

## Audio and Video Recording Log (Required)

### 1. Name and address of contributor or interviewer.

Name of Contributor/Interviewer: David E Meyer (aka O'Shea) son of Earl D Meyer Co H/379th IR/95th ID

Address: US Malling 7095 Hollywood Blvd #840

City: Los Angeles State: Ca ZIP: 90028

Telephone: 001 (357) 97 760 448 (Cyprus) Email: osheadavid@protonmail.com

Organization affiliation (if any): 95th Division Foundation; Mob Rule, Inc.

### 2. Name and birth date of the veteran being interviewed as it appears on the Biographical Data Form.

Name of Veteran: WALTER JOHN BLENKO, JR

Birth Date: 06/15/1926

### 3. Recording format (please check)

Video type	Audio type
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Video (MiniDV, DVCAM, DVPRO)	<input type="checkbox"/> Cassette
<input type="checkbox"/> DVD-R Video	<input type="checkbox"/> CD-R
<input type="checkbox"/> USB (thumb/flash) drive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> USB (thumb/flash) drive
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (identify): recorded on TASCAM FLASH	

### 4. Digital File type (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> WAV	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MPEG2/MPG	<input type="checkbox"/> MOV
<input type="checkbox"/> MPEG4/MP4	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (identify):	

### 5. Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 105 MINUTES (3 TRACKS)

*Recordings must be at least 30 minutes in length and unedited*

### 6. Date of recording: 08/06/2011

### 7. Location of recording (City, State): 541 BOURBON ST, NEW ORLEANS, LA 62 REUNION 95TH ID

8. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence. You may estimate the minute marks. Providing this information ensures that key interview topics are readily identifiable and will greatly increase access to the collections for researchers (see next page).

# Audio and Video Recording Log

## 1. Name and address of collector or interviewer.

Name of Donor/Interviewer David E. Meyer O'Shea (son of Earl D Meyer Co. H/379<sup>th</sup>/95<sup>th</sup> Infantry)  
 Address "Mardi Gras" 35 Harrington Sound Road  
 City Hamilton Parish Bermuda State n/a. ZIP CR 04  
 Telephone( 441 599-4826;441 296 4826 Email meyeroshea@gmail.com; osheadavid@sbcglobal.net  
 Partner organization affiliation (if any) Veterans History Project

## 2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed as it appears on the Biographical Data Form.

Name of Veteran/Civilian WALTER J BLENKO JR. Birth Date 06/15/1926  
month/day/year

## 3. Recording format (please check)

VIDEO type: Betacam  VHS  8mm  High-8  DVD  Other  Tascam Flash  
 AUDIO type: Cassette  CD  Digital (Flash)  (Identify)

4. Estimated length of recording (in minutes) 105 Min (3 Tracks) Date of Recording 08/06/2011

5. Location of recording 541 Bourbon Street New Orleans, Louisiana - 62<sup>nd</sup> reunion 95<sup>th</sup> ID

## 6. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.

For example:

1:45	enlisted with best friend	22:30	on board troop ship to Europe
2:50	chose Signal Corps and reasons why	26:30	part of 2nd wave at Omaha Beach on D-Day

Minute Mark                      Topics presented in order of discussion on recording

note:                      *This interview with Walter Blenko Jr. was held at the 62<sup>nd</sup> reunion of the 95<sup>th</sup> ID Association. The interview is interrupted twice: after 51 minutes by the meeting of the association; and after 46 minutes by a fellow veteran. These 3 recordings are included as .wav files on the DVD. This log and its time codes refer to these recordings. The CD included with the DVD includes a digital version of the transcript as well as the .mp3 files of the version of the interview that was given to Mr. Blenko. This version was broken into tracks for Mr. Blenko's listening ease.*

(Continued on additional sheets as needed.)

*Note from interview/logger:*

*I*

*The interviewer/logger was able to use the VHP format on the first page of the log but found it easier to continue the log in a looser format that still includes time codes and maintains accuracy.*

*The interviewer/logger has received VHP permission to do so.*

*All of the interview takes place on August 6, 2011 at the 62<sup>nd</sup> reunion of the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Association. The venue was the French Quarter hotel located at 541 Bourbon Street in New Orleans, La. The hotels name has changed since the interview. The new name is the Sheraton French Quarter.*

*The yellow highlighted text indicates particularly vivid or articulate descriptions or insights in case a reader would like to stop and listen to the interview.*

#### INTERVIEW PART I – 50:57

Time Code	Subjects covered.
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0:00	<b>Job in Co. E and permission given to record (note – recorder was still on after the end of another interview as Mr. Blenko began to talk.)</b>
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0:21	<b>Overview of where Mr. Walter Blenko Jr. was during war. Joined Company E (378<sup>th</sup>) 95<sup>th</sup> ID. The weather.</b>
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1:00	<b>Movements in early 1945. “Hideously cold ride” in back of overloaded 2 ½ ton truck Felt effect on feet for years afterward. Bastogne, to a small town in Belgium.</b>
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**Job at Company E. (378<sup>th</sup> Infantry) Rifleman. B.A.R. (Browning Automatic Rifle)**

2:30	<b>Then attached to British short time in Netherlands while they reorganized. Germans had blown dams. Rivers flooded. Swampy.</b>
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3:00	<b>Description of 95 ID when joined.</b>
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3:46	<b>As replacement – “new and different environment.” Had been at Camp Wheeler, Georgia</b>
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**One more week to go in basic training when Germans broke through in the Bulge – (Sat. Dec. 16, 1944) “in a matter of hours told” ... “forget week 17 of training pack and get ready to move.”  
Packed up. Checked in Ft. Meade, Dec. 31. Heard whistle, bells. Midnight New Year’s eve.**

Time  
Code      Subjects covered.

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### On getting to Europe

**First 10 days to Ft. Meade (Md.). Checked in Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>.** “Rain, sludge, snow, and as we were getting ready to march off and draw equipment, we heard all kinds of whistles and bells. [laughs] Midnight, New Year’s Eve. “

5:20 Sailed Jan 6, 1945 on USS Wakefield (the Manhattan before the war). 4000 to 5000 men.

5:51 Description of how you made friends as you went along and lost them as groups were split and men were reassigned.

6:27 June 15, 1926 – Birthday. 18 years old.

Backtrack to what Mr. Blenko was doing when he heard about Pearl Harbor attack and

Bio info on parents.

8:25: Back to the trip across the Atlantic (on USS Wakefield). Had traveled at sea before but most men had not. Fine description of life on that ship.

9:58 description of one night. Heavy seas.

9:25 In compartment D-4. To go to D-5 Travel up and down ladders. Slept on plain racks. Rectangular pipe frames canvas stretched across. People moaning around.

11:27 *Lands in Liverpool, England*

*From Liverpool to station in Weymouth – marched down from the station to the harbor, boarded LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) and crossed the English channel to Le Havre. In LCI – maybe 250 men.. maybe 300. Into floating dock at Le Havre.*

13:00 - *Ours was a day to day operation. Going back to Camp Wheeler.*

13:10 *Flashback to end of basic at Camp Wheeler trying to get to Ft. Meade.*

*10 day delay in route. (The replacement’s experience)*

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We were supposed to fly. Sent to Warner Robins AFB (Ga.) spent day waiting. Bad weather. Send back to Camp Wheeler (Christmas Eve – 8PM). Nobody expecting them. Not enough rations. Return to plane, get on plane 4 PM Christmas Day (1944). Weather is bad so pilot grounds at Richmond. First time on a plane (DC-3). No seats. Benches.

Checked in where pilot grounded. First hot meal in 36 hours.

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Time  
Code      Subjects covered.

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**16:45 Christmas dinner, 1944 – hot dogs/baked beans.**

**16:57 Officer brings us to station in Richmond lets him go home to Pittsburgh. Arrives on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>, returns on 30<sup>th</sup> to Baltimore.**

**18:00 Assigned to 95<sup>th</sup> in Metz. In Le Havre just “part of a movement.” Replacement system. Haphazard system. “ReppleDepple” (replacement depot)>**

**19:00 Leave Le Havre on trains – “40 and 8s” (interviewer – from WWI could carry 40 men or 8 horses). 3 days in route. Lost men on trip across – stretching legs out of train – engineer honk “toot, toot” take off. Men would have to catch up someday.**

**19:40 Got near Nancy (France). 2 days then in Metz. Stationed in an old French Calvary post. barracks**

**20:23 No central heat. Stoves in various rooms. “Our group ...didn’t know how to make it work:... “Cold...wintertime.” Day or two.**

**Loaded on trucks. Driven. Unloaded. Reassigned by name. Back on trucks to another place. Reassigned again.**

**Still not the slightest idea (who he was with.)**

**21:23 More reassignments. Up to Regimental HQ. Call for so many men to go one place.**

**Saw a slob from basic training go that direction.**

**21:40 “I went the other. On such choices are the fates and the the lives of the world determined.”**

**Assigned to E Company (379<sup>th</sup> Infantry.) 21:57**

**22:10 About to cross a bridge one replacement asks when “we are supposed to load ammunition.” “J..C you haven’t got your gun loaded!!!” Everyone loads quickly.**

**22:44 Fraulautern (Germany). Combat.**

**Germans occupy some house, G.I.s other. Very touchy. Firing zone. Front line.**

**24:00 Sound bullets make – a ‘ssshhwit’ sound.”**

Time      Subjects covered.  
Code

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24:26 Interview – “do you remember a time you felt nervous or afraid or concerned?”

Always with one. Got fatalistic about it. This is a job.. .get it done. No good to groan.

Did your job. You had to. Stick with your group.

25:54 Job as automatic rifleman.

Standing guard, running patrols, trying to stay warm.

26:13 Tricks to staying warm

Using K-rations. Breakfast preferred because had full package of Nescafe. Dinner had chocolate bar in 5 or 6 section. If standing guard in cold night, bite of a section, “let it dissolve in your mouth and pretend, it provides some warmth.”

Guard duty. Typically 1 hour because in squad of 12 – covers 12 hours.

27:58 On squad. Leader – Victor Fidel. Respected. 20 years older than I maybe.

28:41 Replacement experience. Broken by squad and half-squad units. Know a few people but even getting whole platoon together not common.

So mostly with the squad (of 12).

29:35 Fraulautern squad was in one or two houses. Knew the squad sergeant and a few guys.

30:49 Was there reluctance from those who were there to get to know the replacements?

Didn't feel it.

31:09 We were on first floor of the house (in Fraulautern) Sleep where you could find a spot.

Couch/chair. Get to know 3 or 4 people quickly. Congenial. No use for one of them but most were helpful.

On knowing and not knowing things. Any close calls?

32:41 Interviewer talks about his own father

33:03 People who listen 100 years from now – any thing you want to tell?

33:38 Have you talked about it to your children? Grandchildren?

33:45 Has written letter to each grand-child about family history (including time in service.) Doesn't know if you can adequately tell people about some experiences.

Time  
Code      Subjects covered.

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34:38 *Most important people/person during time in service?*

Hard to answer. Number of people at different levels.  
On Squad level . Very outgoing and helpful.

35:23 Joe Brewer. Rifleman. A little bit older than others. Conversated comfortable. Some advice. End of war when turned home at Ft. Dix, N.J. Brewer on same train.  
Lost touch. 37:19

37:33 Recap from Fraulautern. (Interview tells about his own father's experience in Fraulautern.)

39:00 In Fraulautern a week or two after we arrived. Relieved by 26<sup>th</sup> Division (?)  
Then shipped N to Bastogne 2 days then to small Belgian town. 39:42 On a strip of land between Albert Canal and Meuse River.

40:11 interruption by walking veterans

40:37 In Bastogne, we were rear echelon. Two days. Looked like the photos. )  
Movements.. Up north to Champs (Longchamps?).

42:30 *Did you just go into Ruhr pocket?*

Ruhr pocket action "a long way off."  
Now in Belgium – to Netherlands and take over some of the British Second Army.  
Zones for a few days.  
Then unsure where next. Antother spot 43:27 stayed. Not a good fix on it.

43:37 Pushing up to the Rhine  
On the Adolph Hitler Bridge (calls it "Audubon Bridge") on the Rhine. 379<sup>th</sup> crossed. Missed some wires and Germans blew it up next morning.  
Saw it after it collapse.d

45:04 Up to Rheinhausen. Running patrols are the town. Then back to the place can't remember. Little village

45:54 Then cross Rhine on truck convoy on pontoon bridge Easter Sunday – April 1, 1945.

46:32 End up near Hamm and drove back to clear the Ruhr pocket.

46:45 *95<sup>th</sup> in Holocaust Museum. Do you know about this?*

No personal experience with liberating camps (know 95<sup>th</sup> ID had done so, though.)

Time  
Code      Subjects covered.

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47:53 On German solders. “Hard to sort out what I thought at that time from what I think today.”  
Resourceful group. Many caught up in unsound system.

48:50 Some (Germans) could be pretty nasty.

Was fired on by German civilians.

49:39 *Story of coming to a German residence.*

*Woman there (civilian) “pointing out how fervently she disliked Hitler... but the windows were wide open and the room smelled like gunpowder...sure she was shooting at us.”*

50:20 Interruption for business meeting.

End of Part I – 50:58

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## INTERVIEW PART II - 47:01

0:00 I think when we broke off because of the meeting ..  
talking about people who had great affect on Mr. Blenko.  
Squad Sgt. Victor Fidel.  
Platoon Sergeant. Roger Baldwin. Low key effective  
Platoon leader. Good too.

1:20 Qualities of good leadership.  
Competence. Consistency.

2:02 Company Commander. Captain (Joseph?) Quinn. High regard. Good standards.

2:41 On squads, platoons (3 sqd) to Company level to Battalion level.

4:00 *Asked for description of “a day in your squad’s life?”*

Hard one. No two days alike.

Long range objective – win the war. General description of objectives. “But I had no idea .. at the time. I knew we did this, we did this...” We were part of reduction of the Ruhr Pocket. Fitting it into the big picture – I never knew.

5:40 Mr. Blenko is “one of the youngest in the squad.”

Time  
Code      Subjects covered.

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6:04    **On the food.**

“Catch as catch can.” Much time working on field rations. On the move. Winging it. “Like a monkey swinging from tree to tree: ‘Where’s my next branch?’ Now in the 9<sup>th</sup> Army. Went through Arnhem, Julip (?).

8:24    **Mud?** Don’t remember any of that. Remember cold then wet weather.

9:07    **Recollection of weather** - on way back to U.S. stop in Normandy for a couple nights. Had tents and folding field cots. Still as cold as anyplace I remember. Then blisteringly hot during the day. More about weather.

Left Germany in area of Munster mid-June. Sailed out of Le Havre on 22 June, '45.

10:58    *Contacts with natives in France/Germany?*

Not much. Constantly on move.

We were “clearing houses” as we go down street make sure no Germans left to shot at us from behind. 11:39 We go into house, make them unlock the doors, chase up the upper floors clearing, looking into each room, checking closets.

12:18    “Leap-frogging” over other crews.  
3 men (or so) working together. House-to-house.

12:31    *Experience taking prisoners?*

In the Ruhr. Some unwilling to fold (German soldiers); others wanting to get out.

One time, some German soldiers came out of a hedge right in front of me – they were scared to death. “Gesture from a rifle, they got that very quickly.” 13:32

Rudimentary German used.

Because this was the Ruhr and Germany starting to collapse quickly there. Some German soldiers willing to fold,

Ruhr Pocket campaign – not static always moving. Keep the other side off balance.

Time  
Code      Subjects covered.

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14:17 Dortmund (9<sup>th</sup> largest city).

Enter one night.

Rumors that Germans would make a stand. So we had orders to move in quickly.

In long twilight (May 1 or later), natives “felt it was like peace” so they were “strolling the streets.”

When the 95<sup>th</sup> moved in, moved long and hard down the street and made the civilians “get behind us so they couldn’t run ahead” and telegram that we were coming. Natives were upset but little argument.

15:51 Our company was fortunate. Not run into resistance. Late April, early May.

16:08 On hearing about Roosevelt’s death. Good description of difference between press and Almanac’s and personal experience.

New World Almanac story at end of that year (1945?) make Mr. Blenko laugh. Story said that men sat down cried, stiffened, vowed to fight on.

Mr. Blenko’s experience different.

Men were tired but were marching. No one sat down (because that)..”would have stopped the line. “

Marching rifle company 200 men probably 1/3 mile long.

Word came in by radio (bulky with whip antenna)

Marching carrying 19 lbs of rifle, then ammo, hand grenades, canteen, emergency ration, ponch, half-lb bock of dynamite (helps make foxholes in frozen ground).

Reports one man saying “so the old son of a bitch (Roosevelt) finally kicked the bucket” and subsequent banter.

Not politically correct but the truth.

22:20 *Did you have to watch your language coming back to civilian life.*

Don’t think so. Didn’t get into the habit of misuse of the vernacular.

Didn’t carried away with misuse of language.

25:23 *Back to the U.S.*

Sailed back from Le Havre to Boston 22<sup>nd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1945. Planned to head for Japan 2 days in U.S. Given new uniforms. Then dispersed for 30-day furlough. Reassembled at Camp Shelby A-bomb dropped.

Time  
Code

Subjects covered.

**27:00** *On Celebration for V-J Day.*

*Fine description.*

*Men restricted to camp. Would have overwhelmed the town otherwise.*

**27:43** All grateful we had returned from Europe. Weren't optimistic about getting out of Japan. Orders to go to Japan cancelled. Relief.

**28:40** On Days before discharge.

Mr Blenko doesn't have enough points for discharge so sent to Camp Atterbury (Ind.).

**28:59** Separation center. Shifted from infantryman to being in an office – the finance department examining service records for discharges.

**29:58** Story of going to town one night, back on bus. Soldier got off when I did, asked me how long I'd think we'd be here. I asked him if he had a little slip of paper. Yes and pulled it out. Looked at two numbers. First one is date of discharge. Soldier's slip showed tomorrow was his discharge date. I told him "Pack your barracks bag, say goodbyes. Go to Final Ceremony where you get discharge. Go to bus. Take bus to railroad. Get on the train. (to Columbus Ohio – soldier's home) He couldn't believe it.

**31:42** On talking to other soldiers about the war. On reunions. Having a good time.

**33:21** *Advice for new 95<sup>th</sup> IT veterans coming back from Afghanistan?*

Stephen Decatur's toast .

"Our country, in her course of foreign nations, may she always be in the right. But, right or wrong, she's our country." 35:18

Must recognize that human nature is pretty raw/brutal.

Civilization thin veneer. If chip away. Collapse.

What Mr. Blenko sees in movies and reads – "People do not talk that way or act that way."

On respect and affection.

"If somebody is in the service today, I would hope that they would have in mind that they are there for their country, and what it stands for. That it is and ought to be a very proud heritage." 39:05

Dispise the constant running down the United States by people within the United States.  
Importance of standards of right and wrong.

Time      Subjects covered.  
Code

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**40:07** *What would Mr. Blenko like to say to great, great grandchildren listening 150 years from now.*

Values. Proper society is one in which person is free to do what he wants to do, subject to not infringing on somebody else.

**41:44** *Comparing German, British and U.S./American initiative.*

How “American Army.. just go ahead (with experiment clearing the hedgerows), and do it.” See if it worked without necessarily waiting for an authority’s permission.  
Stories of free-wheeling behavior.

**46:15** The thing that made the American soldier perfectly terrible in garrison made him almost unbeatable in battle.

**46:16** Interview interrupted for Mr. Blenko to sign a Liberty Victory Belles apron.

End of part II – 46:34

Part III – 7 min 31 sec

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**0:00** People thank Mr. Blenko for signing apron.

**0:15** *Interviewer tells story about asking a question he first heard from Ken Burn’s producer. He asks Mr. Blenko Ken Burn’s question – “Tell me a story you’ve never told anybody before.”*

**3:23** Mr. Blenko tells of a story he has rarely told. Wonderful

After V-E Day, near Munster in army of occupation. Marching close formation. Showing the flag but not looking for trouble.

Enormous number of displaced persons, or “D.P.s,” off to one side of a road. Pathetic looking.

Cooking or eating. Our column came by and the D.P.s got to their feet unsteadily.

One D.P. – man – leader maybe – “slowly raised his hand in a (open-handed) salute....

Captain Quinn... company commander.. “immediately called, ‘Eyes left’ and returned the salute.

And the D.P. straightened his back.. “must have gained three inches in stature as he held that salute and ...was recognized by the officer at the head of this column carrying an American flag.

**6:40** Closing. 6<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2011. Privilege of talking to Walter J Blenko.  
Company E, 378<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Final Rank Infantry – PFC  
When moved to finance department in final days – then T/4.

End of Part III – 7:31

Entire interview: 105 minutes (1 hr 45 minutes)