

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Veteran's Name: David R. Jones

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

Date of Interview: Baton Rouge 2004

Transcriber: Carol Slezak

Transcribed: December 17, 2022

Expanded and sound-enhanced by D Meyer (son of ED Meyer Co H/379th/95th ID) Jan 26, 2023

Interviewer: First I'll say. I'm David Meyer, son of Earl Meyer, Company H, 379th. And this is Mr. David R. Jones, Company E, 377th. We can just start from there. ...

(break)... You were telling me about the day you were shot. Please start again.

David Jones: I wasn't shot, I got blowed up.

Interviewer: (repeating)...blowed up...

David Jones: ...In a minefield.

Interviewer: ... and you were the first ...

David Jones: I was first Scout.

We started off in the platoon....and we...we went where we were supposed to get to. I was in the head of it ... They told us to sit down and wait. I waited. Pretty soon an officer comes to me and I says " We're short" (sounds like " a striker"), " he stopped off for something."

He didn't have a runner so he said, I'll be back and bring him up.

He went through the minefield to get to there.

And back through the minefield. ... and what happened...

I went back through the minefield and brought him back up with me.

And then a little while later he comes to me again and said, "Would you go back? The runner he ain't here and neither is the platoon guy. I don't know who the rest... there was three of us..

I went back through the minefield, came back up again and they come with me. ... and we got hit on the edge of the minefield, the Germans loaded up ...

Interviewer: Holy cow. (1:22)

David Jones: Killed three right there. One laid right against me.

Interviewer: Was it a mine that blew up or artillery?

David Jones: It was a minefield.

Interviewer: .. a minefield ..

David Jones: It's not even in the record. I couldn't find it anywhere. About 10:30 at night.

Interviewer: 10:30 at night. How long did you lay there?

David Jones: Oh, probably 5, 10 minutes. ... but (sounds like "luckily") here up out on a paved road. Over a fence and everything.

Interviewer: What... What wounds did you have?

David Jones: I had both legs broken.

Interviewer: Jesus...

David Jones: This left one was the worst, busted the femur, still got a big piece in there. And I also got a splinter 13 inches long. This one here had a bunch ... tibia busted.

Interviewer: Holy cow. Was that at the beginning of the Metz battle?

David Jones: It was the lead off of it.

Interviewer: The lead off of it...

David Jones: ...There was three killed. If I remember right, there were 17 wounded.

Interviewer: Did you know the three guys who were killed?

David Jones: Oh yeah. Can't remember their names anymore. Merrill [PH] was one. He had his face blown off.

And the one who tried to save me, I suppose. I don't know was Brad Whitman And I talked to him and he said, I don't remember anything. And that was the end of it.

And there's a lot that way.

And I can't remember who the third one is.

Interviewer: And Was that the end of the war for you?

David Jones: Yep. That was the end

No more war... I had a hard job getting back. I mean.

Interviewer: How did you get back?

David Jones: You want to hear all of it?

Interviewer: Yeah.

David Jones: Well, in the first place, some of the other platoons come over and picked us up with wounded" ...)

And they took us back to the CP and they put a splint on my left leg. My Right leg they didn't have to.

From there, they took us to the Italian CP. And then the Regimental CP. But in the morning, they took us to Division CP.

From there they took us to the hospital. and I can't remember the name of the town; the shit's been too long. Fifty-nine years.

Interviewer: Sure.

David Jones: From there they was probably (unintelligible) .. the enemy.

Interviewer: How long were you there in the hospital there?

David Jones: They checked your wounds and they put the cast on.

Interviewer: From your chest all the way down? Holy cow.

David Jones: Yep [laughing].

Interviewer: Was it itchy?

David Jones: Nope.

Interviewer: Were they nice to you in the hospital?

David Jones: Yeah, they had us in the hospital, then come and took us ... they put us on a plane to go to Paris...

No (corrects himself) .. to England.

And we got up to it and it was loaded.

I had a window, I could see out. I was the only one. I looked out the window and I looked down. I said to the nurse, What's going on? "She said, Well, we're supposed to go to England. ... She said, actually "No.. the weather's too bad."

So we had to land in Paris. Landed in Paris and was there three days. From there they put us on a hospital train.

[Break for 3 seconds]

So you're in Cherbourg?

David Jones: I got to Cherbourg and they put us on a hospital ship called the Eula Neill [?]. And uhm... Had railing on the bed that high.

And I asked what they were for, and he said, "You'll find out pretty soon."

We crossed that English Channel, that's why. A lot of them fell out of bed.

And that wasn't so bad. We made it ... to England. I don't know what town in England.

To England on the next trip the boat sank... 5:50

I went to a certain number I don't know what it was.

We got there on Thanksgiving Day. I remember that. We went to one hospital, and they give us a meal, then they took some of us to another hospital.

And I was there until we went home. I don't even remember where we went out or anything anymore...

Interviewer: But you're still in a full body cast?

David Jones: Yeah.

Interviewer: So ... would they ... you get to England. Could they .. Did they wheel you around places? Or were you stuck...

David Jones:They had to carry me. Carry

Interviewer: Did they carry you on a stretcher?

David Jones: [no verbal response – nods head].

Interviewer: Really! So.. (recapping) so you go to England, and it's Thanksgiving Day. And did they carry you to where you had a Thanksgiving meal?

David Jones: I had two Thanksgiving meals [laughs].

Interviewer: Two Thanksgiving M...

David Jones:Yeah... Then the cast got too tight and they had to bust it open.

Interviewer: Really.

David Jones: A lot of funny things happened.

Interviewer: So, where was your first Thanksgiving meal?

David Jones: I had Turkey. I don't remember what the other one was. I ate them both, I was hungry.

Interviewer: .. and then your cast got too tight...

David Jones: After gettin' there I stayed there until—they put me in traction. I had maybe 80 pounds of weights on the leg.

Interviewer: So your leg's up in the air in traction?

David Jones: No, it wasn't up in the air like that.

In fact ... I could even sit down on a chair... or on the bed.

I don't know how they done it but they done it. When that got healed enough to see, they put me back in the cast again.

Just one leg. ...that was on the knee on the right side...

Interviewer: Is the cast still up to your chest?

I don't know where we went out on the boat... We went back Back on the Monticello. An old... (unintelligible) ...

Got back to New York City in February. Something like that. Got a free phone call. I called home and I don't remember who it was.

My wife didn't have a phone but I ... someway. Here I found out I had a son.

That's the second one. The next day the New York paper says "Soldier finds out that he had a son." Headline. My wife asked me last night if I had that paper and I said I don't know what's come of that.

Interviewer: You think that would have been in February?

David Jones: Yep.

Interviewer: February 1945, one of the New York newspapers had .. Was it a headline?

David Jones: Yeah. We were kind of surprised in the hospital. Joe Louis was in the hospital. He wasn't hurt but he was in there.

Interviewer: Just bringing good cheer?

David Jones: Yeah. I asked him for an autograph, and boy there were a bunch of them after I did. ...

Then they after got... The cast I still had it on. I think I was there three or four days ..I don't know how long.

Then they took us and put us on a train. They had to take the window out to get me on there. Couldn't get me in. ... Oh I had a lot of ...?

I went to Camp Pickett, Virginia.

I stayed there the whole time. ... 9:50

[Break 2 seconds]

Interviewer: Now you are in Camp Pickett Virginia..

David Jones: Camp Pickett, Virginia I stayed there until I was discharged on Labor Day.

Can you imagine being discharged on Labor Day?

Interviewer: Labor Day, 1945.

David Jones: September the Third..

Interviewer: So that's just after the Japanese surrendered.

Oh that must have been a happy day.

David Jones: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you were at Camp Pickett when you heard of the surrender? Where were you when you heard of the German surrender?

David Jones: I can't remember. What was that date? Do you remember that?

Interviewer: I think it was April, maybe April 11—somewhere around there. [Actually May 8, 1945]

David Jones: I had to be at Camp Pickett.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Jones: I was there.. I was going home once for two or three weeks. I had a brace on my legs.. They were fractured. And we had to go home by train.

Interviewer: And you saw your son?

David Jones: No. My dad brought my wife and the kids down to see me in the hospital. Older son doesn't want nothing to do with him, youngest six weeks old.

Interviewer: What was it like to see your son for the first time?

David Jones: The oldest boy didn't want didn't want nothing to do with us, because I was laying down. The other was too small. He wasn't more than six weeks old or something like that.

Interviewer: Just a little baby?

David Jones: Yep.

Interviewer: Are they here with you now?

David Jones: No.. They're back in Ohio.

Interviewer: They still live back in Van Wert, the town?

David Jones: Yeah, both in Van Wert County..

Interviewer: Just going back to when you first arrived in France. How'd you ... Did you land at Omaha?

David Jones: We went to England first.

We crossed the ocean on the West Point. Neither here nor there. Went on the West Point. Went into the floating docks in Boston. We went to some camp in the east on the other coast. I was first in there, too.

Interviewer: You were:

David Jones: Yep.. Why, we don't know. We stayed there probably a couple weeks.

Interviewer: What was it like on the ship going over? ... Is that your wife?

David Jones: That's her standing; she doesn't see me though... .

Interviewer: There she is. Hey..., Mrs. Jones?

(Pause)

David Jones: She's my second one (wife) .

Interviewer: (repeating)... your second one...

David Jones: I must have been married 57 years.

Interviewer: So when you left England. So what was the boat ride like across from the U.S. to England?

David Jones: It was a nice ride. About 10,000 on the boat. ... No escorts.

Interviewer: No escorts ...

David Jones: We zigged and we zagged every six miles

[laughs]. Close to 10,000. USS West Point, USS America. ...

Four-high bunks in there. If you wanted to take a shower, you lost a meal. ...

Interviewer: In .. You what?

David Jones: You had to lose a meal to get a shower. ... It didn't take very many days... took seven or eight days.

Interviewer: What sort of food did you have on the boat.

David Jones: Huh?

Interviewer: What sort of food did you have?

David Jones: (faint) You got used to the food...

Interviewer: 14:19 When you got to England, you stayed a few months?

David Jones: I don't remember how long we stayed.

Interviewer: Were the British nice to you?

David Jones: Well... listen we got through to Paris once..you all remind me... (sounds like "I would be in the PX team... [inaudible]...

Interviewer: What was that like to go?

David Jones: Well, we went on a train is all I remember. ... They went back and picked us up. I don't know where all we went.. I stopped got a shave... I remember that much. ... We got back after dark.

Interviewer: When you first landed in France, where did you land?

David Jones: Omaha Beach.

Interviewer: What was the first thing you remember seeing?

David Jones: An awful mess around there.

Jeeps, trucks and things like that.

And the hedgerows, we got to the hedgerows the first day or the second day.

The first day. ... We went to get a shower. They had a shower thing. Took a shower; on the way back they come along and picked me up because I had a driver's license to run the Red Ball.

Interviewer: So you drove the Red Ball?

David Jones: Yeah.

Drove that for a month.

Then we were put on a forty-and-eight train. You know what a forty-and-eight is—40 men or 8 horses.

Interviewer: Ah, 40 men or 8 horses fit in the car. They started for the front line. I remember it was a double-tracked place.

The other track the Germans had busted the ... down the line... the connection of the other railroad.

On the way up we were told to stop for something. The train did, and another train pulled up alongside of us I opened up the door... There was a bunch of (sounds like "frozen turkey") on theirs, I took it off and put it on ours.

The company commander gave me the dickens for doing it. When we got to our destination we didn't have no food , he came around and asked me if he could have it [laughs].

Interviewer: How long do you think you were in Europe before you were blown up?

David Jones: Well, let's see. Over six months all together. From the time I left and got back. I was thinking it was six months and three days. But I'm not sure.

I was quick.

Interviewer: Where was... Do you remember the first time you heard gunfire?

David Jones: I heard it pretty early. I was sent on patrols quite a few times ... In fact, one night the company commander says to me and two soldiers to find the platoon leader [?] ... We found him, and started back and the sergeant was lost so I had to bring him back. That's the reason I wasn't lost [laughs]. Couldn't lose me. .

Interviewer: You had a good sense of direction.

David Jones: I didn't want to be an officer.

Interviewer: Why is that? My father didn't want to be an officer either.

David Jones: I don't know. They asked me several times why I wasn't an officer, and I said I didn't ever wanted to be one. So, it seemed to me—I made PFC real quick.

Interviewer: When you left the service, what was your rank?

David Jones: PFC

Interviewer: (repeating) PFC

David Jones: I got the PFC in November.

18:55 = Interruption while Mr. Jones sees someone her remembers. They chat.

[Looks over.. recognizes some other reunion attendees)... "Hey, I know you...." (smile in his voice) (to the interviewer: "Hold it off for a little bit.")

Interviewer: Sure

Woman's voice: We were lookin' for you but you weren't there.. back and forth... meetings.

Interviewer: 19:25 Were you in the army with her husband or did you meet him at a one of the reunions?

David Jones: At reunions. They're from Indiana.

(break) Time 20:00

Yeah, there used to be a lot ... One fellow ... from Van Wert.... he'd been a prisoner.

When he came back, he didn't know what he was doing ...

Interviewer: Ohhh.

Interviewer: That happens. I can remember that night I got wounded, and them others got wounded, and they were hollering for help and everything else. I hollared at them I told them,

You better be quiet because the Germans are here. I got a citation for telling them that [laughs].

Interviewer: You did?

David Jones: I don't remember what it was any more.. it was something..

... I asked about it later. Somebody was checking on it. But not a bit of it is in the 95th's ... in the army records.

Interviewer: I hear that over and over and over again; things missing from the records.

David Jones: Oh, there's a lot of stuff missing.

Interviewer: 20:59 When was the first time you ever returned fire?

David Jones: I never returned fire. Never had to shoot anyone.. The others did, but I never had to. They'll leave a scalp to prove it, see. [?]

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the ... when you came back.. What are some of the passwords you remember?

David Jones: One of them that time was about "railroad." What was that big railroad called? It had three names and we used two of them. I remember that.

I don't know who made the names up ...

Interviewer: They changed every day?

David Jones: Every time we went out.

We didn't talk when we was on patrol. ... You would make noise with the rifle.

Interviewer: So you went on reconnaissance? Mostly.

David Jones: We used to sneak out and turn one of those things.. we'd turn the (sounds like "A" "V" "H") on them.

Interviewer: Is there anything... When you look at your time over there, is there anything that you're particularly proud of?

David Jones: Not really. ... because I did what I was told. I didn't get to stay long. Which maybe was a good thing.

Interviewer: Maybe?

You did.. You did everything you needed to do.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

David Jones: That's about all of it. That's about all of it. Yeah.

I'm going to tell you, Van Wert County got pictures of all the World War II veterans on November this year... early Novrmber.. ... Not November.... (thinking) June.

Interviewer: June..

David Jones: I think ... Maybe it was May. May before the 30th . And there was probably 150 that showed up. We took pictures of them, then had interviews. ... (?) Put that in the paper. ...

Interviewer: 22:48 On the night you were wounded was it cold?

David Jones: It was cold that night. It snowed a little bit. And the wind was coming in underneath the first tents they had me in. They had the tent buttoned up, but the wind was coming in. I couldn't move much.

Interviewer: What were you wearing at the time?

David Jones: You had to wear ... wool uniforms and things.. Like you see on pictures and things.

Interviewer: 24:19 And how old were you?'

David Jones: I was born in 1919 [laughs].

Interviewer: You were born in 1919.

David Jones: That was '44; that'd be... that's be 25, wouldn't it.

Interviewer: Twenty-five. .. Twenty-five

David Jones: Feel my arm; it gets cold.

Interviewer: What?

David Jones: My arm... does it feel cold?

Interviewer: A little.

David Jones: My leg's the same way.

I've had both legs operated on.

Interviewer: Jes...

David Jones: In fact, the one leg has been operated on three times.

Interviewer: 24:53 Does it still bother you?

David Jones: Oh yeah ... this leg it still .. won't bend.

Interviewer: Did you say there's still a piece of something in there?

David Jones: Yeah, a big piece of ... the bone ... about right there.

It looks **about** like a bullet, but it's not.

The first time I went to that ... I've been to probably six or eight different hospitals. ... first time I was in ... Ann Arbor, Michigan; the nicest one I've found. That's why I keep going there. It's 160 miles up there, but its.. real

(looks spots wife) My wife didn't go, she's still right there talking to that bunch.

Interviewer: Mr. Jones, thanks a lot.. is there anything else you'd like to say?

David Jones: I don't think so. ...

Interviewer: What I'll do, is ... uhm... later on today or tonight... I'll take your interview and I'll uh ..I'll put it on a CD and give it to you.b Okay..

David Jones: We'll be to the supper.. I think were the only ones of the bunch of us (*from his company?*) I go back over and see if there's other.

David Jones: Thank you, Mr. Meyers ... -Just Lucky (or Lovely) .

End of interview - 26 minutes 11 seconds