

Ernest Johannes log

Narrator: Ernest Johannes

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

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Transcriber: Carol Slezak

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Log compiled by: David Meyer (O'Shea), November 2022

First download

- 00:00 Ernest Johannes Headquarter Co. 2nd Lieutenant 379th IR, 95th ID/ Then says Highest rank when leaving Staff Sergeant
- 00: Bio. Born July 12, 1917. Address. Born on the Horicon Marsh Chester Township Dodge County Wisconsin (SE Wis) Two brothers, one sister
- 00:00 On family. Father in navy as boy apprentice in Spanish-American War. Then tug boat captain San Francisco/Oakland. Then back to Milwaukee start florist business. Failed. Rigger Navy Yard in Bremerton, Wash. Back to Milwaukee Int'l Harvester, saved then start Greenhouse. Success. Mr. Johannes works there in deliveries until 16. Continues to help until drafted.
- 0 xx Marquette University. BA Business Then law. Admitted to bar June 1, 1942
- 05:36 Drafted in Milwaukee **July 18, 1942 six days after 25th birthday.** Sent to Ft. Sheridan then Camp Swift, Texas where he joins the 95th.
- 05: There at the inaugural parade of the 95th, "first proceedings." "Smelled like we were in a horse barn." Barracks "spanking new." Description of barracks. Duties. "Wanted us to take the casing on the windows off" double decker beds issued sheet blankets. Asked to hang clothes on racks but
- 05: Duties. Worked in green house. On rifle range "I was a bolo" (meaning didn't hit the target or only hit it once.)
- 0:00 First days. Didn't gripe Description of other men. Some WWI vets. Men from everywhere, every age. "Anybody with a heartbeat." Deserters from regular army. Story of drunk, 50 years old, goes AWOL Caught and discharged. At Swift took men up to age of 39. While there, discharged those 39 and older. But had a few up to 50 yrs old.
- 7:00 ?? The G.I. bath for those men who didn't like to keep clean. Others took them to the shower and used GI brush on them.
- 0:00 On deserters taken into Mr. Johannes's company. Given second chance. My company were all the "goof-offs" and "foul balls" assigned.

08 Promoted to “Gas” Corporal. Describes. Wore a gong around his neck to notify if he detected poison gas being used. Mallet inserted in bottom. Was promoted but there was a Gas Corporal throughout WWII.

Training troops putting on and off gas mask using “laughing gas”

End of first download

Second download

- 0;00 Camp Swift and Ft. Sam Houston. Memories. Anti-tank platoon. (before Gas corporal)
- 01:00 on Camp Swift and the Murder of the girl from Bastrop, Tx (7.5 away) by 95th GI. Signal Corps. Picked up girl, raped and murdered her. Tried. Convicted Hanged on gallows at Leon Springs (after division moved to Fort Sam Houston.)
- 0:00 Description of grass fire Camp Swift. Men ordered to “stomp” on the fire, put it out.
- 00:00 Camp Swift. Slept on cots in a building. Nice. Food described “not much good.”
- 04:59 Move to Sam Houston. Went ‘into the field” at camp at Leon Springs **(24 miles north west of Sam Houston) Hiked there.** Life in the field. Shelter pack tents half to you half to another. In tube. Became supply sergeant. Tent mate Herman Bates. “enormously talented.” Carpenter
- 0xxx Duties as supply sergeant. Company property and individual property. Kept records of company property. Radios, Wire.
- 10:18 On Socks. Big problem . Each man provided two pairs. Supply’s responsibility To prevent trench foot. Some men careless
- 10:... Leon Springs is the military reservation. Camps there. Each regiment builds own camp at Leon Springs. One is Camp Bullis. Built the camp. When called into the field, came from the camp. Sometimes return from field.
- 10:00 Story of batallion commander who is busted at reveille. Company commander of 379th (Martin?) “Colonel. WWI veteran, tough” takes reveille. 3,000 men. Calls 1st Battalion commander. Commander reports. Calls 2nd Battalion Commander. (Lewis?) No show. “He’s in the sack sir.” “Get him out and tell him he is relieved of his command. Remembers another CO who was drunk. “Let’s go on.”

- 12: Leave Leon Springs, Tx to Camp Polk, LA for Louisiana maneuvers June, 1943
“war games.”
- Pigs running wild in LA. Falling into sump holes.
- On food. Two sandwiches in morning (marmalade) and two at night (marmalade).
Story of cook at night making sandwiches putting on a stump and “behold the pigs
were lined up” behind the stump. Funny.
- 12:-0 **Still supply sergeant at Camp Polk. Stayed so from 1942 to 1945 when discharged
at Camp Shelby, Miss. (so with 95th ID from the beginning through deactivation).**
- 20:45 Story of Doctor at Camp Polk telling Mr. J he had poison oak. Gave calamine to
treat and said, “Stay out of the poison oak.” Mr. J said back, “when I bed down,
how can I avoid laying on poison oak?” Doctor laughs.
- On hygiene. Only time men could brush teeth was when in camp because didn’t
carry toothbrushes. In field and combat, everyone growing beards. Sometimes
long beards. Slept on ground in Louisiana. Late June, July. Getting cold
- 22:00 ?? Stories from Camp Polk. On the drunk who went to sleep in the wrong barracks,
got kicked out and goes to Mr. J in supply because he’d lost his shoes. Mr. J had
to find him another pair of shows. Drunk had another pair of shoes “in salvage”
being repaired. Mr. J finds him another pair. Helped him. “that’s my job.”
- 24:00 Trip from Texas to Camp Coxcomb, Ca. near Desert Center (20 miles away).
Long train ride. Train stops and “we’d have to run.”
- 25:00 Life at Camp Coxcomb, slept on the ground in tents. Desert. Tent city.
Description of sleeping. Jacket as pillow.
- Thanksgiving 1943. Dinner at Coxcomb then two-and-half ton trunk to L.A.
- Mr. J has 3 day pass. Got to downtown LA midnight. Find a place to sleep?
Shared bed with another soldier. Bed bugs. In morning, visit Aunt in Van Nuys.
- Xx:xx Many trips to L.A. Story of return to Desert Center at midnight. No one around.
Starts walking the 20 miles to Camp Coxcomb. Jeep gives him a ride and gets
back before reveille.
- Interviewer mentions time. They break to attend the annual Metz hour ceremony.

End second download

Third download.

- 0:00 First day of Metz battle. Supply sergeants ordered to go out and pick up
discarded gas masks. Found three soldiers “from my outfit..frozen...dead.. killed

from concussion in a rise. Describes them. Squatting. Killed by force of concussion not shrapnel. Called graves registration to pick them up. First day.

Xx:xx On Patton's visit to 2nd Battalion. "jeep was olive, lustrous." Mr. J was driving in center of road to avoid shrapnel. Pulls aside when Patton's jeep approaches other way. Only time saw Patton.

On why some jeeps had steel rod in front of them. To catch piano wire Germans would string across the road. Description of officer who died, Wire "took his neck off."

At beginning of actual fighting took over from another supply sergeant to haul ammo and supplies. Got to Co. G with load of ammunition. Arrived. Co. in "disarray." Cold, rain. Wounded man calls for medics. One of litter squad refused to go help. Mr. J retrieves the wounded man. Mr. J's jeep driver so nervous wouldn't unload ammo. Mr. J does himself. "Ammunition is heavy." Being shelled too. Outruns the shelling.

--- end of recording ---

(find more)

didn't realize he'd signed up for the army until he arrived in Camp Swift, Texas after a three-day train ride

09:00 Whittington was always paid last because his name was near the end of alphabet

09:30 barracks were new at Camp Swift, Whittington and his fellow soldiers had to put in the sod; the camp had been opened the previous month and was just getting populated

10:58 company didn't come up to full strength until it was transferred to Indiantown Gap, PA in 1944

11:08 they were hard on the ASTP guys who came in. "They'd been on the gravy train as far as we was concerned."

11:43 ASTP guys got stuck with KP and guard duty; mentions the ones he remembers

12:50 memories of Sam Houston in San Antonio, TX

13:53 didn't get promoted to sergeant until they were doing swamp maneuvers in Louisiana

15:00 scored well on an army test, but didn't get called up for officer training; some guys from his company did become officers

15:44 Whittington rose through the ranks as officers above him were killed or wounded, such as becoming platoon leader during the attack at Maizieres-les-Metz, France

16:42 but that didn't last long, because Whittington was wounded in November 1944

16:53 back at Camp Coxcomb in California before he went overseas, he won an expert infantryman badge and earned a 15-day delay en route to Indiantown Gap; he used that time to go home to Indiana and get married

18:00 got married on Saturday night, left on Monday morning; they saw each other a few times while he was at Indiantown Gap; wife Glenna [Talkington] was seventeen and still in high school

18:55 they had been married sixty-four years when she died in 2008

19:15 they started going out in 1940 when Glenna was in eighth grade; Whittington had graduated high school in 1939

20:08 mentions the ASTP guys in his platoon; one is a retired lawyer who did prison time and now lives in a gated community in Florida

21:30 mountain maneuvers in West Virginia; learned mountain climbing: "I didn't like it, but you do in the army what your orders are."

22:10 his squad went on a weeklong survival training course in West Virginia, camping and scavenging for food

23:50 moved up to Myles Standish in Massachusetts

24:15 shipped out on the USS West Point, the US's biggest ship, carrying 8500 men

24:42 Whittington's battalion traveled outside on the sun deck, no protection from elements; "But the worst of it was all them guys that got sick down below was coming up there."

25:18 Fellow vet Ceo Bauer chimes in: "We stayed on the promenade deck. Played cards. Got dirty."

25:55 overcrowding, everybody scared and sick, at least one man committed suicide by jumping overboard

26:44 by the time they got to Europe, all the men were mad and ready to fight

- 27:04 landed in Liverpool; then landed in Omaha Beach; remnants of D-Day—
equipment strewn around, wooden crosses marking the dead
- 28:25 went into hedgerows; spent two weeks there in pup tents before moving up
towards Metz; calisthenics and rifle training every day to keep busy
- 29:47 relieved the 90th Division at Maizieres-les-Metz, the first place they saw action
- 30:45 attack on Chateau Brioux: “I got hit in the arm with a piece of shrapnel. I went
back to the first aid station and they pulled it out, awarded me a Purple Heart,
gave me a tetanus shot, and sent me back up there.”
- 31:20 attack failed; many casualties; “It was a disaster”
- 32:03 thinks Patton made a bad decision to attack the chateau at night and use a march
and fire strategy; “None of them got very far.”
- 33:20 K Company was almost annihilated in chateau attack
- 33:58 after getting hit by shrapnel, Whittington was back on the line the next morning
- 34:16 the next day, they took the chateau; slept some, picked up the dead; waited for
replacement officers, including Vince Geiger
- 36:34 Geiger was his company commander for the next couple of weeks, until
Whittington got wounded the final time November 26, 1944
- 37:02 crossing the Moselle River; by this time Whittington is platoon sergeant; getting
bedrolls
- 39:20 a German soldier who shot himself rather than be burned to death in a garage
- 40:32 incident where Whittington refused to patrol a third time in German-infested
woods; commanding officer threatened to court martial him; “Well, we had lost
people every patrol. And I wasn’t going to do it again. We knew where they was
at.”
- 42:24 Whittington took it up with a higher-up officer, who told him not to worry about it
- 43:00 later saw the officer who wanted to court martial him at a racetrack in Louisville
- 43:38 Whittington started attending the 95th reunions in 1962; “I don't think I've missed
one since.”

44:20 about eight minutes of duplicate audio from earlier section about Vince Geiger's arrival and bedrolls

52:41 wearing a white arm band and not carrying a weapon to pick up dead; otherwise, Germans would shoot you; mentions people who were shot picking up dead

54:00 friend Donald Fields from Indiana who went out to smoke a cigarette and got shot

55:23 Whittington got shot by a rifle, just a flesh wound

56:00 surrender of Metz

56:45 they got in the brewery; fourth platoon sergeant got drunk and refused to move out, got in trouble

57:50 encountering booby trapped tunnel in a basement in Metz

58:29 Metz townspeople were hiding

58:45 brief break in tape, section missing

58:50 fighting at German headquarters in Metz; Germans wouldn't surrender except to a high-ranking officer

1:01:33 third time he got wounded, a German 88 got shrapnel in his lungs, wounded his face and "it blowed half my ass off;" long recovery, nerve damage in legs made him unable to walk for a long time; discharged on V-J Day, August 28, 1945

01:03:33 recording ends