

John Dummeldinger audio log

Narrator: John Dummeldinger
Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)
Date: July 29, 2009
Transcriber: Carol Slezak
Transcribed on: Sept – Nov 2010
Log compiled by: David Meyer, May 2025

Note: Log is based on transcript which is the product of two recordings. The first is missing but the transcript shows its accuracy. The second – “Dummeldingerminute6totheend” is one hour and eleven minutes long. It is included in the Dummeldinger folder

Recording 1 – (Missing for now)

- 00:00 Intro. Meyer son of Earl D Meyer, Co. H/379th/95th Infantry. Venue Oklahoma City Biltmore July 29, 2009 6:55 PM
- 00:46 Dummeldinger born April 28, 1921 in Munger, Michigan. Served in the “good ol’ army” – 2 companies Co. F, 377th, 95th ID then transferred to Cannon Company, 377th. Daughter also present – Ms. Linda Jenkins of Essexville, Michigan Served July 1942 to Sept 19, 1945. “The whole run.”
- 02:59 First name, “Casper” but chose to be called by middle name “John.” Twenty years old when heard about Pearl Harbor Was playing ball went in for supper and turned radio on – Pearl Harbor . Dad points his finger to John and says, “You’re going in the army.”
- 04:28 Names siblings.
- 04:56 Workin' at the machine gun plant in Saginaw, when drafted. July 22, 1942, Said to his girlfriend, Kate – “Goodbye my dear, be back in a year.” (Interviewer says his father used the same phrase.)
Leave taking from family. Hated to see him go. Other brothers and Uncle couldn't serve. Brother Gus had to stay home with the farm.

Recording two “Dummeldingerminute6toend”

- 00:00 Up to time in machine gun factory still worked on farm –milk cows before the factory did chores when he got home.
Family were general farmers. A few cows, worked with horses, one tractor, sugar beets, corn, wheat, barley, oats, hay.

- 01:00 On being drafted. Sent a letter to report to Bay City, Michigan where he had a meal boarded a train to Fort Custer, Michigan then changed trains and sent to Camp Swift, Texas to the 95th Infantry. At the very beginning of the 95th (July, 1942)
- 02:00 Early days at Camp Swift. Coming into F Company
Within a week “we’s out there with a rifle, on guard, and this and that.” Was strong from the farm work. 5’5” tall scrappy and strong.
- 03:30 Basic training. Bed check 10:00 PM up by 6:30 or seven. 3 “square” meals. Used to a farmer’s breakfast but in Army – shit on a shingle (grey beef on toast.)
- 04:15 *What was first night like?* Different. Not too happy about it. But I says, "Dammit, you're here and you're going to do what the rest of ‘em do."

On basic. Calisthenics, etc. Transferred from Rifle platoon to Machine gun section. Got one of the machine guns from Saginaw factory where he had worked.
- 06:50 Camp Swift to Ft. Sam Houston for Advanced Training. Full pack 18 mile hike to Camp Bullis. Then Camp Cibolo 25 mile hike. Lived at Cibolo in pup tent pegged to ground two in a tent
- 08:15 The Louisiana Manouevers. “The Three Day problem” Had machine gun camouflaged when observer comes up and says, “You’re wiped out” on first day. Next two days “nothin’ to do.
- 08:50 To Camp Polk, LA.

Buddy in Cannon Company tells Mr. D that in Cannon company “we ride” (not walk) Mr. Dummeldinger asks Cannon company Captain to be transferred there but Mr. D is Corporal and will only take privates.

Mr. D rips off his stripes asks to be demoted to private and then transfers to Cannon Company granted. So he doesn’t have to walk.
- 10:45 To Camp Coxcomb, Ca. (desert training). Went in October stayed until Feb or March. Hot desert so thought he was training for the Pacific. Hot in the day, cold at night. 3 day pass to Los Angeles.
- 12:20 To Indiantown Gap, PA. in Cannon Company Learned how to shoot the cannon. Weight of projectile? Man from NJ says “toity-tree pounds” (33 lbs)
- 13:00 Daughter says when she was little they would ask Mr. Dummeldinger if in Cannon Company he was the man “who lit the wick.” He said yes. Laughs
- 13:15 Worked on a 105 millimeter cannon but a snub nose version. Close support for infantry. Maximum 5 miles usually shot one mile and quarter.

- 14:00 Five different powder charges. Casing separate from projectile. Get order from FDC – fire direction center – “Charge one, charge two.” Put in the charges, shove in the projectile. “Ready, fire.” Mr. D pulled the lanyard.
- 14:50 On positions on the gun. Mr. D worked direction Another worked elevation.
- 15:15 Arrival of the “Quiz kids” (“Whiz Kids) from ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) (*ASTP high school kids tested superior so sent to colleges to be engineers, linguists then pulled out when Army needed them for invasion of Europe.*) ASTP complained “We’re not getting our education.” We said “Shuddup, we’re not getting education neither.” They got used to it.
- 16:00 West Va. Mountain manouvers. Described Mountain Climbing School. More scared after he was done than he had been before.
- 16:50 To Camp Miles Standish, Mass. To be shipped out to Europe on USS West Point. Stories from the zig-zag voyage across the Atlantic to avoid torpedoes. On eating on board.
- 18:45 England. Land in Liverpool to Camp Barton Stacey near Winchester. Pass to London. “Big Ben all shot to heck.”

(Didn’t hear buzz bombs here but another time in foxhole one buzzed over head. Never woke up)

Tea and crumpets Beer called “bitters” room temperature. First one hard to swallow second tasted better. No time to mingle with the British . Only a couple of weeks there then
- 20:45 Liberty ship across the channel to Normandy. Given C-rations “morning noon and night” Stew, pork and bean. “Filled your belly that’s about it.”

On the Liberty ship. Wide open big ship. No guns. Cross the channel Climbed down the side into a LST and taken to Omaha Beach.
- 21:42 Interviewer: Was there anything left from D-Day?

Everything cleaned up but had lined up maybe a half mile of whole ships that had been shot up. Breakwater?

Land on D-day plus 60? Something like that. Middle of August
- 22:15 Bivouacked in Apple orchards. Lived in two-man tents. Patton running Red Ball Express. Mr. D didn’t drive. Stayed in apple orchard. Wrote letters back home “Somewhere in England”
- 23:15 Then up to the front Replaced the 5th division. Stayed a certain “neck of time” then got word going into action. F Company (Mr. D’s old company) makes night attack on Slag pile. Mr. D’s replacement on the machine gun is killed.

- 24:00 Interviewer talks of medic Dick Schoen who was at the slag pile. “It was murder there.” “Yes.”
- 24:15 Mr. D. was Number one Gunner but volunteers to be forward observer
- 24:45 First combat experience as a Forward observer. Thought he’d just carry a radio on his back run up to the lineman see a lot of action.
- 25:15 Reality – Ft. Gambetta attack joined with Cos L and K
Got to a chateau and opened fire. Germans “let loose with volley” Knelt in corner Praying. Seemed like an hour but only 15 minutes
- 26:15 On Battle for Metz. “We (the 95th) lost more men in Metz than the rest of the war.
- 26:26 Interview tells of first time he went to Metz (2004) called NPR. NPR says, “What’s Metz?” People forget quickly.
Takes a break. 26:40
- 27:00 After break. Daughter Linda says Mr. Dummeldinger just told her that during bombardment of chateau, Mr. D said if he’d get out alive he’d go to church every Sunday. “And he does.”
[Bystander stops by listens.] Mr. D. repeats prayer story Bystander takes photo. Talks of sound of shrapnel.
- 29:20 Now you leave Chateau Go toward city of Woippy. Along the Moselle Have to cross late at night.
Two or three boats at first and then rest follow us. Germans start shelling. Rest of boats don’t get over. Dark didn’t know “where the hell to go.” Heard Germans talking.
Mr. D. speaks German. And then we lay down beside the Moselle all night.
- 30:30 No supper On the damp bank all night. Hearing Germans talk. Speaks in German. Translates they are saying “Where are the damned American soldiers?”
Only 3 boats made it over 12 in a boat so 36 men in all. Mr. D knew German so he translated what he heard for the others.
- 31:15 Radio starts buzzing so turns it off so German’s couldn’t hear. Couldn’t go into building Fear of booby trap. (All this is after Metz but before Germany)
- 32:15 Stayed in the cold grass all night saving our butts. Next morning other boats arrive brought chow. We ate and weren’t fussy.

- 32:45 Into the Ruhr Valley. Dortmund, others. little opposition. When close to Rhine rumor that they will be in Berlin in 3 days. Engineers make a treadway bridge we go across little opposition but stopped at the Elbe River. Yalta treaty says Soviet Union to take Berlin.
- 34:00 3 days on the Elbe. Germans making rafts to come over to us. I ask in German why? Germans don't want to be captured by Russians who will treat them like they treated the Russian.
- Liberated a Yugoslav camp.
- 35:30 On the Polish girls and men being used as slave labor.
- We set up military government and appointment German Burgomeisters in four or five villages. Germans had Polish men as farmers and Polish girls as house servants. Germans serving the girls left overs for food and sometimes spoiled meat. Said to young lieutenant, Junior we called him, lets visit the German lady who serves spoiled meat.
- Told her we would have dinner with her and the Polish girls would come to dinner and have the same food as we ate. Told German that the Polish girls were freed.
- 37:00 On Mr. D's birthday the Polish girls brought him a bouquet of lilacs. We found a shoe store got Polish girls and men shoes.
- They said the Germans had taken them from their homes when they were 11 and 12 and made them do dirty work.
- 38:10 Where were you when heard of Roosevelt's death. When German surrendered Still some firing but after 3 days, stopped.
- 39:10 Memories of Russian wanting to get even with Germans so protect the Germans. Russians raid German smokehouses. Dinner with grateful Austrian who cooks fatty suckling pig. Mr. D doesn't like fat. Says "we had a big dinner and can't eat all of this good food." Thinks on his feet.
- 42:10 Interviewer asks: What did you do for relaxation? Played ball. Learned poker and blackjack. Cost him little.
- 43:45 Travel to camp (Lucky Strike) prepare to return to the US. Hit tail end of storm on way across Atlantic.
- 44:00 Landed finally in Newport News, Va. Anchored in harbor. Thought there would be a band a celebration. Instead, came on shore after dark loaded in a truck and taken to Camp Shelby Mississippi to prepare to go to the Pacific.
- 30 day pass went home. Remembers when his mother saw him again.
(Emotional.)

- 45:45 Where were you when the A Bomb was dropped? Camp Shelby. Even after both bombs dropped word was still going to the Pacific. No discharge
- 46:30 Story of discharge. Family in Michigan asks him to see if he can come back to the farm and work (father old, brother has mumps). Mr. D asks Captain Rollins who says yes but Colonel Gaylord (nickname "Turkey Neck" because of long neck) nixes it. Finally sister in Michigan gets hold of the General explains they need Mr. D.
- Mr D doesn't know and gets a call to see the General. Spruces up. General says, "Do you have a sister, Minnie? She wants you to come home." I tell General about how Captain okayed but Colonel disapproved. Says the lima beans ready to be harvested and brother is sick. By next week gets his discharge. September 19th, 1945
- 51:15 Who was most important person to you in the war? "My mother" for being kind.
- In Army, Sgt. Lindell who got him in Cannon Co. and he got to ride rather than walk.
- 52:20 Medals commendations. Bronze Star. Combat Infantry Badge. Good Conduct was a surprise.
- Daughter says "tell him the story."
- 53:00 Mr. D and friend in Saarlautern find a motorcycle with sidecar. Also some schnaps. Get a little drunk. Jeep pulls up nearby with Colonel Gaylord inside. Mr. D in sidecar friend Schultzie driving the motorcycle pull up and say, "Hi old Turkey Neck" and slaps Coloel and back and takes off. Chased by Colonel but they lose him. Colonel suspects was Mr. D and friend. Captain forgives them tells Colonel that he reprimanded them when he really let them off.
- 55:15 How he got his medals after the war since he discharged early.
- 56:15 Final questions.
- Final rank. Buck Sergeant – three stripes.
- Would you recommend military service? Yes. One year. Teach discipline.
- On officers. No one had anything good to say about old Turkey Neck.
- Sergeant Hanson of Co. F didn't like Mr. D. Mr. D was promoted to Sgt of machine gun section and up for section Sgt. Hanson promoted another squad leader, Mallery, instead and Mr. D. transferred over to Cannon Co.
- 59:14 Started over in Cannon Co as private. How he is promoted up and from what position.

- 1:00:15 Do you remember a time you felt nervous or afraid? All the time. Anyone who says they weren't is lying.
- 1:01:25 On talismans. No. But carried picture of his mother 5 by 7 inches. Said "Thinking of you always." lost it.
- 1:02:00 Any advice for soldiers of today (2016) fighting in Iraq?
Altogether different war. "We had mission to complete" these fellows "just holding more or less."
Support for soldiers more in WWII than now.
- 1:03:45 Advice to today's soldiers – "do what you're supposed to do. If get an order, carry it out."
- 1:05:00 Started going to reunions in 47 (maybe). Second or third one. Have gone to about half since then.
Why important to remember WWII. To save our country.
- 1:06:15 How did war change you? Was "onery" when returned. Didn't know what I wanted. How his father ended up putting money down on a farm and giving it to him. "You keep up the payments."
Stayed as a farmer in the summer in the winter worked in construction and carpentry. Until 50 - 55. Didn't have to work.
- 1:09:15 Ken Burns question. Tell me a story you haven't told anyone before. Mr. D takes deep breath then says with emotion "I'm 88 years old and every night I go to bed and thank the Lord ... for being alive....going as long as the Good Lord wants me to go.
Good end. (everyone crying now)
- 1:11:15 Sign off. David Meyer son of Earl D Meyer Co H/379th/95th ID talking with Mr. Dummeldinger IDs himself his two companies 8:15 PM.
- 1:11:45 Finish Recording "Dummeldingerminute6totheend"