

Henry Kolar Audio Log

Narrator: Henry (aka "Hank") J. Kolar

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

Date: August 13th, 2004

Venue: Baton Rouge Holiday Inn, Baton Rouge, LA

Transcriber: Carol Slezak

Log compiled by: David Meyer, May 2025

Time Code	Subject
00:00	<p>Introduction: Henry J Kolar Co I/ 379th. (At first 997th Treadway bridge Unit Also present - Henry's wife, Lenore.</p> <p>Interview held in Atrium of Baton Rouge Holiday Inn on August 13, 2004.</p>
00:50	<p>Drafted in Chicago then to Camp Grant, Illinois and then to California coast can't remember Camp name (possibly Camp Beale) but close to Stockton..</p>
01:20	<p>At Stockton to study engineering depot. Went in as a mechanic. Couple of weeks and then</p>
01:27	<p>Basic training at Camp Beale (?) in California.</p>
02:21	<p>997th Treadway Bridge Outfit needs a mechanic so shipped there.</p> <p>Going out next morning. Did infiltration course. Cover with mud.</p> <p>Outfit built pontoon bridges. "I didn't know nothing about them and here I am bein' sent over there and they are shipped to Boston" then to Europe with absolute strangers.</p>
03:20	<p>Trip across the Atlantic. I Took sick. "14 days sick"</p>
03:37	<p>to Edinburgh, Scotland (Mr. K says "England") Got a look at "big Brockaway trucks" with booms on them that would unload the big Treadways.</p> <p>How the bridges were assembled. Pontoons into the river, crane pulls them together. Filled with air, then float them downstream and assemble them. Put the treadway on top of them and tanks could go across. This was his job in France.</p>
04:30	<p>Landed D-Day plus 14. With Treadway bridge outfit. First bridge put up at St. Lo "blown to hell" by artillery burst.</p>
05:30	<p>95th Infantry needs men so was transferred to the 95th. Took over at night in a truck. Arrived No cots. Took blanket and slept on floor.</p>
6:15	<p>Woke up. Face black with soot from burning bottle of gasoline with rags for wicks burning all night.</p> <p>Sergeant says "you ever fire an M-1" "No"</p> <p>"Wel,I you'll learn we'll get you out there." Learned M1. Also hand grenade training.</p>

- 06:30 From then on, he was "in the infantry with the 95th Division." Went through Saarlautern, Saar River.
- 6:47 Mr K asks Interviewer to reads out loud Mr. Kolar's account on crossing the Saar River. When shelled he writes he was "so scared" he dug a hole in the river bank and put his head in it left his butt out.
- 07:31 Quartered at a German house. German lady bakes them a cherry pie.
- 07:54 Crossing the Saar. On the cold weather. Can't give exact date On losing track of place and date. "You see a sign and you know you are there."
Didn't know the people with the 997th Bridgeway Company.
- 9:10 Did you ever build the pontoon bridges with the 997th? Worked the boom on the Brockway trucks. "Got so bad we... got out of there." Transferred to the 95th
Tries to find what happened to the 997th but can't locate. Captain Whitewood was company commander, .
(Break)
- 9:50 Someone offers to help Mr. K with information. Never heard a word from him again.
- 10:49 Crossing the Saar River. Germans start on us firing with machine guns on their tanks - so scared Mr. K puts his head in a hole with butt sticking up
- 11:38 At the Rhine. Billeted in a house. On third floor watching out Germans.
- 12:05 Germans had to fight just like we had to fight. German women cooked for them. Life good until shells came over then "it was bad."
- 12:30 Asks interviewer to read a letter that he (Mr. Kolar) wrote to his old friend. Very sweet reminiscence
- 12:51 Henry reads letter to Ed Pecorny Recounts shared war experiences. How Ed was captured and released. Runs into German who wouldn't give them potatoes Kicked in the butt down the stairs and "we got potatoes." Joe Barfard pays harmonica to entertain women.
- 14:18 What was Mr. Kolar's job? Squad Leader. T-5 a corporal. A lot of sergeants being transferred from one outfit to another and kept their ranks so "They wanted to take away Mr. Kolar's rank way but Patton said 'No.'" "I earned my stripes."
Made squad leader for a short time
- 15:20 Joe and Henry as bazooka team. Story of holding their position.
- 14:57 Gave food to German woman with baby buggies. Got their kids food. Fraternized.
- 16:05 Get in foxhole with bazooka. Assigned to shoot at back of tanks. Had never fired a bazooka. No tanks came by.
- 17:02 In morning, Germans strafe with 50 cal. Machine guns Friend Ed captured. We reattack. Germans give up. Don't know why. Four of them. Release Ed.

- 18:10 What a shell sounds like. Story about moving up on a position with armoured tanks. tank shell Concussion from a tank shell throws Mr. K two feet from the ground.
Used to ride tanks but didn't like them. "Too much noise"
- 19:04 Street fighting. TD - Tank destroyer - would blow a hole in the building for us to go through. Go from building to building
- 19:46 House to houses fighting. They get into a building. Side blown off. All open.
Mr. K sits down on couch Germans lob in mortar. Hits ceiling. Covers him in plaster. "I was a snowman."
- 20:15 On sleep. You attack, you rest for two days, you move up again.
- 20:50 Marion Holmes comes up to say "Hello" from I company. At end of war photos standing next to Mr. K
- 21:35 "Is there anything else you haven't said."
- 21:40 Family in Belgium who took care of Henry in WWII in their house "for a week or so." Boy was about 12 at the time. Girl now 72. For Mr. K's birthday, she sends Mr. K chocolates (chokes up)
Had cows and chickens living downstairs and we lived upstairs. Steam from the manure by windows. "You could smell it." Gave their kids food. And give Grandfather cigars from C rations.
We were holding our position waiting to be called for the Bulge. In the meantime, Mr. K would bring coffee and chocolate bars to the kids. Hennis was last name.
- 25:23 On 25 mile hike. Took too long.
Story of how 2 guys from Tennessee stuffed empty stove pipes in their packs to make them look heavy during 25 mile hikes. Until they got caught.
- 26:21 On racial segregation. Had fights. "Colored had one night out and we had another."
- 27:02 Interviewer explains what will happen with interview.
- 27:48 Mr. Kolar talks of a guy from Texas "wrote a book on me" and will give Mr. K two copies.
- 28:09 Interview ends.