

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN DUMMELDINGER

July 29, 2009

Atrium Area, Biltmore, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Transcribed by Jessica Lambarth

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(Parenthetic numbers represent time stamps in original recording)

Note: First part of transcription is from a recording yet to be relocated.

Second part of transcripton is from recording "Dummeldingerminute6totheend"

First part:

D. MEYER: Hello this is David Meyer, son of Earl D. MEYER, Co. H, 379th, 95th Infantry. Today is July--
What is it 30th?

L. JENKINS: 29th.

D. MEYER: 29th. Ah, 2009. It's 6:55 pm. And we're in the---an atrium area of the--in Oklahoma City,
Biltmore, Oklahoma, and today I have the great privilege of talking to-- Sir, Could you say you're name?
Could you state it and spell your last name?

J. DUMMELDINGER: John Dummeldinger. D-U-M-M-E-L-D-I-N-G-E-R.

D. MEYER: That's great. And where were you born sir?

(00:46)

J. DUMMELDINGER: I was born in Munger, Michigan , April the 28th, 1921.

D. MEYER: And---What branch of the service were you in?

J. DUMMELDINGER: The good 'ol army.

(All chuckle)

D. MEYER: And what was your--- You have an interesting story about where you served. But what were
your two battalions or regiments? Where did you serve? What was your company?

(1:18.3)

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ah Company F, 377th, 95th infantry. And then I transferred into Cannon Company,
377th Infantry.

D. MEYER: Ok. Ok. And also at the table here is....

J. DUMMELDINGER: My daughter Linda Jenkins.

D. MEYER: Miss Jenkins.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Of Essexville, Michigan.

Dummeldinger, John; Sergeant, Company F and Cannon Company, 377th, 95th Division, WWII

(1:41.0)

D. MEYER: Of Essexville, Michigan. And sir now you live where?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Munger, Michigan. 1152 E Munger Road.

D. MEYER: 1152 E Mun--. What's your zip code by the way?

J. DUMMELDINGER: 48747.

D. MEYER: And just for the record, what's your phone number? No one will call you.

J. DUMMELDINGER: 659-2912.

L. JENKINS: 989 area code.

(2:01.8)

D. MEYER: 989 area code. Great, and that, ---let's see, and you served from when to when?

J. DUMMELDINGER: July 1940--July 22nd, 1942 to Sep 19, 1945.

D. MEYER: So you were there for the whole run?

J. DUMMELDINGER: YEP!

D. MEYER: Ok . So now I'll just ask different questions, everything's easy. Um, just a little thing on a---on your early years, was you'rewas um, was your name the same when you were growing up? Was that you're same name at birth?

(2:45.7)

J. DUMMELDINGER: I hate to admit it, but it wasn't. My first name as I was baptized was Casper John Dummeldinger.

(All chuckle)

L. JENKINS: And there's a good story behind THAT!

D. MEYER: And what's the story behind Casper?

(2:59.3)

J. DUMMELDINGER: As I grew up I guess everybody called me Casper, and I didn't like it, so my mother or my dad asked me, "Which name would you prefer, John or Casper?" and I says "John". And my godparents, they were very disappointed when I changed my name to John because my godfather's name was Casper.

(3:25.6)

D. MEYER: Ah. That's a good story! That's a good, what---You talked about---about where you were. So what year where you born? Twenty---

J. DUMMELDINGER: April 28th, 1921.

D. MEYER: 1921. So, when Pearl Harbor attack occurred, you were twenty years old?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yep.

D. MEYER: And again, Where were you and how'd you find out?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I was at home-- it was Sunday afternoon, I think a couple neighbor boys was over, we was playin' ball and we went in for supper. We turned the radio on and then I heard that Japan invade--attacked Pearl Harbor and my dad looked at me and he says,

D. MEYER: He points--

J. DUMMELDINGER: -- "You're going into the army." So, eventually I did.

(4:14.7)

D. MEYER: Now had your father--- anyone in your family have military service?

J. DUMMELDINGER: No, none of 'em. I was the only one.

D. MEYER: And how many siblings did you have?

(4:28)

J. DUMMELDINGER: Four girls.

D. MEYER: Four girls.

L. JENKINS: No, no. How many brothers and sisters----

D. MEYER: Brothers and sisters,

J. DUMMELDINGER: Oh, ah, I had two brothers and three sisters.

D. MEYER: And what were their names?

J. DUMMELDINGER: My brother, Carl, was the older brother and my brother Gus was the youngest. And I had three, or I had four sisters, Ann, Margaret, Rose died when she was 18,

D. MEYER: Oh.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And then my younger sister Minny, she was just four years younger, or four years older than I was.

(4:56.7)

D. MEYER: Ok. And so, so you were right in the prime age for the service?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I guess so.

D. MEYER: I guess---What were you doing at the time you joined, or---

J. DUMMELDINGER: I was workin' at the machine gun plant in Saginaw, that Saginaw Steering Gear, makin' machine guns.

(5:14.3)

D. MEYER: Oh you were? And, and--Were you-- did you enlist or were you drafted?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I was drafted.

D. MEYER: You were drafted. So you didn't have any choice where you were goin'.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Nope.

D. MEYER: No. And you were drafted on what day?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ah, July the 22nd, 1942.

D. MEYER: 1942. Do you remember that day? What was---

(5:36.2)

J. DUMMELDINGER: I sure do! I just met my girlfriend Kate, or Kathleen. We just met, I believe, that April and we left and I says "Goodbye dear. I'll be back in a year."

(D. MEYER laughs)

J. DUMMELDINGER: But I was wrong!

All laugh

D. MEYER: Sure, sure. My father used to say that same phrase: "Goodbye dear, be back in a year".

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ya'p.

D. MEYER: No--Now you were, you were wrong! Where, um, when you left, what was the leave-taking like with your family?

(6:09.8)

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ah, we was farmers.

D. MEYER: You were farmers?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Hmm.

L. JENKINS: How did that affect your family when you left, Dad?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, they hated to see me go.

L. JENKINS: It was hard on grandma, mostly.

D. MEYER: It was hard on grandma? Did she cry? Yeah.

L. JENKINS: And he had, um, a younger brother and an older brother and they weren't able to serve. Um-

J. DUMMELDINGER: They didn't, ah, qualify. I guess they were (4 F?)

L. JENKINS: Uncle Carl had asthma....

D. MEYER: OK

L. JENKINS: And, ah, and Uncle Gus was supposed to stay home with the farm, right?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yeah.

(6:46)

D. MEYER: And so, ah, so up to that time, before you got the job in the machine gun factory, did you work on the farm?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yap.

D. MEYER: What sort of farming was that?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ah, general farming. We raised, well, we had a few cows. At that time we teamed with, worked with horses, we had one tractor and we raised, ah, sugar beets, corn, wheat, barley, oats, and hay.

End of 1st Recording (yet to be relocated)

2nd Recording starts “Dummeldingerminute6toend”

D. MEYER: Ok. And, ah, so, so did you leave them short handed ? What, ah, did you work at the-- on the farm too, along, with the machine gun factory? Did you leave them short-handed?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ah, I helped with the chores before I left. I worked the day shift from four, from eight in the mornin' till four in the afternoon.

D. MEYER: Ok.

J. DUMMELDINGER: I could help milk the cows in the morning before I left. And I could help milk the cows, do some chores when I got home.

D. MEYER: When you got home. So, that did, so you were a help, so they had to take care of-- they missed you a lot.

With, so, you joined up--What happens when they draft you? Just send, show up at a draft center? Or, ah-

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, that they, they ah, sent me a letter sayin', ah, I should, ah, report to such and such a place in Bay City, Michigan. And there was a bunch of us that reported there. They invited us in. We had a meal. And the train was---waitin' out there. And "All Aboard!"

D. MEYER: Ha!

J. DUMMELDINGER: You got up and we went to, ah, Fort Custer, Michigan.

D. MEYER: Fort Custer, Michigan.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Hmmm.

D. MEYER: Is that where you did basic training?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Nope. I went there overnight and that next morning “all you” ---they called our names off, "Get on that train!" I didn't know where we's goin', and we was on that train for two days, and we wind up in Camp Swift, Texas.

D. MEYER: So you were there at the very beginning of the 95th Infantry?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yap.

D. MEYER: That's so, that, are you going on the Camp Swift trip tomorrow?

L. JENKINS: Yes, we are.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ya.

D. MEYER: Oh,--be interesting....I'll, I'll talk to you sometime on the trip, ah, and see, what, see how things have changed, or if you remember anything else.

So, you got to Camp Swift. How many men---ah, were around you? What was it like?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, it was different!

(All laugh)

J. DUMMELDINGER: And, ah, there was three other fellas that, ah, came to F Company at that same time, and two of the fellers they, well, they were drafted, they must of, I think 45 at that time, but the other two fellas they was, I think, 41 or 42, and we looked out the window and here they doin' bayonet training. And they looked out, oh, on that....

J. DUMMELDINGER: --- be able to do that and the younger guy, McNaughten (?), I guess was his name, he looked at me and I looked at him and I says "We're goin' to be doin' that pretty soon too and within the next week we's out there with a rifle, on guard, and this and that and--

J. DUMMELDINGER: Laughs

D. MEYER: Ah gosh.

(00:17.5)

D. MEYER: Was,-- you must have, you must have been in good shape on the farm, was---

J. DUMMELDINGER: I was in good shape. I only weighed a hundred and twenty-seven!

D. MEYER: A hundred and twenty-seven pounds!

(Laugh)

D. MEYER: And how tall are you?

J. DUMMELDINGER: 5'5".

D. MEYER: 5'5", 127. So you were scrappy and strong!

J. DUMMELDINGER: laughs.

D. MEYER: So, uh, so all that physical-- basic training, was that a bother, or?

J. DUMMELDINGER: No, but, ah, I got to bed at night, which I didn't go to bed too early when I was home, because I knew I was leavin' for the army. The bed check was at ten o'clock and I think we had to get up six-thirty, seven in the morning and we got three square meals a day, which I didn't think it was square, but they called it square.

All laugh

D. MEYER: No, 'cause you're used to farmers' breakfast.

J. DUMMELDINGER: We'd get the pancakes and the different things like the German folks used to make. And there was what they called ah gray beef on toast, I guess; you know what they called that-- shit on a shingle!

D. MEYER: Shit on a shingle.

All laugh

D. MEYER: Ah, shit on a shingle. So there you are—people slappin'--shit on a shingle in front of you.

D. MEYER: Now you grew up in ah, in a fairly big family. My wife always--I asked her one time, "What's a question you'd like to know?" And she said, "That first night, when you're with all those strangers, what's that like?"

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was different.

D. MEYER: You know, were people rough, or did you find friends?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I wasn't too happy with it, but I says, "Dammit, you're here and you're going to do what the rest of 'em do."

D. MEYER: I get you. I understand. Um, during basic training, what, now you told me what the typical meal was like, what was the typical day in basic training like?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, we got up in the morning and, um--for roll call. After roll call we went and had our breakfast. After roll call, we come back into the barracks for about fifteen minutes. After fifteen minutes was up; fall out. Fall out we had to do our calisthenics, our exercises, there. We done that for a half hour then we had a break and then we went in to our regular training of ah--

D. MEYER: Bayonet and rifle and everything?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Hmm, but then I got transferred from, ah, rifle platoon into machine gun section.

L. JENKINS: But you thought that they transferred you because of where you worked, because--

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, they, ah, on my record I worked at a machine gun plant and sure enough I got one of the machine guns made in Saginaw, Michigan.

D. MEYER: laughs. "I hope this works!"

J. DUMMELDINGER: "I hope this "blank" works!"

All laugh

D. MEYER: What ah, let's see, ah, so, you're working in there, what's, ah, is there a camaraderie among your friends in basic training?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, we, ah, I got acquainted with one fella from Detroit. And, we called 'em Mack. But, ah, somehow or other he got transferred into, ah, he got transferred into some other branch of the army there, where there was no infantry? among them.

Dummeldinger, John; Sergeant, Company F and Cannon Company, 377th, 95th Division, WWII

D. MEYER: Sure, okay, so then, what was you're, after basic training, where did --so you're, do you go to Fort Sam Houston?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ya, and we done our basic training at Camp Swift and then we went to Fort Sam Houston for advanced training.

D. MEYER: Okay.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And there every Monday we'd put our full field pack on and eighteen mile hike to Camp Bullis. Ugh! And we stayed there for the week and then we'd come back. And everybody'd holler "Hosanna to AHA!" Our feet was tired but we got home, got a pass, went to town, and enjoyed ourselves. And then after a couple weeks there, there was a Camp Cibolo, that was further than Camp Bullis, and, ah, Camp Bullis was eighteen mile and this Camp Cibolo was twenty five miles, and Camp Cibolo we lived in pup tents, that was--

D. MEYER: Oh gosh. So you're living on the hard ground in pup tents.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And then rain! We'd made little trenches around the pup tents so the water didn't come into our tent!

D. MEYER: How many men in a pup tent?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Two.

D. MEYER: Two. Okay.

J. DUMMELDINGER: 'Cause we each had a half--

D. MEYER: Both had a half of the tent.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ya, and we'd put 'em together and got pegs-----

D. MEYER: Did you go, ah, and after those long hikes, did you go to, ah, do any of that Louisiana Maneuvers?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We went to Louisiana Maneuvers and that's when we had umpires; one was the red, one was the blue and they called it a "three day problem". And we had our machine gun set up there where we thought we was camouflaged and here come the umpire waiving a white flag "You're wiped out!"

D. MEYER: How-and how did that happen?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I don't know they must've had binoculars, and spotted us--, but at that time, we was kind of happy 'cause we had to go back to the rear and we didn't have to do nothin' for the next two days.

D. MEYER: laughs

J. DUMMELDINGER: But after maneuvers, we went up to Camp Polk in Louisiana, and they formed this, ah, Cannon Company. Couple of my buddies got transferred over to the Cannon Company and my buddy Kelly Lindall (?) from South Dakota, he was my number one gunner on the machine gun and he says, "John over here we ride." And I says, "Yes. And when we get overseas, when them guys come wavin' them white flags, it's gonna be a different story."

All laugh

D. MEYER: Yes

J. DUMMELDINGER: So I transferred-- well, I was a corporal, and I went over to Cannon Company and asked if I could be transferred.

Well, ah, the captain over there said that, ah, "We don't take no noncoms." And I said, "Well these stripes'll come off!"

"Well, [said the captain] are you willing to come over as a private?"

And I says "Yes". And he says, "Well, if you're willing to come over as a private, come on over. But first, get your permission from your captain."

So I went back to F Company and I asked Captain Jenkins, "I'd like to get transferred over into Cannon Company."

And he said, too, he says, "They don't take no noncoms." I told him, I says, "These stripes will come off" and I rip one off right there. He said "John, if you're willing to go over there as a private, I give you permission."

So I went over to Cannon Company.

D. MEYER: That's interesting. And, 'cause it's better with the cannons than it is walking around 25 miles with the infantry.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yep, yep, (laughs). So then we went off to California, Camp Coxcomb. Cannonball Creations.

D. MEYER: Really, tell me about Camp--- because my father had stories about Camp--

J. DUMMELDINGER: Camp Coxcomb.

D. MEYER: Was it hot?

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was hot, and this is when-- we went out there in October and we stayed there till I believe February or March and we done maneuvers there and, ah, it was different training and we said, "Uh-oh, we're goin' to the Pacific!"

D. MEYER: That's what I heard. 'Cause you were, they were preparing you for sand and for desert-- for that, and would the, ah, the nights, did they get cold?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ah, At-- in the morning it was cool, by noon we had to roll up a side of our tent. And after dinner, we had to lay down on our cots and not do anything. We couldn't even write letters, we just had to lay on our cots for one hour. But then, as the sun went down, it got cold, and we'd layin' on the army cot, about four o'clock in the morning that bl-- dang cold air'd come up under them cots and, ah, you couldn't find enough covers to keep warm. But we managed--

D. MEYER: So it's either hot or just, ah,---

J. DUMMELDINGER: That or it gets cold at, ah, at night.

D. MEYER: Did you go into, were you able to go into Los Angeles at all, for R and R--?

J. DUMMELDINGER: One time.

D. MEYER: One time?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We got a three day pass and we went into LA.

D. MEYER: Did you go to the Hollywood Canteen--anything?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ah, no. I forget-- I seen an Earl Carol show, and, ah, that was something that I'd never seen before--and, ah, but, eh, we managed to, ah, get back--

D. MEYER: And so you got back to Camp Coxcomb, and then after Coxcomb, did you go, ah, to, ah, Indiantown Gap?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yep, from there we went on a train to Indiantown Gap.

D. MEYER: Now, in the Cannon Company, now you're in the Cannon Company, right?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Hmmm.

D. MEYER: So, what sort of training or---

D. MEYER: And what were they training you to do?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Learn how to shoot the cannon there. And they asked us all kinds of questions, like "What is the weight of the projectile?" And there's one guy from, ah, New Jersey, they talk different, their 'New Joyzy" you know?

D. MEYER: Yes!

J. DUMMELDINGER: And the projectile weighed thirty-three pounds. And they says, "Well, what is the weight of that projectile?" "Toity-tree pounds!"

All laugh

J. DUMMELDINGER: And he was embarrassed 'cause everybody laughed at him.

All laugh

L. JENKINS: When we were little and Dad told us he worked with Cannon Company--You know, little kids, can't--they don't know what a cannon is and we used to say, "Are you the guy that lights the wick Daddy?" and he said, "Yep, that's what I did!"

All laugh

J. DUMMELDINGER: No, but I--pulled the lanyard a good many times.

All laugh

D. MEYER: Now, how many, what, what size cannon would you--

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was a 105.

D. MEYER: A 105.

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was a snub nose cannon and we were supposed to be the close support to the infantry. Where the regular artillery had a 105, but they had a long barrel which they could shoot further. Our maximum was five miles, but most of the time we would shoot one mile or a mile and a quarter.

D. MEYER: And you determine that by the amount of charge? How do you--

J. DUMMELDINGER: There were powder charges there; we had five powder charges. The casing was separate from the projectile. And we'd get order from fire direction center, FDC they'd call it--

D. MEYER: FDC

J. DUMMELDINGER: And, ah, they'd say, "Charge one, charge two", and we'd put it in there, then shove the projectile in there, slam it into the chamber, close it, and-- "Ready, Fire!"

D. MEYER: You pulled the lanyard?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Hmmm.

D. MEYER: And did you wear anything?

J. DUMMELDINGER: No. Sometimes you go out like that, sometimes we'd forget and--

D. MEYER: And then you'd hurt your ears?!

J. DUMMELDINGER: Chuckles

D. MEYER: Oh gosh! I bet.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ya.

D. MEYER: Um, did you have a special, did you have special positions, or did everyone do everything?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, we, had ah, one sight for the ah--bellies? (2:15.7) this way, and, one sight for the elevation.

D. MEYER: Okay.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And, ah, I worked the ele-the direction---what do ya call it?

D. MEYER: Yeah, yeah, sure, the, the back and forth.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And the other guy, he worked elevation.

D. MEYER: He worked the elevation.

D. MEYER: Okay, and so, now you're at, so you're learning how to do this stuff more and more and you're in Indian Town camp and that's where I understand the ASTP, the new kids come in--

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ya, we called 'em the Quiz Kids.

D. MEYER: The Quiz Kids? You called 'em Quiz Kids?!

J. DUMMELDINGER: Ya! (laughs) Well, they wanted to get an education from the government, and oh, they complained! "Oh, we're not gettin' our education...." And, oh, ah, we'd say, "Shut up! We're not gettin' no education either!"

MEYER + DUMMELDINGER laugh

D. MEYER: I know, so, it's ah, Paul Madden? 3:05.5) was here, he said one time, he said, "They called me, they used to call me 'Whiz Kids'. But I haven't heard it from your side yet.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yeah

D. MEYER: Yeah, so, but did they get used to it, pretty soon?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Oh yeah. Yeah, they, ah, got used to it.

D. MEYER: And, um, the, um, I understand some people went on Mountain Maneuvers, West Virginia?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We went, ah, I went to Mountain Maneuvers and some guys went to Mule Training, in West Virginia. And I went to the Mountain Climbing school. Golly, we had to climb them cliffs and pound pitons into the side and take a rope and go this way and then rope this way and once in a while the piton would slip out and you'd just be dangling there and look down and there's the meat wagon down there (03.51.2) 'bout that big!

D. MEYER: Gosh!

J. DUMMELDINGER: Laughs. Lucky that, ah, none of us got hurt!

D. MEYER: Oh, gosh. That would scare me to death.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Then we got back to Indiantown Gap there, and we got a certificate, graduated from Mountain Climbing School. Hell, I was more scared to climb after that than I was before!

MEYER: + DUMMELDINGER laugh

D. MEYER: And from Indiantown Gap did you go out to, ah, ah, Camp Myles Standish to ship out, or where--?

J. DUMMELDINGER: From there we went to Camp Myles Standish. (4:20.8)

D. MEYER: Okay.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Just before we shipped over.

D. MEYER: And what ship did you take over?

J. DUMMELDINGER: USS Westpoint.

D. MEYER: USS Westpoint.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yap.

D. MEYER: How, um, I know people, people with different reactions on a boat? How were you on a boat? (04:37.7)

J. DUMMELDINGER: We was down, I think, the third or fourth tier. We were below water.

D. MEYER: Hmmm

J. DUMMELDINGER: And they said, in case we get hit, they had something that automatically shut the doors so the rest of the boat wouldn't get--

D. MEYER: So if you get hit, you get shut in.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Hmm. And then one thing, ah, we weren't allowed to get up above on deck for two days. And, anyway, we had to get up on deck to do our Calisthenics and I looked around and said, "Where the hell is our escort?" And one of the sailors come along and I says, "Where's our escort?" This ship goes fast enough that it could goes this way for ten minutes, then it'd goes that way for ten minutes...

D. MEYER: Zig-Zag.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And, ah, the torpedoes can't get us. So that's how we went all the way over to England.

D. MEYER: So, just by yourself.

J. DUMMELDINGER: All by ourself. It was scary, but, eh....

D. MEYER: Scary...(05:37.9) Now, now some people I know got, what did you do when, some people I know got seasick, did you just stay away from...?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I never missed a meal.

MEYER + DUMMELDINGER laugh

J. DUMMELDINGER: Of course I didn't feel like eaten a few times like it was hard to swallow, but...

D. MEYER: Sure

J. DUMMELDINGER: I, eh--

D. MEYER: Now, to get the meal, where would you get the meal on the ship?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We had to go into some room with long tables like this.

D. MEYER: Six foot table

J. DUMMELDINGER: We had a tray there go by there, they'd put this and that there and we sat there and...

D. MEYER: So, so more bad food.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, it was edible!

D. MEYER: Edible.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Laughs

D. MEYER: Ah, So, when you land, so you get to England, do you land, like Liverpool? (6:23.5)

J. DUMMELDINGER: I think we landed at Liverpool.

D. MEYER: Okay. And then, where'd you go next?

J. DUMMELDINGER: That, South Hampton, I believe.

D. MEYER: Mmm-hmm. Around Winchester?

J. DUMMELDINGER: That, I don't know.

D. MEYER: Or some people stayed at a Camp Barton Stacey. Does that sound familiar?

J. DUMMELDINGER: That rings a bell.

D. MEYER: Okay. (06:45.4) So, you're in England, are you still training on the guns, or are you waiting, what are you doing?

J. DUMMELDINGER: No, we just sat there and I got one pass to go to, ah--

D. MEYER: London?

J. DUMMELDINGER: London, and, my gosh, that was just shot all to hell. An iron rail just curled right over like that from the bombs.

D. MEYER: Oh.

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was....and Big Ben was all shot to heck when the Germans come along and just strafed (07:11.9)

D. MEYER: Oh they did? You never see that, you know, that they show pictures of Big Ben and you never see it shot to hell.

J. DUMMELDINGER: No

D. MEYER: That's interesting. I heard that sometimes, those, what do they call them, buzz bombs would come--.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Oh yah. They, one come over and I was sleepin' and I didn't hear it. The next morning the guys hollered, "Hey Dummeldinger, did ya hear that buzz bomb?" and I says, "No". Says, "You mean you didn't get up and jump in a fox hole?" and I says, "No".

Laughs

J. DUMMELDINGER: I slept through it; the rest of the time (7:43.1) they jumped in the hole, and someone jumped on top of the other.

MEYER + J. DUMMELDINGER laugh

J. DUMMELDINGER: But, eh--

D. MEYER: So you slept well.

J. DUMMELDINGER: I slept through it then. It didn't bother me.

D. MEYER: Okay, and then, so you, so you're back from London and you're waiting to go out, and, um--

J. DUMMELDINGER: And in the afternoon we lined for tea and crumpets. That was a big deal for the English one. Tea and crumpets. And their beer. they called bitters, it was bitter, room temperature.

D. MEYER: Oooh, oooh

J. DUMMELDINGER: You could hardly swallow the first one, but after you got the second one down, eh, it started to taste better.

MEYER + DUMMELDINGER laugh

D. MEYER: Did, did you talk, did you mingle with the British? Did you get a chance to meet with any of the British girls or the men or--?

J. DUMMELDINGER: No, we weren't there that long. I think we was only there a couple weeks there. And then we got on this one Liberty ship to go across the Channel and all we got was them C rations, morning, noon, and night. (08:44.6)

D. MEYER: And what's in the C ration?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Stew, pork and beans, and hash. It took a spoon. It filled your belly, but, eh, that was about it.

D. MEYER: And then, did you drink coffee with it or what did you drink?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Gall, I don't believe we had coffee.

D. MEYER: So you just drank water?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Water.

D. MEYER: Water and that slog. Um, and then the Liberty ship?

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was just a wide, open, big ship. It didn't have no guns on it or nothin'.

D. MEYER: Nothing. Did they ever get sunk, or were you worried about getting hit?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, we was worried there, but she was just open.

D. MEYER: And so, you're going across the channel, and do you get on an LST or a Higgins? How did you get--

J. DUMMELDINGER: We got on a LST we climbed down the side of the ship there, ropes, their ladder ropes, there along the LST and then *they* took us right up on the shore.

D. MEYER: Up on the shore, and *where'd* you land? Some people said they landed on Omaha.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Omaha Beach.

D. MEYER: Was there still anything left from D-Day?

J. DUMMELDINGER: They had everything cleaned up but maybe a half mile, a mile, they had a bunch of whole ships lined up that were shot. I don't know why they had 'em lined up For breakwater or what, I don't know what.

D. MEYER: So you could still see. So you're on the beach, and it's around D-Day +60?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Something like that. We left the middle of August and got over there...

D. MEYER: So you get over there, and did you climb the hill to the top, to the apple orchards?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, we bivouacked in the apple orchards. That's where we lived in the two-man tents. At that time is when General Patton ran out of gas, and they took all of the trucks available to haul gas and supplies up—.

D Meyer: Up on the Red Ball.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yah, they call it the Red Ball.

D. MEYER: Did you drive?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I didn't drive, no. My truck driver drove. I think we had six trucks in our Company.

D. MEYER: So while they're supplying Patton are you in the apple orchard?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I don't remember. We didn't do a hang of a lot. We wrote letters back home somewhere in England.

D. MEYER: Then did they move you?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We went up to the Front. We replaced the 5th Division. We went up the Front; we stayed there for a certain neck of time and then the word come down we're going to go into action. And I don't know how many companies. I know F Company, they made a night attack of a slag pile and they just got slaughtered.

D. MEYER: And you were providing support for them?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We didn't know about it. It was a night attack. So they guy that took my place in the machine gun section, he got killed the first night. And my whole squad got wounded.

D. MEYER: Dick Schoene, who had been a medic, he was—were you at the reunion last year in Toledo?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yah.

D. MEYER: His family ran the reunion. He was a medic, and he talked to me about the slag pile. He said we took it, then we got pushed off of it, and then he went up to try to find some bodies, and he said a German machine gunner just put a line of machine gun fire in front of him, like, You can't go. He said it was, it was murder there.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yah.

D. MEYER: So at this time, first, going across, if you're with a cannon you don't ride in the trains, do you? Do you just drive in trucks?

J. DUMMELDINGER: At that time, I volunteered to be a forward observer. I was the number one gunner, but then my buddy Joe July ? (25:54) says, John, why don't you be a forward observer? You carry a radio on your back, you run up with the linemen, and you can see a lot of action. I said, Good! I'd never thought about it, but. One day we joined with L Company or K Company, and our mission was to attack Fort Gambetta. We left early morning, we got to a chateau, and we opened up fire. And the Germans, they just let loose with a volley of artillery like I'd never seen. I found myself kneeling in the corner, just praying. And it lit up, I guess--it seemed like an hour, but I they said it was like 15 minutes. And then the rest of the guys, they got inside the chateau.

The chateau had a high wall, probably 10, 12 foot.

D Meyer: And then do you enter Metz like that?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, I would say we lost more men in the battle of Metz then we did the rest of the war.

Dummeldinger, John; Sergeant, Company F and Cannon Company, 377th, 95th Division, WWII

D. MEYER: That's what I heard. When I first started to going to reunions I went to NPR. This was five years ago. I told them it was going to be the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Metz. They said, What's Metz? I said, Ah. I thought, People forget. People forget quickly.

I am going to pause just for a second. You're just doing great. You're doing great.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Am I taking too long?

D. MEYER: No! Oh, no, no, no, no, no.

L. Jenkins: That's really cool. Dave, he just told me, he said that that while he was down there on his knees outside the chateau, he said to himself, If I get out of this I'm going to church every Sunday. And he does.

D. MEYER: And do you go to church every Sunday?

L. Jenkins: Every Sunday. He'd never told me that part before. I'd never heard that. I never knew there was all that shelling outside the chateau. I never heard that part before.

D. MEYER: (greet someone) I forget your rank.

Person: Oh, I'm an officer candidate now.

D. MEYER: Oh, you are! This is—

J. DUMMELDINGER: John Dummeldinger. A good old Irish name. ...

Person: All right.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And I was an interpreter over there for a while too.

L. Jenkins: You had a lot of jobs.

D. MEYER: Mr. Dummeldinger was just telling me about—was that the attack on Gambetta that you got caught outside and couldn't shield himself from the shrapnel. What did you say? You prayed?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I was in the corner and artillery and shrapnel [makes noise] I don't know if you ever heard shrapnel [makes noise], and I heard guys hollering they got hit. And I just sat there in the corner kneeling, praying, praying. I said, Boy if I ever get out of this alive, I'll try to go to church every Sunday. [Person asks to take Meyer's and Dummeldinger's picture with a video camera).

D. MEYER: OK, we'll just keep talking.

L. Jenkins: I mean, that's so cool that he made this promise that he'd go to church every Sunday, and he has. I mean 62 years later.

D. MEYER: Congratulations. That's great! That explains things.

L. Jenkins: And I didn't know that either.

D. MEYER. No. So you're at Fort Gambetta and you withdraw, because no on retreats, you withdraw. And then you follow someone into—.

J. DUMMELDINGER: There's one street, or city, they call Woippy. We went along there, and some other company had made a break through there. And then we come to the Moselle River. And we were going to cross the Moselle River. It was getting late at night, and so we went across. I think there was two or three boats went across, and behind us, and a boat, and the rest of the boats come behind us, and well the Germans start shelling, and the rest of them didn't get over there. Well, it got dark, and we didn't know where the hell to go. And it got dark. And we hear German soldiers talking.

L. Jenkins: What did they say, dad.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Where are the damn—.

L. Jenkins: No, say it in German.

J. DUMMELDINGER: [Speaks in German]. And we just laid down beside the Moselle River there, and we stayed there all night.

We didn't get no supper, but I didn't get hungry. I just—that bridge had just saved my soul there.

D. MEYER: So you're there on the damp river bank all night.

L. Jenkins: And can hear the Germans right there.

D. MEYER: And again, what did the Germans say?

J. DUMMELDINGER: (Speaks in German again, same sentence]

L. Jenkins: And that means what?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Where are the damned American soldiers?

D. MEYER: So now you're on one side of the Moselle. Some of them go over the Moselle and...how many boats went over?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Three. There was probably 12 guys in a boat so there are about 36 of us over there.

D. MEYER: Are you the only one who knows German?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, there was different ones. But at that time I didn't even bother to ask anyone if they could speak damn German. I just understood what they say. I just told everybody.

L. Jenkins: And then your radio. You said your radio started making noise then.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yah. My radio was buzzing. I turned my radio off so they couldn't hear. And there's buildings there. We couldn't go in the building [makes noise], it blow up. They had the buildings all fixed with dynamite and they would blow them up here and there. We better lay outside this—.

D. MEYER: Now, is this outside Metz?

J. DUMMELDINGER: After we went through Metz.

D. MEYER: So this is Saarlautern.

J. DUMMELDINGER: No, Saarlautern was in Germany. This is still in France.

D. MEYER: So this is after you're done with Metz but you're on your way someplace else. On the riverbank at night, were you on the sand or in the mud, or?

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was cold. But there's grass along there. And we just laid there so we didn't have to get wet in the water. But we stayed there all night. We didn't sleep much. We were just trying to save our butt. The next morning the rest of the crew came over in boats there. And they brought us our chow. We ate. We weren't fussy what [about what we ate (laughs)].

But then after that, why, we had our rest area and we had a wine cellar. And I helped myself to some good old French wine. Then we got back on the guns, and we went through the Ruhr Valley. Went through Dortmund, Soest, and I forget what, but there wasn't much opposition there.

Then we got close to the Rhine River, and word come down we're going to be in Berlin in three days. The 2nd Armored Division was supposed to be spearheading. And we went across the Rhine River, well the engineers made a bridge for us with ah, I forget—.

D. MEYER: Like a treadway bridge?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yah. And we went across that and we hit a little opposition every once in a while but it didn't take long. And we got as far as the Elbe River and that was as far as we could go. And what the hell, can't we go to Berlin? But they said there was a Yalta Agreement with Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt, that the Russians want to take Berlin. So we sat there three days by the Elbe River, and a German was making rafts and logs to come across to the side where we were. And they asked me, John, you can speak German? Go ask them how come they're coming over here.

Well, they said they didn't want to be captured by the Russians. Because the Russians would treat them like the way the Germans treated the Russians.

D. MEYER: So you're in the Ruhr Pocket. You're sort of cleaning up the area with Dortmund and all this. I know some of the 95th liberated a labor camp. Were you around?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We liberated a Yugoslav camp. And they were just as polite and clean. A private would go by and they'd give the private a highball.

D. MEYER + J. Dummeldinger laugh

J. DUMMELDINGER: And anyway, I had a young lieutenant. We called him Junior. He said, Call me Junior if you want but when the captain's around call me Lieutenant (laughs). Anyway, we went around. It was after the war was over so we set up military government. And uh, what was that little town weaved in there? Anyway, we had to appoint Burgermeisters there, and I think we had four or five little villages where we appointed Burgermeisters. And went around to different places. Most of those places had Polish men doing the farm work and young Polish girls doing the housework in the house. And this one time three young Polish girls come over and said they weren't allowed to eat at the table with the Germans. They had a table out in the other part of the house where they had to serve the German people and then what was left they brought out for the girls to eat. And then this one girl said they tried to make them eat spoiled meat.

So I said, Junior, we're going to take a ride over there to see this lady. So I went over to this lady and said, What's this I hear, you're trying to serve these girls spoiled meat? And the girls were sitting back there; they were shaking, scared. And this [lady said], Nein, nein, nein. And I said, Well, tonight, we're going to come over and have dinner with you and these girls are going to sit down at the same table as you are, and they're going to eat the same food as you are.

They're not servants anymore, they're freed. And we went over there, and the girls hesitated to start. And I says, Here, here ... See the old German lady all ...

D. MEYER laughs

J. DUMMELDINGER: Then my birthday was the 28th of April. Those three girls brought me a little bouquet of lilacs. And then we found a shoe store and we took these girls all two or three pair of shoes. And these Polish men, too. We got them some shoes, too.

D. MEYER: Did you ever get their names? Did you ever write them after the war?

J. DUMMELDINGER: No, no.

D. MEYER: So they must have been so very fond of you.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yah. And they told me the Germans took them from their homes in Poland when they was 11 or 12 years old to come over to the Germans and do their dirty work.

D. MEYER: So a few weeks before your birthday, President Roosevelt died. Do you remember that?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I believe it was April the 6th.

D. MEYER: How did that hit everybody? How'd you feel?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, the Germans were real interested in that, too. They asked if I'd heard of Truman. And I never heard of Truman. They were most interested in that almost then we were.

D. MEYER: Where are you when Germany surrenders?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We were right there at the Elbe River. But then after the Germans, we could hear the Russians firing and shooting there, and every once in a while the Germans would lob an artillery shell

over toward us. But then I guess about the third day no more shooting, but you could hear the Russians coming.

D. MEYER: Did you ever meet the Russians?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I didn't but that's another thing. We had a Russian camp there that was supposed to do work for the German people. And they wanted to get even with the German people, so we had guards there to keep the Russians fenced in. And here one night, why the German lady come knocking on our door. What the hell you want. The Germans are over at their place, they're looking for some musical instruments. And we went over there. They tried to move a piano out of the house (laughs). And we says, Leave that piano alone. What other kind of music would you want? Well, we would like an accordion, and a guitar, and I forget what else.

Anyway, we confiscated an accordion and guitar, and in the meantime our guards would be guarding and the Russians would have the girls come and talk to our soldiers while they went under the fence to raid the ... Germans come over, The Russians are in my smokehouse! We went over there, here they were, taking the ham. I said, Take what you eat, and leave them a few there. Well, OK. But Russia was unruly.

(41:49)

Then this Austrian, I forgot to tell you, they really was glad to see us as their rescuers. We stopped in there to ask them how—they were doing good. And this one Austrian said, We'd like to invite you and the lieutenant over for a meal. Said they got a nice suckling pig. So I asked the lieutenant. Sure! So we got over that afternoon about four o'clock, and here they brought us a slab of pork like that, but half of it was fat (laughs). Lieutenant says, John, you like fat? I says, No. Then what the hell are we doing? While the Austrians all stand around there, we're so glad we can eat.

D. MEYER: What did you do?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I says, I'm sorry, we had a big dinner and we can't eat all of this. It's good, it's good (laughs).

D. MEYER: Quick thinking. I'm jumping around a little. But what did you like to do when you had time for relaxation?

J. DUMMELDINGER: When? We're busy getting these people all organized there. Under a new government there.

D. MEYER: Before you got there, when you first got to France, did you play cards, what did you do?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We played ball a lot. And we played blackjack. I learned how to play poker and I learned how to play blackjack. It cost me a little (laughs).

D. MEYER: My father told me a story how one time he'd won a few hands and there were some sharpies from New Jersey. And he started taking them. Finally, they'd lost all their money and they said, One more hand, double or nothing. And he won. So he got his money back, and they said, Hey, where you going. He said, I'm getting out of here while I can, the good Lord save me.

J. DUMMELDINGER: We had one guy. He's from Georgia. Name was Keiker (?). We'd play blackjack. He'd say, Holler if you're hurt, holler if you're hurt.

D. MEYER + J. Dummeldinger laugh

D. MEYER: So now it's near the end of the war. You've had the meal with the people. What do you remember about that time—did you go to Camp Lucky Strike or what did you do to get back to the United States?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We went to some camp, I believe it was Lucky Strike. From there, I guess we loaded on a boat to come back to the United States.

D. MEYER: And was the boat trip the same?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Not really. I think on the way home, I think it was the second day, we were on the outskirts of, what they call, not a hurricane, but what do you call it on the water there?

L. JENKINS: A typhoon or something.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Something like that. Oh, that boat was just going and they ... the back end all you could see was the rudders. That boat was just channeling like that. (?) But we were just on the outskirts there, but it took us an extra day to get home. And then we landed in Newport News, Virginia.

L. JENKINS: But didn't you say that you stayed out to sea though, before you came in?

J. DUMMELDINGER: As we come into Newport News, we got in there in the afternoon, and our boat anchored out in the water there, and after dark it come into shore.

And they said, Well, don't talk to nobody. Just unload and get in the truck. And I thought, What the hell kind of a greeting do we get? I thought here the band would be playing and women would be ... people would be Yeah, job well done! But they took us off the boat like they was ashamed of us. But then come to find out we were supposed to go to the Pacific, and they didn't want nobody to know what was going on. So we unloaded and we went to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. And we all got a 30-day pass to go home. I went home for 30 days.

D. MEYER: What was it like to see them again?

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was – great.

D. MEYER: Your mom must have been happy to see you.

J. DUMMELDINGER: (Pause) Yep (emotional).

D. MEYER: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the bomb dropping?

J. DUMMELDINGER: We were at Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

D. MEYER: So you're back from your 30 days?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yeah, and we're at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. And we was training to go over to the Pacific. And then they dropped the one bomb, and General Trout (?) said we're still going to the Pacific. And they dropped the second bomb, and he said we're still going to the Pacific. And most of us felt, hell, the war is over with. Meantime, my sister, Minnie (?), lived in Detroit, and they wanted to know if I could come home and help on the farm. Because my dad was in his upper 60s, and my younger brother, who was doing the farming, had the mumps, and they went down on him. And he was unable to do anything. And I guess the neighbors came in and helped them. And they asked if I could get a discharge meaning that the war was over with.

Well, I went and applied for a discharge. My Captain Rollins(?), he approved the discharge. I went to regimental headquarters and I hate to call him Turkey Neck, but that's what I called him. Colonel Gaylord, he had a neck a foot long (laughs). And he disapproved of my discharge. So I went to the Red Cross there and they said they've got to start at the Red Cross back home. So it went back and forth. My sister Minnie lived in Detroit, she called Shelby, Mississippi. She wanted to talk to my company commander. When she got on the phone she said, I'd like to talk to the commanding officer at Camp Shelby (laughs). She got a hold of the general!

J. DUMMELDINGER: So she told the story. So that was a Saturday. I was all dressed up, got my Class A uniform, ready to go to town. And here the company clerk come out. Sergeant Dummeldinger, the general wants to see you. What the hell did I do now? He said, Get the Class A uniform on, I said, I got it.

So I got in the jeep, he took me to headquarters there. The lieutenant met me. He says, Do you know how to report to the general? I says, Yeah, I give him a high bow (?), Sergeant Dummeldinger here. Please ... to step in sir, reporting as directed.

OK, so that goes for a while. He says, You go see the general now. I give a high bow (?). He says, At ease, sergeant. And he says, Do you have a sister Minnie in Detroit, Michigan? I says, Yes I do. What happened?

I just got a phone call. Were you applying for a discharge? Yes, I applied for a discharge and my captain ok'ed it. Come to—I didn't call him Chicken Neck—Colonel Gaylord (laughs) disapproved of it. And he asked me what we have there. I said, Well, the navy beans are ready to be harvested there and my brother got the mumps. He said, That's what I heard. And he asked me several questions and then he says, OK, I'll look into it. The following Monday, I got another call from headquarters. There's a major and two colonels, they cross-examined me. And I told them. I was honest, up and up. Next day, the clerk come out, Sergeant Dummeldinger, Here's your discharge. Wow (laughs)! So I got discharged September the 19th.

D. MEYER: September 19th.

J. DUMMELDINGER: 1945

D. MEYER: So the war was just over by two weeks or something like that. Who was the most important person to you during your time in the service?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I believe my mother.

D. MEYER: And why is that.

J. DUMMELDINGER: I don't know. She is kind, and she didn't give me as much hell as my dad. My dad, he was awful strict. And my mother she always kind of held my dad back.

L. JENKINS: How about anybody in the army, dad?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I had Sergeant Lindell (?) He's the one who was with me as a machine gunner in F Company. Then he got transferred over to Cannon Company. And I went over to see him, and he says, John, we ride over here. So that kind of hit me there. I got to thinking, That's right, you don't have to walk anymore. That's when I went to see about a transfer.

D. MEYER: Did you get any medals or special commendations?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I've got what, half a dozen? I got the Bronze Star. And infantrymen get that Combat Infantry Badge. And then I got the Metz, what they call the liberation from Metz? And actually I got the Good Conduct medal.

L. JENKINS: Oh yeah, that was a surprise. You didn't tell him the story about—.

D. MEYER: Tell me the story.

L. JENKINS: You and Schultz

J. DUMMELDINGER: We were in Germany there, in Saarlautern. And we was right up against the Siegfried Line. And we sat at thing for maybe two or three weeks; me and my buddy from Cleveland, Ohio, Schultz. We looked around here and found a motorcycle. With a sidecar on it. Then we also found a little schnaps (laughs). So him and I, we lit into the schnaps (laughs). And we got feeling pretty good. Here comes a jeep along there. We drove up alongside the jeep and here's old Turkey Neck. I was the sidecar and Schultzie was driving. He said, Hi, old Turkey Neck, and he gives the colonel a slap on the back.

What outfit are you fellas from? We took off. I heard the colonel say, Follow them. We zigzagged, and we got down someplace where the jeep couldn't go. Anyway, a day later the captain—I guess the colonel went over to see the captain. He says, Are your men out on a motorcycle, a sidecar? And, Not that I know of. Anyway, he's questioning around and somehow he's got an inkling that it was me and Schultz. So he called us. Were you guys riding on a motorcycle? Why are you asking? Did you by any chance happen to run into Colonel Gaylord and call him Turkey Neck?

D. MEYER: No!

J. DUMMELDINGER: I cannot lie, yes we did. He said, You know, you could lose your Good Conduct medal over that. And then I had a Hood, Lieutenant Hood (?), he was a West Pointer. And he kind of favored me. And he said, Well, Captain Rollins, the boys had a rough time and I would just excuse them, and call the colonel back and tell the colonel that you reprimanded them two guys.

L. JENKINS: Tell him about how you got your medals, dad. How a lot of the guys got their medals when the war ended, but because you got out a little bit early—.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Oh, sure. All I had was the European medal... And so, my nice daughter—.

L. JENKINS: I didn't mean that part. Yeah, we contacted the personnel records and got your medals, but who gave them to you?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Oh, I had a grandson, he was a West Pointer. He graduated from West Point and he served a year over in Iraq. He's back here. Why, these daughters and wife, we had a meeting at my other daughter's place, and here he comes with his full uniform on. Says, Sergeant Dummeldinger, front and center! I had to go down. And here he gives me the Bronze Star.

L. JENKINS: So you were decorated by an officer. His grandson.

J. DUMMELDINGER: He advanced to captain. Then he got discharged.

D. MEYER: And what was your final rank?

J. DUMMELDINGER: My final rank was sergeant. Just three stripe. Buck sergeant.

D. MEYER: Would you recommend military service to young people nowadays?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I would like to see all our young men serve one year. Show them a little discipline.

D. MEYER: Now you told me a little bit about Colonel Turkey Neck.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Colonel Gaylord was his right name.

D. MEYER: Colonel Gaylord. Now, other than having a turkey neck, what did you think of him as an officer?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I don't know. To me he wasn't a very nice looking gentleman (laughs). I called him a gentleman. But for some reason, nobody that I know of had anything good to say about him. At least none of the enlisted men. He never came to one reunion.

L. JENKINS: You did have an officer, dad, that you didn't get along with. The reason you left F Company and went to Cannon Company.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Oh, that was Sergeant Hanson (?). He was our platoon sergeant, and I was being promoted to being sergeant of the machine gun section, and we had this Clinton Mallory (?). He was a squad leader and I was a squad leader and I was supposed to be promoted to section sergeant. In the meantime, Hanson and this Mallory got together, and Mallory got the promotion. And that's one reason that I transferred over to Cannon Company. And I'm glad I did.

D. MEYER: So when you start out at Cannon Company as a private, how long does it take you to—.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, I made PFC when we got out to the Mojave Desert, and then I would have been promoted to corporal because I was the number one gunner, then my buddy Joe July, he talked me into being a forward observer. Well, the forward observer is just a PFC. But then when captain asked me if I'd come back on the guns, be number one gunner, I said gladly. And that's when I got promoted to

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corporal, and then when one of our sergeants, he was a forward observer, he got hit. And I got promoted to sergeant also.

D. MEYER: Do you remember any other times when you felt nervous or afraid?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I was scared all the while we was over there. Especially up at the front when you hear the bullets flied around. Anybody that wasn't scared was full of.

D. MEYER: You mean anyone who says they weren't scared--.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Was lying.

D. MEYER: After you said you'd start going to church, after you made that moment, did that change anything? Did you feel luckier?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, I felt obligated to go for being saved.

D. MEYER: One person told me he would carry a letter from his wife and a locket. And another person carried a WWI coin from his father for luck. Did you have anything you carried?

J. DUMMELDINGER: No.

L. JENKINS: Yes, you did. Mom said she gave you a picture of her and you said you lost it. And I always tease mom that some German's got it on his nightstand (laughs). You lost the picture of mom.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, I had to carry that radio on my back. And then I couldn't put my regular pack in the jeep. And I went to get from the jeep and it wasn't there.

L. JENKINS: And mom said, Oh yeah, you had to carry that big pack and you couldn't carry a little old picture of me (laughs).

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was a picture 5 by 7.

D. MEYER: So it was a big picture.

J. DUMMELDINGER: And it said, Thinking of you always.

D. MEYER: Two years ago in Oklahoma City, one of the veterans, Jennifer Cotton (?), who is here today, asked me questions for today's soldiers. Do you see any common thread between World War II veterans like yourself and the soldiers of today fighting in Iraq?

J. DUMMELDINGER: It's altogether different. At least we had an object or we had a mission to complete. Whereas these fellows here are just holding more or less.

D. MEYER: How about the differences in support back in the U.S. for soldiers now versus then?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I think they supported the soldiers more then in the time of World War II then they do now.

D. MEYER: How about foreign support for soldiers today then when you were deployed?

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J. DUMMELDINGER: That's sort of a mix. Like you hear over in Korea they want Americans to get out of there. Then others say they're glad that we're over there and do what we did. So it's kind of a mix.

D. MEYER: And what advice would you give today's soldier?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Do what you're supposed to do. If you get an order, carry it out.

D. MEYER: When did you start going to reunions?

J. DUMMELDINGER: It was either the second or third one in Chicago.

D. MEYER: How long ago was that do you think?

J. DUMMELDINGER: '47?

D. MEYER: So you've been seeing these for a long time.

J. DUMMELDINGER: I missed a few there, but I would say I went to at least half of them. Well, they had a reunion in Las Vegas, I didn't go there. And there were a few other places that I wouldn't go to.

D. MEYER: Why do you think it is important to remember what happened in World War II?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Well, it was to save our country, mainly.

D. MEYER: Looking back, how did the war change you?

J. DUMMELDINGER: I believe I kind of looked at things in a different—. When I first got out of the service, I didn't know what I wanted. I was just kind of, didn't know what I wanted. My job was available there at the steering gear (?). When I left there they said my job would be there and my seniority would continue. But when I got out I was just ornery and I didn't know what I wanted to do. And my dad would ask me at different times what I wanted to do and I said, I don't know. And my brother had run a restaurant up at West Branch (?) Michigan, and he wanted me to come and join him there. And I didn't know.

But then spring came along and my dad, every Saturday, he would, he shaved once a week. And Saturday was his day off. He'd just save up and go to one little town or the other, and he'd have a few beers in him there. And when spring came of '46, he met a fella in a little town that had a farm that he was working for his mother. And my dad asked him, What about the farmer? His name was Jack Russell (?). He said, I work this farm for my mother, and she can't see that I'm doing anything right.

And my dad said, Well, I'm looking for a farm for my son John. He says, I'll try to talk to my mother about selling it. And he talked his mother into selling it. And they came over, made an agreement. So my dad paid \$500 down on the farm. He says, Here, John, I got a farm. You take over the rest of the payments. So I said, Well, I don't have no tools.

You can use my tools until you get enough money to buy your own tools. So we got started. And we got married. And we started from scratch but we gradually got up and we raised a family, saved a few bucks.

D. MEYER: Did you stay as a farmer?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Yeah. And in the winter I went to work for a I had two brothers-in-law that were in the carpenter business. And I worked for one brother-in-law for three or four years, and then I had my wife's brother, he was a builder or a constructioner in Bay City ,and I went to work for him until I got up to oh, about 50-55, and I said I'm getting too old and had enough money to get by. I didn't need to have to work.

D. MEYER: I met the filmmaker Ken Burns once. I asked him what his favorite question was. He said it is, Tell me a story you haven't told anyone before. I said, That's asking a lot. He said, Ask them to close their eyes, take a breath, and something will come out. So, take a breath, close your eyes. Now, tell us a story you haven't told anyone before.

J. DUMMELDINGER: [after about 30 seconds of silence] Well, I'm 88 years old and every night I go to bed I thank the Lord for being able to do what I'm doing (emotion in voice). Thank him for being alive and I thank him to keep going as long as the Good Lord wants me to go.

D. MEYER: Well, I can't think of a better end.

J. DUMMELDINGER: (crying) Now everyone here is crying.

D. MEYER: This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th, 95th Infantry. And today I've had the great privilege of talking to, Sir, can you say your name?

J. DUMMELDINGER: John Dummeldinger.

D. MEYER: And your companies were?

J. DUMMELDINGER: Camp Company [Company F] and Cannon Company, 377th Infantry, 95th Division.

D. MEYER: It is now 8:15 and we're done. Thank you very much.

J. DUMMELDINGER: Thank you.

L. JENKINS: Oh David, thank you so much. That just means so much to me.