

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Veteran's Name: Stephen Jamison

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

Date of Interview: August 13, 2004

Transcriber: Carol Slezak

Transcribed on: September 13, 2014

Interviewer: This is David Meyer, son of Earl Meyer, Co. H, 379th, 95th Infantry. We're in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in the atrium of a Holiday Inn. It's a 95th reunion on August 13, 2004. And I'm with Stephen **Jamison:** And you're with what Company?

Jamison: Company F, 378th Infantry.

Interviewer: And we're also with Margaret Jamison [wife]. And when did you enlist?

Jamison: I had to go to Lakewood, which is a town about 10 miles from where I lived. Lakewood, New Jersey. And I got on the bus there. The fact is they made me corporal, which means they gave me all the names of everybody on the bus. And then I was to hand it in to the proper officer when I got to Fort Dix, which was 15 miles beyond where I lived.

So I went to Fort Dix. The next day I was outside – we were doing calisthenics. And my brother-in-law who drove a garbage truck saw me, stopped, ran over and said, "You're the father of a little girl, born at one o'clock this morning." I said, "Oh."

He said, "Go to the sergeant and see if you can get a pass."

I said, "All right, but I don't think it will work."

So I went [and asked for a pass]. Now mind you I had no uniform yet. No dog tags. So he says, you know the favorite word in the army [laughs], "Who the *blank* do you think you are?"

I said, "Well, I thought I'd ask."

So in the meantime my brother-in-law had gone to his boss and told him. He said, "I understand you used to work on the base here." He said, "Yeah, I used to work for a retired colonel for public works. Go see him."

So maybe an hour later I get a call to go back to [see the sergeant]. And the sergeant says, "I don't know who the hell you know, but you got a pass. Now get the hell out of here. But I guarantee you you'll never get another one while you're at Fort Dix. Thank you."

So I went to Allentown, which is about 20 miles away. There was a little hospital there, Doctors Farmers Hospital, a private hospital, and I saw my wife and daughter.

And then the next morning I went back to Fort Dix. I had a problem getting in because I had no dog tags. Finally I convinced them and I got back on the base.

Then I wanted to be a pilot.

Interviewer: How did you convince him? What did you say? How long did it take?

Jamison: It took a half hour. They made phone calls and what have you. They couldn't believe that I got a pass.

Interviewer: Is that a record of some sort?

Jamison: Yes. I don't know how long after the war, but a friend of mine was in the First World War, 78th Division. And the 78th Division used to have their reunions at Fort Dix. And he went to the reunion. And he came back all excited. He said, "You got the record! You got the record!" I said, "What record?" He said, "You were in Fort Dix less time than anybody else that got a pass [laughter]."

Anyhow, I wanted to be in the Air Corps, so I told them that. They were having a test, so I took a test.

Because I had gone to [inaudible] school, I knew everything about the engines at that time, which were mostly rotary – Air Corps rotary. I knew all about them. I'd also been an air warden. I knew all the silhouettes of all the airplanes. So, I came in second. And you have to go before a cadet board of five different officers. I think they were all majors. And one was a psychologist, and he turned me down, because of the baby being just born, my father had died, my sister was in the hospital with TB, and my mother was alone. And of course my wife would be alone. So he turned me down.

But just as I was leaving one of the other majors wrote me a note and said, "When you get to where you're going to take your basic, go to your commanding officer and give him this slip." So the next thing I know I was on the train going to Fort McClellan, Alabama. Of course then I gave the slip to my commanding officer, and I didn't hear anything more about it. So I said, "I would like to change whatever I'm supposed to be doing here. I'd like to learn something."

And they said, "Well you're going to be a truck driver." I don't want to be a truck driver. But you have the background, you've worked in a garage, so on and so forth – you've drove trucks. I said, "No, I don't want it." They said this is not about what you want, it's what we want.

I still stuck to my argument and after a bit they said, "All right, if you're so smart we'll give you a test."

So I took this test, and after I took the test I said to the guy, "Well, how'd I do?"

He says, "Do you realize what you're IQ is?"

I said, "No, no idea."

He says, "You have an IQ of 138."

I said, "What's that mean?"

He said, "It means that a genius is 140."

I said, "Oh."

He says, "You should be an officer."

So, that was the end of that. I got my way, and I went to mechanic's school. Again I came out tops in the class. So they sent me to Fort Benning [Georgia], it's like an advanced mechanics school – for the testing and engineering part. We'd test the various greases in the vehicles so you could run them under water, and the wheels, and so on. And the jeeps, we made snorkels so you could run them around under water. We tore them all apart to see if the greases did their job. We floated GMC trucks across the river on a tarp. We put the tarp in the water, and drove it out and tied it up. So things like that, that you might have to do.

Anyhow, then I come out tops again. When I say tops I think I was second in this. So they said if you want we'll send you to OCS [Officer Candidate School]. I said, "No, I'll stay with the guys I'm with." So I turned that down [laughs]. And of course, then I was shipped from there to Fort Meade [Maryland].

And we got a change of clothes, brand new rifle, the whole works – everything new.

Interviewer: How long have you been in the service by now?

Jamison: Eight weeks? I really don't remember [exactly]. Not long. Then at Fort Meade I got a pass, I went home. Another weekend I went AWOL for a couple days [laughs]. Got back in without any problems.

Interviewer: To see your kid?

Jamison: Yeah. Then from there they shipped us up to Camp Standish [Massachusetts], which is up on the Hudson, then we come back down by train to Weehawken [New Jersey], and we got on the big boat – I believe it was the Aquitania.

Interviewer: Now who were you with at this time? Are you with the 95th?

Jamison: No, I'm just a replacement.

Interviewer: OK, so what division are you in? What are you?

Jamison: I wasn't assigned to anything at this time. We went over, we landed in Gourock, Scotland, and took the train down into England proper.

Interviewer: Here's a question I've been asking everyone. What was the trip across like?

Jamison: Well, I believe the bunks were five high. Hammocks. And if you were on the bottom, the guy gets in next to you and you couldn't get out until he got out. And I would say 50 percent of the guys were sick. The first meal we had, I believe... I know for breakfast they served us something they called porridge, which was watered down oatmeal. And most of the guys couldn't eat that. Then we had boiled liver. Of course, that didn't go over very well. The food was terrible.

And then we didn't have any escort. The ship was fast enough that we went on a zigzag course all the way across. Which took much longer.

Interviewer: Then you landed in Scotland.

Jamison: Yes, Gourock. Then we took a train and we went down into ... The first camp was Camp Codford [England].

Interviewer: What was that like?

Jamison: It was a tent city, you might say. And every day we went out to do something. Mostly hikes. Twenty-mile hikes. And the hikes would be run a mile, walk a mile, run a mile, walk a mile. And I got in trouble there. I was like squad leader, and we were supposed to run a mile, walk a mile and so on. And the last mile we were supposed to walk before we got back to camp. Of course we were all in a hurry to get back to camp, because basically our day was over. It was time to clean rifles and what have you. And being squad leader when they wouldn't run the next-to-last mile, I said, OK, mark time. So we marked time. Then, forward march. When we're supposed to just walk.

Everyone called me Jamie, my last name being Jamison. And a guy says, "Jamie, what do you say?" I said, "Double time."

And I don't think the lieutenant who was in charge of our squad was too happy, because the next morning I was called to the front of everybody and scolded properly and told to do 300 pushups. And I had an occasion to meet him in combat and he tried to shake my hand and I said, "No. No way. Just don't bother me."

Anyhow, from Codford we went to Camp Wellington. And we basically did that. Only I sprained my ankle so I went with the officer who was in charge of machine gun training. And I went everyday out with him. Just assisted him, because I couldn't get around. And I learned to shoot a machine gun like you would a rifle. Pop pop pop pop. They didn't want you to fire too many rounds at one time, because you burn the barrel of the machine gun. And I got very good at that.

Interviewer: Was there one type of machine gun you were learning?

Jamison: It was the water-cooled. Anyhow, and then I got a pass and we went into London. We went to Piccadilly Circus; Rainbow Corner, where they had all the dances and the signers—like USO people [Bing Crosby, that type of thing]. The buzz bomb [German V-1 flying bomb] came in while we were there. And you could hear them coming. I guess it was a one-cylinder engine -- pop pop pop pop -- and it would be at night. Evidently they would keep going 'til they run out of fuel, and when they did the noise just kind of [sputtered]/quit, and down they'd go, and then you'd hear the explosion. And they didn't have much control over it. Except they must have figured out how much fuel.

So that was the first buzz bomb. Then they came out with the V-2 rockets. Jet propelled. Which is more accurate and could carry a heavier bomb load.

Interviewer: So you were in Piccadilly Circus when you had your first buzz bomb experience.

Jamison: We were outside. We had just started to leave to go to the hotel we were staying in. And we heard one. Sure enough, it looked like a cigarette butt. The light from the exhaust, I guess. And then the pop pop pop sound, then [the sound of it going down].

Interviewer: When it started going down did everyone dive?

Jamison: Well you just kind of ... We saw it wasn't going to be near us. We just sort of looked at it. Sirens were going, and people were running for shelter, what have you.

Interviewer: How did the British treat the Americans? Did they treat you well?

Jamison: Well, I guess you've heard the saying, haven't you?

Interviewer: I've heard something from a movie.

Jamison: That's right. The saying was: "Overpaid, oversexed and over here." Yes, there was some friction. In Codford we had friction. There had been some black troops there, and there was a stabbing and so one at one of the pubs. So we couldn't go out at night. Then they moved us from there to Wellington. I don't know if that was the reason.

And then my next camp was Warminster. And we trained there, basically the same thing – walking and so on. And I was like squad leader. And I had two interesting experiences. One was, I was to take a squad of men and go arrest "Mink Coat Mary," who had a tent up on a hill close to our camp.

Interviewer: And what did she do?

Jamison: She was a lady of the evening. And she worked out of a tent. And of course, none of us wanted to do anything like that, so we sent one of the guys out the night before to tell her to get out of there. So when we went up there, she was gone.

And the other thing interesting was I was leading the squad, and I saw this rainbow. And you know rainbows lose kind of fast. And it was on the side of a hill, and there was a haystack there. And the rainbow was just approaching the haystack. And I took off. And [the sergeant said], "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to the end of the rainbow."

He said, "You get into the rainbow."

I ran up there and stood in it. It was just a couple of seconds, then it kind of moved on. I come back, just as jaunty as I could be. As soon as I got back the guys said, "Well, Sarge, what are you going to do with him? Court martial him?"

He said, "No," he said. And that was over.

And of course I was sergeant at guard once, in a different place, and the guys over there, they knew you wouldn't shoot them. They're your own men. And I don't know what the infraction was. But sometimes you had to move them from the guard house to some other area, to go eat. And they had barracks there. And you'd be going along with these men. And they'd be walking along and all of a sudden one of them would dart out, walk through the barracks and come out the other end – just to torment you. It was rather interesting.

Interviewer: So as sergeant of the guards, did you have close buddies there? Did you have to keep your distance?

Jamison: No, they weren't buddies of mine. They probably went AWOL for a couple days or something. Or got drunk, or what have you.

Interviewer: Oh, I got you. So that's in Warminster. So how long were you there?

Jamison: I couldn't tell you, but it wasn't too long in any of those camps. One, two, three and then we went down to Southampton, and we went over the Channel to Omaha Beach [France].

Interviewer: What did you go over in?

Jamison: I don't know what it was, but it was a pretty good size boat. We had to climb down the nets into a Higgins boat. And of course when I dropped off I stepped in a shell hole. Went right down the shell hole. I guess I'd still be there if a couple guys didn't grab a hold of me. Because you got a full pack on there. I was struggling to get up, they got hold of me somehow and got me up. Then we got up on the beach.

And there was a lot of debris on the beach at the landing. This was after D-Day. I would think maybe a month after or something like that.

Interviewer: Was there any smell left?

Jamison: I didn't notice any. And there were big piles of food, canned stuff on wooden pallets, covered with tarps. Of course we couldn't get too much to eat, so we distracted the guard. A couple guys faked a fight and the other guy would sneak across the back and get a case of pineapples or something good.

Then we'd go back. And we'd sleep in the pup tents. We'd just go in, dig a hole, and put our loot in there [laughs]. Then we started up and we were told we were in Patton's secret army. You know, Patton had a fake army that the Germans thought would go across to Calais, instead of So then we kind of followed up along And a couple times we were assigned a couple little jobs, like sending out patrol to check out [things].

I was on patrol one day and I heard this thumping noise. Thumping, thumping [pounds on table to make the sound]. And there was a little pocket there, and I saw some trees, and it seemed to be coming from that, so I sneaked up onto it. And there was a little water hole there. Couldn't have been more than 100 feet across. And a lady was doing her clothes. She had a plank about four inches under the water, and she was laying her clothes on this plank and beating them with a stone. Some of these areas, people were very primitive. We were so far ahead of them.

Of course that's the problem today. We're so far ahead of some of the other people they're jealous of us.

I broke my tooth. Eating a C-ration. You know they had those little brown crackers? Well, I think they made them out of cast iron. And I bit one in two, and it got behind my tooth and just spun a piece of it right out. So then I had to go to a dentist, right? So the nearest one was, I think, right outside of Le Mans.

Anyhow, a jeep took me to the dentist.

I had to get there first thing in the morning. And the sergeant was there. And he was warming up the syringe. You know they have a syringe that they squirt to clean up the debris after they drill it? And he had in a pan of water on top of a little kerosene burner; it froze up in the middle of the night. And then the drill was a bicycle affair.

The dentist came in and pedaled a bicycle that run the drill. It was a very crude operation. And of course the water was ice cold after he drilled it out and squirted it up there. I thought I was going to go right through the top of that tent. And finally we got it filled, and I went back. But it bothered me every time I got hot and cold.

Jamison (cont'd): So then eventually we followed up behind Patton and about the first of November I was assigned to 95th Division. And on the way up to the division they took us by truck for a ways then they stopped and they had the old 40 & 8 railroad cars. And we stopped at Saint Lo, and we were loaded the next morning in these railroad cars. And then we transferred to trucks again. But we got there late in the afternoon to Saint Lo. And Saint Lo as the most devastated city in Europe. Everything was just blown up.

And I was walking around through the ruins, debris. And there was one building where there was a lean-to on the back of a house, and this man came out, a Frenchman. He motioned to me with his thumb, as if to take a drink. And I said, "Yes." I shook my head yes. He went back down to the cellar and he came out. And he and I sat there, drank the whole bottle of wine, just before dark. I couldn't understand him and he couldn't understand me. But there was something nice about it. This friendship in all this clutter and destruction.

Interviewer: Did you talk without understanding? Or did you just sit there?

Jamison: We just sat there. And then I went down, and I got in the car, and we moved out. And as an aftermath of having a drink with the Frenchman, I told ... Lisa Lomberzay (PH), who was chief of protocol for the city of Metz, I told her in 1994 when we were there about having this drink. And she got all excited. And she said, "Do you know the man?"

I said, "No, I don't know him. He was much older than me and he is probably deceased by now." And the next morning she said, "The mayor of Saint Lo wants to see you."

So Marge [his wife] and I went to Saint Lo, and I got the city medallion. I still got it. I got the city medallion. And of course, then I went back. This was in '94.

But to continue on with my other story, When we got as far as the train was taking us, we got in trucks. And we moved up. And at every place where there was a bridge, or where there had been a bridge, we didn't go on the bridges. We went down through the water. Because the Germans had everything zeroed in. Every crossroad, every bridge. And you had to do that, or you know.

And of course the first thing they told you when you get in the back of that truck – of course we've all got rifles. And [they tell us] the first shell that comes in, don't duck. Because we're standing all close together in the back, and the truck is packed. Sure enough, we get next to one of these bridges and we went to go around it, down through the water, and here comes a shell. [Makes the noise of the shell coming in.]

And of course as soon as you hear it screaming, everybody goes like this [presumably ducks in demonstration]. And [when ducking] guys were jamming the rifle in [someone else's] face. It's automatic [reflexive when you hear the shells]. And he told us about it before it happened. But still, a couple guys got hurt.

And then finally we get up, and I had to report to the captain. And the captain looked at the papers and said, "Huh, New Jersey!" very disgusted-like. I guess he was picturing the city and refineries and what have you. And I said, "Sir, you don't have to worry about me. I spent half my life three steps ahead of the game board. I can handle myself."

He said, "Hmm, a smart ass, too."

Jamison (cont'd): So I left. It was a couple days after that, maybe three or four. And I got called in to see the captain. I said, "Oh boy, what'd I do now?" So I went in and he says, "Jamison, they got any other ornery S.O.B. like you?" I was quite feisty.

I said, "I don't know sir."

He says, "Well, if they have I want 'em."

I says, "Well, that was kind of a backhand compliment, thank you."

He says, "You are first guide (CK)." So I was put in his first guide (CK).

Interviewer: Do you remember his name?

Jamison: I thought it was Macy (PH), but they tell me it was ... I can't think of it right now. I guess the reason I got to be first [guide] is I went on patrol, and one of our guys got shot in the leg and we had to leave him. When we got back they said somebody's got to go get him. I said, "I can go." And I found him. I've always had a good sense of direction. And also, after the war we were talking about it. And they talked about people being afraid, and I don't ever recall being afraid. And my daughter-in-law said, "You know why? I bet it's because some of your ancestors are Indians. And of course, the first thing they teach you is to be brave."

So I don't know if that was part of it or not. But I had no problem finding this guy in the dark. And then of course I couldn't carry him. He was much bigger than me. So I kind of half-crawled, with him on my back. But I got him back. And after that I was always a scout. I was always made regimental scout, or combat scout, just before I got hit. Which is made up of Army Specialized Training Program [ASTP] people, or those with high IQ's, or so on.

Interviewer: What was made up of them?

Jamison: They had units of combat scouts.

Interviewer: So your unit had a lot of ASTP people?

Jamison: Yah. A lot of times they sent them out, and usually you'd carry a Tommy Gun or something like that. They'd have them on raids. Just raise heck, and get back as best you could.

Interviewer: Reconnaissance, too?

Jamison: Yah.

Interviewer: Right about now, are you still in France, or are you coming close to...

Jamison: I'm still in France. And then the next thing is we cross the Moselle River. The Moselle River goes around one side of Metz. And what's the other river, the Saar, on the other? Anyhow, Metz lies between two rivers, and there's hills all around it. And forts, all the forts. Jeanne d'Arc, Fort Driant... And in between the forts were block houses with turrets, and stuff. And a maze of tunnels, and so on. Most fortified city in the world. And we eventually took it the first time since Attila the Hun took it in 400, or something like that. And it was like the transportation hub of Europe.

Interviewer: I saw some pictures the other day looking down from it. And it looked like the U.S. troops coming over were pretty exposed coming up the Moselle. And then you had to cross.

Jamison: We crossed at Thionville.

We crossed in small boats. Then after we got across, north of Metz, we formed a task force and our colonel was Colonel Marone (PH). And he got hit once and still stayed with us. Then he got hit again, and that time they had to take him out. We were called Marone's Marauders. Then Colonel Bacon took over. I didn't know. They rearranged some of the task force. We had a .. I guess they called it battalions or something. Tanks. T.D.'s or something. Tank destroyers and uh... Infantry. And one of our.

Interviewer: So Moselle was flooded. How'd you cross the Moselle?

Jamison: Boat. Small wooden boats. Some were hit. Some guys got hit. Then once we got across they brought up the engineers and put a Bailey bridge across. Then the first big skirmish we had was the rail yard. Then we got out of that mess and then one battalion went to take a fort. And when they went in, why the Germans went around back and came in behind them so they were bottled up. So we had to go and sort of get that mess straightened out. And I think that's just about when Colonel Marone got hit the second time. So we withdrew and Colonel Bacon took over.

Then we went up behind the German lines. Because the Germans were lined up next to the river, and our troops were on the other side of the river. We had 90th Division and 5th Division. And the 5th Division tried to make a frontal assault up – almost opposite of Metz. They were coming in like that. And they got the tar kicked out of them and they sort of withdrew. Then we went up. We got about a mile inside the German line and then we just went as hard as we could on up. And we were the first troops. Fort Julien. And at Fort Julien they couldn't get the door broke in. It was a foot thick. Then you had concrete, three or four foot on each side, and the steel door which was a foot thick.

And they blasted away with 155's (155 mm. guns). Couldn't do anything with it. Eventually they got the concrete broke on the sides of it. ... [Brief talk about the forts.]

Interviewer: What do these forts look like?

Jamison: Mostly they were built right in the side of a hill or mountain or whatever you want to call it. Then they were reinforced with walls. Most had a moat of some kind around them. See some of these forts had been there for years. And then WWI, just before, the Germans worked on them. No, the French had worked on them. They had the Siegfried Line [fortifications] and the Maginot Line. And the Germans and the French kept working on them. Every time there's a war they'd reinforce them. And they got to a point where one fort could cover another fort. So, you had almost an impossible thing, they thought.

Interviewer: So you have the one fort, and you're coming down to Metz. How many troops?

Jamison: Once we got through, you might say break through, then the division began to pour troops in. So it's hard to say. But several of them, and of course once we hit Metz then they started from the other way. And we took the military school at Metz. They had a military school for officers. And of course some of them were elite officers, German officers, and they were told to fight to the death.

Interviewer: And did they?

Jamison: Yah. And it was SS Panzer Division there. And it was pretty rough. It was a lot of street fighting once we got into Metz. And different groups said they were the first ones in Metz. I always thought if I wasn't the first one in, I was pretty close to it. So when we were over there in '94 [for a reunion], the French general was with us. Pierre...Bellais (PH), or something like that. And I was talking to him.

I said, "Now I can't recognize [where we came in]. I thought I was the first one. I thought it was right over in there."

He says, "It was. There's a new bridge. And if that's where you crossed you were probably the first in." So that's some satisfaction.

Then of course we had fighting. And of course we had a lot of house-to-house fighting. And what you call mouse holing.

Interviewer: What's mouse holing?

Jamison: Well most of the time houses over there were made of stone, concrete brick. And in the cities we'd just take satchel charge or a beehive charge, lay it against the wall, blow a hole through, [and then] blow a hole through the next house. Then you didn't have to go out on the streets, which the Germans had all zeroed in. So that was mouse-holing. At one such incident, me and one of my Buddies, his name was Bruno; You had two people when you took the houses. One of 'em would kick the door in, the other would cover him.

And you'd take turns. So you had equal chance of getting hit. So this particular one, we had kicked the door in. And shortly afterwards we found an old lady and old man in the back. They sat there, they were crossing themselves. About that time a shell came in and tore off the front part of the house, one of the rooms. And we said, We've got to get out of here. And we ran around, hoping there was a cellar in the house, and sure enough, there was a back door down into the cellar. When we got down to the cellar the old lady and old man were down there, crossing themselves. And how they got down there ahead of us, I don't know. Because they must have been 80 years old. But they were there.

I had to go on patrol at night, so one of my close buddies was a medic. So if I was out on patrol, and he was in, he would find a place for me to sleep. We'd sleep anywhere we could find it, and we were taking a lot of small towns. And sometimes we'd even go in the house and sleep in the bed. But usually we'd be in a barn or something. Some hay or straw, what have you.

So he would find a place for me, and I would find a place for him if he was late coming in because of taking care of the wounded. So we developed a friendship. Which came in good later on.

Interviewer: So are there other people with the medic and you?

Jamison: Oh yah, a regular squad.

Interviewer: So when you're mouse holing, do you throw grenades in the other buildings to make sure there aren't Germans in there, or what do you do?

Jamison: Not always. Sometimes, if you suspect there are Germans.

Interviewer: Did any Germans come in the other way?

Jamison: Yes, sometimes. I got in trouble once. The house was rather square with four rooms. And we went in this room and the guy with me looked in this room, I went this way, and then I heard the Germans. You could hear them because of their boots. I heard one and it sounded like he was behind me. ... Somehow they got in behind me. So I just went over to the far corner, and of course the other guy recognized they were there and he went out. He didn't have a chance to holler; if he had he'd have given his position away, and he'd probably get shot.

I'd managed to get the door shut behind me. So I went over to the far corner and just sat down in the far corner, and I see the doorknob start to turn. And I shot through the door. And then there was a great amount of confusion. And then they got a pole, a long pole, and they pushed the door in.

Of course every time they'd work on it I'd shoot. But eventually they got it open. And they threw in a potato masher [stick grenade]. So I just curled up in a ball, and opened my mouth. I don't know what time it was when I came to. No idea. I was bleeding from my nose, a little bit from one ear, and disoriented. But I didn't seem to have any wounds or anything.

Interviewer: Why do you open your mouth?

Jamison: To absorb the concussion. And anyhow, I finally got up and around, and then I went out. I didn't know exactly where the men were. I said, Well they must have went back. So I started back. And finally I was challenged by one of our guys, and I didn't know the password. So I said, "I don't know what the password is, but I'm a GI." I gave him two or three examples, like, "deep," and the answer was "purple." And a couple we had used previous to this. And he said, "OK, drop your rifle and come in with your hands up."

So I did, and he saw who I was. And they couldn't send me back. So the medic came and he gave me some warm milk and aspirin [laughs]. And then the next morning I was ready to go again. But that was a rather close one.

We were walking across the field, and one of my buddies alongside me. And they were lobbing mortars in. And it rained almost every day – rained or snowed. And the mortar came in. It was right between me and him but it was closer to him. And he was a short guy. And when it came in it exploded. And I turned and looked and there's mud all over, and his feet are still going but he's about this high off the ground [laughs]. It must have been right under him, but the mud absorbed most of the concussion. So he didn't get hurt.

About that time, one of the Piper Cubs come over. And tipped its wings, and said, "Sniper in the haystack, dead ahead." So as soon as he hollered that the sergeant came over and said, "You and I will take him. March and Fire."

March and Fire you do in pairs. I fire my clip, and when I'm empty he fires his, and I'm loading. And so on. We walk. And for some unknown reason he said to me when we got within I would say 60 yards of the haystack, "Break out in a run. We'll cross over to confuse him." And we just started, we just had crossed over, and there was a shot. And I seen he was hit, and I went on around. And when I did the guy was backing out of the haystack, and I shot him.

Jamison (cont'd): And then I come right around and he was on his knees, and I could see that the bullet went right in his heart. And I said, "Can I help you?" He said, "I want a cigarette." And I lit a cigarette, I put it in his mouth, and he didn't even take a puff on it. He just keeled over. He was dead.

And an unusual thing happened. My wife and I – I don't know how many years later – we went to Gettysburg [coming back from a reunion]. And I had one of these caps on, 95th. And I don't remember what we were doing. But anyhow we were looking at everything at Gettysburg. And [a man] says, "Hey, 95th." So I go over to talk to him. And as I talked to him I found out he was the guy, the pilot of the plane that warned us about the guy in the haystack. And I never followed up on it. I told some of the guys at the reunion about him, and they knew him. He comes from Pennsylvania right up near the New York border somewhere.

Interviewer: When they go over, do they give you a signal?

Jamison: No, he just hollered. He tipped it over and hollered at us.

Interviewer: So you met him there.

Jamison: Yep, met him at Gettysburg. And I'm always sorry that I didn't follow up on it. And one of the guys, Bruno, and I were rather close. And after the war I was always asking....

(original CD is filled. New CD begins. This recording spliced both together)

[CD2 began with new subject]

Jamison: Joe, the medic, came up. And he said, "Where are you hit, what hurts Jamie?" And I said, "Well, my foot, my ankle, calf, knee, thigh, back."

He said, "What do you want me to take care of first?"

I said, "Take care of my foot if I still got one."

So he tried to unlace my boot. He couldn't get it off -- I couldn't stand it. I said, "You're going to have to cut it off." So he took the scissors, cut the leather, and got it off.

He says, "I think it will be all right. It's messed up pretty bad but I think it will be all right."

He bandaged it up. Then he bandaged my calf and my knees and my thigh. He cut my pants straight up, you know, and my drawers. Then mind you know there's about four inches of snow on the ground. Then he went to work on my back. Well, I had picked up my C-rations in the morning, and we had light jackets with a drawstring. And you put your C-rations in the back, and you just tied the string. And he started to work onto me, and he said, "Oh..." And I said, "Uh-oh, it must be real bad." And then I hear a chuckle.

I said, "What are you doing?"

He says, "You got beans and hot dogs and blood all over. They hit you right in the can of beanie wienies."

Jamison (con'td): So, well I still eat beanie wienies to this day. That probably saved my life. So, anyway, he patched me up and said, "We'll have to get you out." So remind you this is the first thing in the morning. Snow. I got my jacket split up the back – this is all bare here. And, I was cold. And miserable. And every once in a while I'd see in German making like I was dead. In case he looked at me, I couldn't tell. And I laid there most of the day, waiting for them to get me out.

I don't know what time it was, but towards the end of the day I heard this tank rumbling down. Did you see [the movie] "Saving Private Ryan?" Did you see the last part when the tank is coming across the bridge? **[Interviewer: Yes.]** Well, you can imagine if you're lying on the ground, you can't move, one of those things comes rumbling up beside you, you're really not sure whether it's yours or the enemy. Fortunately it was one of ours.

He came running right up along side of me. Two GI's were running behind. He picked me up and threw me up on the back of the tank, wheeled around and out we went. And you could hear the bullets zipping off the tank. And he got me out. And when I got out they told me the story. They tried to get me out with a jeep, and they got the front end shot out from under it. Also, one or two days before this we had sort of liberated a hospital, and it had a lot of Russians in it, and some of them had been like guards to the Germans. You know what I mean? And they had big old overcoats on. Most of them were pretty good size men. Anyhow, two of them [two Russians] decided they were going to get me. One of them got their leg broke, and they gave up. And the last thing was the tank. And of course the tank got me out.

Then they couldn't take us back because everything was bombed out behind us, and it was dark. So they put us in a small barn, and we lay on some straw. And the guy right next to me wanted to smoke. So I lit him a cigarette. He took a puff on it and I'm watching him because of the straw.

And the first thing I see is that he burned his fingers. I go, "Hey, you burned your fingers." And he was dead. And they tried to give me morphine. I wouldn't take morphine, and I never shut my eyes all night. I wouldn't take anything. I just had the feeling if I shut my eyes, that was it.

I mean, it's a dumb thing, but that's just the way I felt. And then in the morning they loaded us up and they took us to a field hospital. And when they carried me in there's two doctors, and they had their whites on, and it looked like they'd been in the slaughter house rather than the hospital, covered in blood. And one of them said to me, "You're the 38th one this morning." And of course he cussed and swore a little bit, because of multiple wounds. They'd given me sodium pentothal. And then he says, "Count to ten." I [counted fast]. He said, "No, [count slowly]."

"One.....two.....three....." And I could feel him cutting on my leg. I couldn't feel it, but you know the sensation and the sound a paper makes when you cut it with a razor blade? Well I could hear that sound. And then, of course, nothing. And I woke up two days later, and another hospital nurse was slapping me in the face. I woke up. She says, "Well, I'm glad you're all right. We'd begun to worry. You've been out ever since you got hit."

Jamison (cont'd): Then I was there, they took care of me some. Then they took us by ambulance, I don't know where but somewhere in the Metz area. It was on a C-47 hospital plane. And they were going to fly us to England. We got about in the area of Paris and the weather shut down. And of course you didn't have the radar you have today. The pilot said, "You want to try it or not, it's up to you guys." We said, "No, you're the pilot, you [decided]." He said, "All right, we're going down."

And the navigator or copilot of whatever it was did some figuring, and said, "Paris should be right down there." Le Bourget Field. And so we come in. Of course you couldn't see anything until you got maybe 50 feet above the ground. And we hit a gas truck going across the runway. It kind of spun us around. Tore the wing off. And the pilot almost with tears in his eyes said, "You boys all right?" We says, "Yeah."

"Oh, thank God," he says.

We just got shook up is all. They got us out of the plane, and that was it.

I was in the hospital there for I guess about three days. They operated on me. Then they flew me to England, and I was in two hospitals there. I was in one near Exeter, and they worked on me some, and they kept asking me about my leg and so on and so forth. And they said within two weeks I'd be back on line.

They were giving me therapy, and I couldn't stand it. They were working on me, and my leg was all black and blue, and I just couldn't stand it. So every day I'd go hide when I was supposed to go for therapy. Then I hadn't went to the bathroom in – seven days I think it was.

So the doctor come around and said, "Did you have a bowel movement?"

I said, "No, I haven't had one."

He said, "All right." So he got two orderlies. Of course now I've got like a cast on, all the way up, clear up here. So they've got to hold me over the john, right? They're holding me over the john, and gave me an enema. They tried to pour ten gallons in a five gallon container. And hollered, "Hold it, hold it!"

Well, I let loose. Down in the bowl, up over the sides, all over the walls. They dropped me. It was a total disaster [laughs].

Finally they got me cleaned up and back in a bed. And then my leg because they cut this cord in two, my leg was wrapped up around my back. Of course they were trying to get it straightened out with t his therapy and I just couldn't stand it.

Anyhow, we had frost on this morning. And the hospital is laid out in what they call spiders. You had one round building in the middle, which was sort of the headquarters, then you had all these boardwalks going out to ... [other parts of the hospital]. And this particular morning I was supposed to go to therapy. I go out ... and I hit this frost. I flew up in the air, and come down on my knee. And when I did it straightened my leg out, I passed out. Somebody found me and they carted me back to the room. My leg was black and blue and green and all colors here, but it didn't come apart or anything. And it basically straightened my leg out pretty good. I was about that far – I could get my foot that far down. Maybe ten inches or so.

Jamison (cont'd): They kept telling me two weeks I'd be back in line. And we had a doctor come from the States who worked on penicillin and stuff. He was from the Philadelphia area. Young doctor, very nice guy. And every Thursday they'd have staff come around and check everybody if you were a problem case. They were saying that I was nuts. This major was in charge of our particular ward. But when the new doctor came in he was in charge. So he had come around and checked my foot, and he said to me, "Are you very squeamish?" And I said, "I don't think so." He said, "Turn your head anyway."

So I turned my head, and he said, "You feel anything?" He said, "Well turn around and look." He had a pin he was sticking in my foot and I couldn't feel it.

So then Thursday when he come around, they got my chart out because I was a problem, and he says, "This boy has to be ZI'ed." Which means Zone of Interior – go home. So he took the pin stuck it in my foot and said, "He's got a bad nerve injury." Then it was just a matter of a couple weeks. I got out on pass with my crutches, went down to the local pub. There was a couple of Englishmen in there who didn't like GI's. I'm up at the bar with my crutches and they kept nudging me, nudging me, nudging me. And pretty soon I fell down.

And when I did there was a couple Canadians in there. They picked me up, took me to the door, said, "Get out of here." And they tore the place up. So that was about all the excitement. Then I come back by hospital ship.

Interviewer: Where'd you land by hospital ship?

Jamison: Patrick Henry.

Interviewer: Is that in?

Jamison: Norfolk, or that area there [Virginia]. I landed there and I wasn't there too long. Then I went to White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. It's where the Greenbrier Hotel is? We've since felt like we'd like to spend a night down there, but it's ... \$500 a night?

Interviewer: Were you there to recuperate?

Jamison: Yah, I was there a week or two. Then I went to the major and said I'd like to go. He said, "If you can get that foot down on the floor you can go." So I went back to my room. There was four of us in a room – four beds. And we were discussing it. And one of them says, "You know, I've got an idea. We'll get you a pair of combat boots, and we'll roll up to or three socks to put in the bottom there."

So that's what we did. I think we put four socks in the heel of the boot. And I put the boot on, and I went down. The major looked. "OK," he says. "You passed."

I went home. But two weeks later I had to come back because ... the major wanted to see me. He said, "Will you tell me how you got your foot down on the ground?"

I said, "Yes sir, I had four socks rolled up on the bottom. Now there's only two."

He says, "I'm going to use that [laughs]."

And then I was discharged.

Interviewer: Do you remember the date?

Jamison: [He and his wife discuss discharge date.] Sixteenth of either May or June. It was May, I think.

Interviewer: 1945?

Jamison: 1945 yes, May of 1945, I'm pretty sure. But I don't recall exactly.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you want to say that you haven't already said?

Jamison: Well, two things bother me. And I didn't realize it. And one of my friends said that I should go get checked for post traumatic stress. And of course I went. A psychiatrist. He interviewed me and so on.

And the first thing I said that bothered me was the fact that I think the first man I shot was a German SS trooper who was behind some of his men, sort of on his knee looking down this hill.

Of course I was behind him and the thought come to me, "I really should ask him to surrender." Then I said to myself, "Well, I can't do that, because I know he won't. And if I say anything he'll just swing around with his [weapon] and fire." So I shot him.

I did holler, I said, "Hey, bang." And it bothered me. I guess because when I was a kid you were Cowboys and Indians, and always the sheriff let you draw first, and you never shot anybody behind the back. They call it the "Cowboy Syndrome."

And then really the thing that bothered me that I didn't realize was the fact that I shot a sniper. And that night I, you know, sort of reported it to the captain.

And if they knew where somebody had been killed he wanted the pockets checked to see if there's any papers or notes. And I went to check, and it was a woman. And it just ... tore me up. And of course it still, still bothers me. [Pausing, crying.]

But I guess that's about it.

Jamison's wife Margaret: Steve had written the inscription on a Purple Heart monument that is placed in Ocean County in Toms River, New Jersey. And also a like monument placed in freehold in Monmouth County. And the inscription reads, "They bled for liberty, selflessly serving their country. They are true patriots, whose boundless heroism has kept us free."

Interviewer: Thank you both. It's been a great honor.

End of interview recording

1 hour 23 minutes 16 second