him every once in a while now. I think when they do come up when we get together, I think you've done a good job here, though, too.

Bever: I didn't know they was coming out here until the last minute.

Meyer: You didn't?

Bever: No! He was aware of when it took place. And how could you say no to...Steve, don't come out here with your wife. That speaks volumes to me.

Meyer: It does.

Bever: Yes.

Meyer: Why would you even think of saying no?

Bever: I wouldn't say no, but I wouldn't even invite him. I didn't invite him to come out here directly. He's here.

Meyer: He's here on his own.

Bever: That tells me he was more determined to come out here than to do a dozen of things he could have done in his college class tonight and yesterday night and tomorrow.

Meyer: So he's here to—well, you know what? You preserve history. You tell history. And you know what a class, it's okay. But you know, these are sort of special moments because this is a few times when these stories can come out. That you take your time to tell them to us. I still remember the last time we talked. Remember when we toasted your friends at the end? Very sweet. And I still remember that. So that's one of those things. My transcriber cried. You got that transcription, I think. I gave it to you.

[Time 1:50:30]

Bever: He almost cried.

Grosinske: He did cry.

Meyer: She did.

Bever: That's the funny thing about human construction. [unclear] My kids tell me some of these stories and I can't retain myself. Get all misty-eyed, and an inability to speak coherently. I don't understand that. I guess we're not supposed to be able to understand it. But there's been a great many times, especially as I started telling these stories, just like tonight.

Meyer: It was about loss, you know? And then about—sometimes I think I, and I don't know if it's true, but when you were talking about your buddy being at your back and you're at their back, I think you know a deeper sort of love than I usually know. You might even have more capability than I have. Because you might have to be through those situations to be able to realize what it is. Anyway, Kay, do you have any questions?

Grosinske: Not a question. I think you're a very tender-hearted man. And I wish there were many more tender-hearted men, because maybe we would actually achieve peace.

Meyer: There you go.

Bever: Continue as I have been for many--

Grosinske: Oh, I do have a question to ask. My father liked mushy peas. And I never understood why he liked mushy peas until I finally realized that he must have started liking them during that three weeks in England. Do you like mushy peas? Peas with milk?

Bever: I don't know anything about mushy peas.

Grosinske: He would take peas and milk and squish them. And I thought that was the weirdest thing. But apparently he got that habit during that short time you guys were in England.

Bever: And you said what unit was he in?

Grosinske: He was C Company, 378th.

Bever: Regular infantryman.

Grosinske: Yes.

Bever: In C Company, 78. I never had mushy peas.

Grosinske: Mush peas.

Son: Your thing is Spam, right Dad?

Grosinske: Oh my god, [I love?] Spam.

Son: You would never eat Spam.

Grosinske: My dad liked Spam.

Son: No, he would not.

Meyer: He wouldn't eat Spam and you said SOS. Chipped beef. So you didn't like Spam, either.

Grosinske: I had to tell a guy today what that was. There was a guy at breakfast who did not know, he goes, "Oh, it's chipped beef." "No it's not, it's SOS."

Son: There are certain things you wanted to eat when Mom wasn't home.

Meyer: Were there?

Son: Similar to what you had in the army. And then there was the Great Depression food that you guys didn't really like.

Grosinske: Cabbage.

Meyer: Like what? Cabbage?

Son: Yeah. And then—

Bever: I never could eat onion.

Son: Onion. Yep. What else did Mom not like, too. I mean, sometimes it was a potato thing. They got—

Grosinske: Spinach.

Son: Yeah, they didn't like that, too, because of just all the potatoes you guys ate during that period, too. I remember the Spam. I remember one time she got it or something. We got it. We got it and dad had no interest in it.

Grosinske: It's funny, because my dad actually liked Spam. Because he learned to like it during the war.

Bever: It made me think of another incident. The passing of my wife on May the 27th. Tom, his brother next to him, and his wife had been on a month's trip in and through England. And some of the countries in Europe, on vacation area. And they come down the room before they left. Mom wasn't feeling good—my wife. Should we go? What could we say? Yes. Go, because they had it all planned. They was gone for 29 days, probably. They come back on a Friday, I think it was, my wife was in the healthcare unit at the home where we are. And Tom and her had just got back from that extended vacation. We were sitting around the room where Olive was that night. Tom got up, kissed Olive on the cheek—she was laying in bed virtually motionless—and another one got up and followed suit. I finally went over there, the last one. Kissed her on the cheek, turned around, straightened up, there was his daughter, my granddaughter, standing beside me. I said, Look, Allison, she's not breathing.

[Time 1:54:22]

You tell me how, after they being gone for a month, they got back on the day of her passing and were able to be in there. And she had a smile on her face.

Grosinske: And you told me that she was ready to go.

Bever: Yeah. She'd made that, a good couple weeks ago before that.

Son [which one?]: All the sons had made it home. All the sons had checked in and said goodbye. Time to go.

Meyer: People will wait. Yeah.

Bever: People will wait. I think she did wait.

Meyer: Yeah, people will wait. I've seen that before.

Bever: I think she distinguished my kiss on her cheek in contrast to four or five sons, too.

Meyer: Sure, sure.

Grosinske: Well, she'd kind of felt that one a lot over the years, so I think she had an idea of who you were.

Meyer: And you know, hearing is the last to go. So people can be motionless, but they can still hear. I remember with my mother, she could just make small squeezes like this. So I read the Book of John—I never was a reader—so I read the Book of John, because that was her favorite book. She died while I was reading it. But she, and it wasn't pretty. I mean, she started choking and they let her choke. And I didn't know. I said, "Put the tube in her mouth." They said, "Oh, you know she's code" whatever it is. I said, "I don't give a damn." Then I left. I felt bad because I had made a scene and this big lanky cop comes in. And I thought, I'll wrestle you in hell, you fuck. And then I go outside. And then I'm embarrassed in front of the nurses and I say something. And then all these doctors come in and things. And I thought, oh, what are they doing. And then I knock on the door. I go, "Hello, how is she?" She said, "She's gone." And I went, no she's not, she's there on the bed. They said, "No, she's gone." And I went, oh.

My father died twenty years later in the same hospital, a floor below. And here's an odd thing. Because after he died around five o'clock in the afternoon, I went upstairs. The nurses knew me and let me do shit, stuff. So I went upstairs to the fifth floor where my mother had died and I found her room. No one was in it. So I said, "Do you mind if I go in it?" And for a time, she had, when I was growing up she had to have all her teeth pulled because her gums bled. So there was a time when her breath was very strong. So I go into the room, and all of a sudden the room is filled with the smell of her breath. And it's with the nurse. So I said to the nurse, "I'm going to do something, but will you breathe on me?" And she went, okay. (sound of breath) And I said, "No, it's not you. I know." So I don't know whether it's sense memory, or whatever it is, but it was very strange. And I thought all right, I don't know what this means.

But I'll tell you another odd thing that happened two days later that made me think, when I think about God and things. So my father had been a Shriner, he was a Mason. So the Masons come. They do his visitation ceremony. And you know, the Masons, they're a strange group. They come with their green aprons and things. But the ceremony they do—you go to other ceremonies and you think, oh, God, I'm weak. But they're like, "Our brother has fought the good fight; he has met his end." And at the end your gut is tight, and you're standing up straight and you feel like, oh, I've done this, he's done this, my father has made it. And this one guy leading the ceremony he keeps looking at me, because he's the head guy.

And so two days later, I decide, it's like you on the one thing where you said you didn't eat. You on the ship, I didn't know what to do. So I thought, I'll try to find a family home. So my mother's family used to have a house on the Little Miami River, near Cincinnati, like a cottage, summer place they'd go. And I thought, oh, I'll see what that is, I'll kill some time, see some old memories. So I go there, near Cincinnati, Newtown, Ohio. I go, I say, "Do you know where this place is, Cottage Park?" They said, "No, but go to the hardware store."

I go to the hardware store I say to this guy, "Excuse me, do you know—"
And he says, "Excuse me, are you Earl Meyer's son?"

Grosinske: Really?

Meyer: Yes. So I say, "Yes, what do you mean?" He says, "I was the guy who ran the Masonic ceremony at your father's thing." So, thirty miles away in the middle of nowhere I run into the guy. And so then I thought-- [loud noise] But anyway.

Bever: That's what the bomb sounded like.

Meyer: Was that what the bomb—

Grosinske: Really, the buzz bomb? (laughs)

Bever: There was some of that [unclear] God-given

Meyer: God-given. Okay, that was what the bomb sounded like.

Bever: I interrupted, you had some more—

Meyer: No, that's good.

Grosinske: That's a perfect ending. You need to go to bed.

Meyer: Perfect ending. You need to go to bed.

Grosinske: And I heard your son's going—

Meyer: Okay, okay, hold on. This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th, 95th Infantry. And tonight, for the second time, I've had the great privilege of talking to—Frank, can you say your name? Frank.

Grosinske: Say your name.

Bever: Oh. Frank Bever.

Meyer: Company what?

Bever: Company F, 379th Infantry. 95th Division.

Meyer: And also here is Kay—

Grosinske: Kay Grosinske, daughter of Don Grosinske, C-378th.

Meyer: And also, for sons.

Steve Bever: Steve Bever.

Meyer: Steve Bever and—

Mike Bever: Mike Bever.

Meyer: Who take the message of peace into the future. And give us all hope. Thank you. For the Veterans History Project, good night.

[2:01:54]

End recording