VETERAN'S HISTORY PROJECT

Veteran's Name: Fred B. Love

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

Date of Interview: August 26, 2006

Transcriber: Daniel P. Feldhaus

Transcribed on: July 1, 2007

intro

MEYER: Okay, today is, what, August 26th, 2006, about 3:25 in the afternoon.

I'm David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th.

I'm sitting here with -- just say your name.

LOVE: Fred B. Love.

Q: And what company were you with?

A: I was with E Company, 377th Infantry, 95th Division.

Q: 95th Division?

What's your birth date?

A: April the 10th, 1923.

Q: And what was your final rank?

A: Sergeant.

Q: It was sergeant.

A: Correct.

Q: Now, just as a few preliminary questions, do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

A: Yes, I was in Saint Elmo, Illinois, working in a filling station.

Q: Were you?

A: Yes. I was a senior in high school, and I was working there to put myself through school.

Q: Did it come over the radio? How did you hear it?

A: Yes, somebody heard it on the radio and pulled in the filling station and told me about it. And it didn't mean

much right then, but --

Q: It didn't mean much?

A: No. I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was.

Q: No?

A: I didn't realize right at that moment that it meant war.

Q: Oh, because you were in high school.

And what town were you in? What city were you in?

A: Saint Elmo, Illinois.

Q: Do you live there now?

A: Oh, no.

Q: No, you live in --

A: I live in Owensboro, Kentucky.

Q: Oh, that's right. Owensboro.

Saint Elmo, Illinois?

When did you decide that you were going to join? Or how did you join?

A: I was drafted.

Q: You were drafted?

A: I was too young at the time to be drafted. And they drafted 20 years old, up.

Q: Yes.

A: And then I went to Indiana. I was working for an oil company, and they drafted me -- well, they lowered the draft age to 18.

Q: Oh.

A: And so they drafted me immediately because I was 19.

Q: And so what did your parents think about you going in, or what did your friends think? Everyone was going -- what?

A: Well, at that time, it was the thing to do because so many were going, just all the young men and everybody that was physically able went.

Q: Yeah.

A: So they -- of course, they didn't want me to go, but they didn't disapprove because they knew it was my duty.

Q: Why did you choose the Army?

A: I didn't choose the Army. The Army chose me.

Q: How does that work? You just go to the --

A: I was just drafted, and they just put me in the Army.

Q: Oh, they did?

And where did you go for -- where was your boot camp?

A: At Fort -- no, it was in Little Rock, Arkansas, at Camp Joseph T. Robinson.

Q: Now, my wife always asks -- wanted to know what the answer to this question is like. She always wanted to know what was it like -- everyone's different, I guess. You know, your first night you're in a place and you have all these strangers around you. I mean, you're sleeping

in a barracks with all these other guys from all over the country.

Do you keep to yourself? Do you make friends right away? What's it like?

A: Well, I didn't have any trouble making friends. I was always able to talk to other people, you know. But I had been away from home on my own, making my own living after I got out of high school, and so I wasn't homesick or anything like that.

Of course, I would have liked to have been home, but I wouldn't have been at home if I hadn't been in the Army, I would have been on my own, anyway.

Q: So you were there how many weeks -- what was basic training like?

A: Oh, it was very rough. They indoctrinated us what we had to do and know. And it was a continual training thing, just it seemed to me like about ten hours a day most of the time. And some nights, we'd go out at night and train some at night.

But it was eight weeks of intensive training to get the civilian out of us.

Q: Oh.

A: They wanted to break our spirit so we would do what

we were told, when we were told, without question.

Q: Oh. Now, was that hard for you, or is that --

A: Oh, it wasn't hard. I was open-minded on it. I know it's easier to fit in than to try to be a square peg in a round hole.

Q: Yes. So there's a film called, "Why We Fight," or something like that. Did they ever show you films in training?

A: They showed us a lot of films, training films. That was a good way of training people. The one I recall the most was, "Kill or Be Killed."

Q: Oh, what was that?

A: It was quite violent. But it showed us what we had to do to survive: It was kill or be killed.

Q: Kill or be killed? Holy cow.

Was that like a short film, like a half an hour, or was it --

A: They varied in length from a half hour to an hour. And they were well-made films. They'd show in detail what they wanted to get across.

They had films for a lot of different things, but that one particular film stuck with me.

Q: Sure.

A: Because we were in the infantry, training, the basic.

Q: Okay.

A: They were getting us ready to go to an infantry out there.

Q: Where did you go after basic training?

A: I was put in the 76th Division, and I trained there on heavy-weapons mortar, and they trained in mortars. And we were at Fort Meade, Maryland. And while I was training, why, they shipped us to A.P. Hill, Virginia, which is just south of Washington, D.C., a military reservation there. And they -- while we were training there, why, the company commander kind of called me in, and he says, "What's your Social Security number" -- I mean, "your army number -- your number, serial number?"

And I told him.

And he said, "Well, this is you then." He said, "You're going to school." So he said, "Be here at seven o'clock in the morning and bring all your gear."

So the next morning, I was there. And I didn't know what they were going to send me to, but they shipped us off to Blacksburg, Virginia. It was API, college there. And they said -- gave us a lot of tests and things. And I apparently passed the test because they put me in ASDP at William-Mary College.

Q: Okay.

A: And that was the thrill of my life to get to go to a college at their expense.

It was highly accelerated, unbelievably accelerated. But we were required to take 18 hours on a summer-school basis.

Q: Holy cow. What subjects?

A: We took math.

I don't know if I recall anymore. But we had -- we started out with college algebra and then geometry and then trigonometry. Trigonometry, analytical geometry, and calculus.

Q: Holy cow.

A: And then we had geology and history, English. It was engineering-basic.

Q: Yes.

A: Subjects were engineering. And it was supposed to be a 27-months course. I believe you would come out with a college degree in engineering in the particular schooling I was in -- some of them had different degrees -- and you would be a second lieutenant. And they were planning, apparently, on a long war because I was in a 27 months' course.

Q: Holy cow. They were?

A: But, anyway, we went to that for nine months. And

then they closed it out and just discontinued the program.

Q: After D-Day or --

A: Let's see. No, it was after D-Day, they closed out about March of '44. And they sent a bunch of us to William-Mary -- I mean, from William-Mary to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, and we joined the 95th Division.

Q: So how old were you now when that happened?

A: I was 20.

Q: Okay. And do you -- again, when did you join? What month was it? Like --

A: When I went into service?

Q: Yes.

A: It was in January of '43.

Q: January of '43?

So it was January of '43. This is a few months -- this is about a year later, you're going into --

A: Fifteen months later.

Q: Fifteen months later?

Now, you're going to Indiantown Gap, and you're with guys that have been training together for a long time.

How do the guys who are already there, do they accept the students coming in or --

A: Yeah. I don't know what they thought of us; but we went in, and they made me a private first-class. That was the first time I ever had any increase in rank. That was

four dollars a month additional income, and that was good.

Q: That's good.

A: Four dollars was quite a bit of money back then.

Q: Sure.

A: And so that added to my meager income a little bit. I think they raised me to 54 dollars a month.

Q: 54? That's a lot.

A: They took 22 dollars a month and I had them sent to my wife.

I got married at the time I went into the service, in January of '43. And they took 22 dollars a month out of my pay, and they added 28, so it was 50 dollars a month.

Q: Oh, okay. Okay.

And she was back -- where was she staying?

A: In Saint Elmo, Illinois.

Q: So she stayed -- did she have family there? Did she stay?

A: She had family there. Lots of relatives.

Q: Okay.

A: She came from a big family, and just had relatives all over.

Q: Okay.

A: She had four brothers in the service and a husband

all at the same time, all in Europe. And we all returned.

Q: And they all returned?

A: Uh-huh. All went through it, so...

Q: Okay.

A: But we were there at Indiantown Gap, and we finished our training. We took mountain training, and they fitted us into the program where they needed us, and filled out

the ranks there. And we shipped out in August, I think.

Q: Okay.

A: About the first of August.

Went to England. We went into Liverpool, and then they took us to southern England. And we stayed in some barracks there for a short time. And then we went to Southampton, and went across and landed at Omaha Beach. Not during the fighting, but after.

Q: Was the beach -- could you tell that there had been fighting there?

A: Oh, you could see lots of evidence, yes. It hadn't been very long before. The war was still fresh on --

Q: Yes, it was fresh?

A: It was fresh, yes. They just passed on --

Q: Okay.

A: -- the hedgerow and things. But...

Q: What is a "hedgerow"?

A: Well, it's where they normally have a fence.

Q: Okay.

A: But they just had a lot of trees and brush and stuff growing and then they piled dirt up there, rocks and things up there out in the fields.

Q: Oh.

A: And they made a ridge all the way around the fields. And there were just lots of those little fields surrounded

by these hedgerows, and the fellows had to fight through that.

But we weren't in on the battle. But we were stationed there for a while -- and I don't remember -- maybe two or three weeks. And a lot of our fellows worked in the Redball Express. That was a name they gave to the method of moving supplies to catch up with -- Patton had ran off and left all of his supplies. He ran out of gas and food and everything else. They had to a wait until it could be brought up to him.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: If they had kept him supplied, the war would have been over that summer.

Q: Oh.

A: If the politicians would have stayed out of it, too.

Q: The politicians always --

A: Then they'd be ___.

Q: Did you drive on the Redball Express?

A: No. My squad leader did, ____ (?Titner?). He couldn't make it this year to our reunion. Yeah, he was one of the drivers. We just sat there and didn't do much of anything until they said, "Move out," and they loaded us on "40 and 8s" -- boxcars that could haul 40 men or eight horses. And they would get the plain boxcar, and there wasn't room for 40 men laying down. It was 40 men standing up.

Q: Holy cow.

A: So we'd sit around, if we could find a place to sit, go to sleep and stretch out. You'd wake up, and there would be two or three guys on top of you.

Q: No?

A: So we'd climb up on top of them, and then they'd wake up. It was miserable waking up and not being able to move.

Q: Oh, god.

A: And with no heat.

So we found a 55-gallon drum in the car I was in, and we found a sheet of metal and a piece of stove pipe.

Q: Yes.

A: So we cut a hole in the metal to fit the stove pipe in there and stuck it out the door and built a fire in there, and cut a hole down here for firewood to go in, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it warmed it up pretty nice.

Q: Oh, that's nice.

A: We were just getting nice and cozy, and that top was some kind of metal that had a low temperature --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- rating, and it melted and fell in.

Q: No.

A: And all this coal and wood and stuff we had burning just filled our boxcar.

And by the time we got it open -- we got the door open and kicked it out; but by that time, the car was full of smoke; and the next morning, we just had black all over our face and all over our clothes. Boy, it was a mess.

Q: Oh, what a mess. You're lucky it didn't catch fire.

A: And it was a very miserable ride. And they gave us K-rations, which is dehydrated foods. And we didn't enjoy those. So we raided the car with supplies in it, and we got a bunch of cases of gallon cans. And it had food in them. We didn't know why. And we got it back to our car,

and opened it up, and it was pears. And we lived on pears for five days. Canned pears.

Q: On canned pears?

Did you get sick of them or did they still --

A: Oh, no, we didn't get sick. No, we kind of enjoyed them. That's all the good food we had.

Q: Sure.

A: We ate some of the K-rations.

Q: Okay.

A: We gave the fruit bars to the little French kids.

Q: I don't know, someone said "gentlemen," but nothing else afterwards. I thought they were going to move us.

One question I had before you go on, when you open up a K-ration, what's in it? It's dried, but what sort of thing?

A: Oh, they had a hard fruit bar and it had four cigarettes, and it had crackers and it had some powder to make lemonade. It was yucky.

Q: So everything is awful.

A: I don't remember all of it.

Q: That's okay.

A: It wasn't very good eating at all.

Q: No. I just wondered, because you got a look on your face when you mentioned K-rations, and I've seen that look

before when people mentioned it.

A: C-rations, we didn't get any C-rations until we got to where we were going.

Q: What's in C-rations?

A: That's canned goods.

Q: Okay.

A: The breakfast had scrambled eggs in it.

Q: In the can?

A: But it had B, D, and S: Breakfast, dinner, and supper.

The dinner was hash, and it -- we always said it had potatoes and grease and then tripe.

Q: Oh, god. Oh, god.

A: And it tasted like that. You couldn't always stand to eat it. But it was mostly potatoes.

And in combat, we would find cans of cheese that came in some of the -- some of the evenings -- supper things, some of the guys didn't like cheese. We'd gather those up and we'd heat that hash and put cheese in it. And if we could find an onion on a farm anywhere, well, we'd cut that up, and it was edible, and it tasted a lot better.

Q: I'll bet. I'll bet. That sounds better.

So, anyway, you're on the 40 and 8, and you're going across.

A: Yes. I think we spent five days on that, to the best I recall.

We landed, got off there, and we were near the front lines. And I don't recall day by day, but we weren't there very long, until they moved us up to the front lines. And the Fifth Division had crossed the river there and established a breach on the far side.

Q: Of the Moselle?

A: Moselle.

Q: Okay.

A: And we went in to relieve the Fifth Division at night, right in the middle of the night. We had to do it very quietly so the Germans wouldn't know we were moving around. And we got in there and we took over their foxholes.

Q: Okay.

A: And it came dawn, and I looked out, and there was a G.I. shoe laying there. I thought, "Well, why would anybody leave a perfectly good shoe ___" So I eased over to it, I looked at it, and it had a foot in it. So that's why they left it.

Q: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: We have to be out by 4:00.

MEYER: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: No running up to your room.

MEYER: No, I have everything with me.

Go ahead.

LOVE: Well, I realized then that I was in a war zone.

So that night, our sergeant, Titner, he got orders to take a patrol out, to contact -- to see just where the Germans were, contact them and come back.

So he came to me and my foxhole buddy, Tom Barter; and he said, "Come with me," with him. So we did, and we went out, and we advanced to enemy lines until they opened up on us with machine guns.

Q: Holy cow.

A: It was dark and they didn't see us. They heard us, I guess.

Anyway, we retreated, because we knew right where they were with that machine gun. And so we backed up.

When we got back about a hundred yards from our lines, one of the guys opened up.

Q: One of your guys?

A: Yeah, and a guy named Ferry. And he shot 16 rounds at us.

And Sergeant Titner got down and he crawled up there very quietly, and he got up close enough so he could get

his attention, and he finally did. And then we walked on in.

But the farmers had plowed the fields in such a way that there was high and low places. And we laid down in one of the low places, which is what saved us from getting shot.

And that was our second day.

After the first full day of combat and the first full night there, why, he was going to shoot us. But, anyway, we survived that quite well.

Q: Son-of-a-gun.

A: A day or so later, well, we were getting ready to eat breakfast, and the Germans saw us. They had brought a breakfast, one of the few hot meals we had. And they fired .88s at us, three of them. And they came down in

here, but they were all duds.

Q: They hit the what?

A: They were duds. They didn't explode.

Q: They didn't explode?

A: They went over, and where they hit, they went wham, wham, wham, three of them. And none of them exploded so we didn't --

Q: How far away did they hit?

A: Oh, maybe 20, 30 feet.

It would have killed us, no doubt --

Q: Sure.

A: -- if they had gone off, but they didn't explode. So we survived that one.

We stayed there another day or two.

About the third or fourth night I was on the line, I was asleep, and an artillery barrage came in, and I didn't know it. And then when I woke up, the trees were laying down.

I asked one of the guys, I said, "What happened to all those trees?" And they said, "Didn't you hear that artillery barrage?"

Q: Oh, god.

A: And I said, "No, I was asleep."

Q: Sound asleep.

A: But we -- our own Sergeant Van Cleef, he was a

platoon sergeant, he shot a hog, it weighed about a hundred pounds, and Barter, Titner, and I, we cut off one of the hams, and we roasted it until we thought it was done, and we cut -- we started cutting into it, and it was raw --

Q: No.

A: -- except for the outside, so we slashed off the outside, got us enough to eat, turned it over to somebody

else, and they did the same thing.

Finally, I guess they got down to the bone.

Q: Oh, gosh.

A: But one of our sergeants had curly red hair, and he wanted a haircut. And we found a sheep shear. A hand-cranked sheep shear.

Q: Holy cow.

A: So he turned the crank and I gave him a haircut.

Q: Oh, gosh.

A: He didn't look too good. The only haircut I ever gave.

Q: Oh, gosh. A hand-cranked sheep shear? My god.

A: So we moved out of there and went to another position.

And another fellow and I were carrying K-rations, carting them on our back, carrying them. We were walking along and all of a sudden a mortar shell hit real close,

and we went down on the ground. And I heard my buddy over just fussing about something. And I said, "What's the matter?" And he said, "I think I got hit." And we checked, and his canteen had had a piece of shrapnel go through it and the water was running off on him. He wasn't bleeding.

Q: Oh, oh.

A: But that night we were in a foxhole, and a German had built -- had cleared a lane through the woods so they could fire their machine guns through there and if we got in that lane. And I guess we exposed ourselves or something, and they started firing up through there. And we got on -- we had sound-powered telephones. They were simple little telephones. I don't know how they actually worked, but they separately hooked up the lines and run lines everywhere. And we called in artillery, and they stopped the machine gunfire. It was in the woods on the other side.

Q: When you ran the line -- so you carried the telephone with you; and then once you set up, you would just have someone run a line back or --

A: Yes, we would string a line. There was fellows that would string lines for us, communication people.

Q: Okay.

A: Just run a line, and then you just hooked your telephone onto it.

Q: Onto the line? I see.

A: And then you get on there and you -- kwoosh, kwoosh, kwoosh -- "Is anybody there?" They'd hear you, and they'd answer. It didn't have any ringer on it.

Q: Okay, "kwoosh, kwoosh, kwoosh"?

A: We moved from there -- well, while we were there, the Germans made an attack. We saw them forming for the attack, and they called in a 50-caliber machine gun, and two fellows set that up and defended.

We never fired that thing. They used that 50-caliber machine gun, and they killed a large number of Germans. And then a day or two later, we attacked that.

The French built kind of a square wall around us, an area about an acre or so on the ground, and they built their house and barn and everything inside of that. And the Germans were in there, and we attacked and took it. We had several fellows get wounded.

Q: Oh.

A: And we captured some German prisoners and made them carry the wounded out for us.

Oh, a short time later, we were at another location, and we kept moving, advancing some here and there, moving up. But at this one location, Barter, Titner, and I went out on a patrol. And we went out there to try to capture

some Germans who were coming out to a building out there. They would come out to a building, set up their machine guns at night, and then in daylight, they'd go back. And they'd strafe us with machine guns.

So this one particular night, we were going to go out

there and take them prisoner. So Barter and Titner got over in a position to circle and go in, and I went the other way. This was Titner's idea. He told me to go get behind something and then attract their fire. Shoot until they shoot at me.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: They're chasing us out.

MEYER: Okay. Okay. We'll finish this and then we'll go some place else, because this I can carry it.

LOVE: I got around there, and I got behind what I thought was a hill. It was a clump of dirt. And I fired to attract their attention, but they didn't fire back. And I fired several times, and they didn't return fire, so they weren't there.

So Barter and Titner was going to circle and go in behind them.

Q: Oh, no.

A: But I walked -- started to walk over that little hill. It was a haystack. I had been hiding behind hay, trying to draw their fire.

Q: No.

A: So I lucked out on that.

Q: You were lucky. Oh, my god.

A: We'd better --

{Interruption in recording}

MEYER: -- I'll say, I sat out there with my equipment, I didn't know what was going to happen, and then I said a man named Fred -- Fred Love came over and he said, "I'll tell you a story." He says, "You don't need a tape." And I tell how you were a -- how kind you were to come up, because I was -- I've never done anything like this. So I thought, I don't know what I'm doing.

But after you, Joe -- I think Joe Napier came right after. And then I thought, okay, I just listened with an open heart and then it will work out.

So, let's see. You were talking about the hiding behind the haystack, trying to draw fire.

LOVE: I'd call it a clump of dirt.

I want to tell you about the -- you've got it on?

Q: Yes. What I'm going to do is I'm just going to take it -- because this is a little louder here. I'm just going to plug this in, just to make sure that -- because I can put a different sort of mike in, if we're getting too much other distraction, but I think I'm fine. Okay.

Okay, Fred, can you just say something?

A: How does it sound now?

Q: It sounds good. It sounds good. Okay. That's good.

A: After that incident there, of not finding the Germans there, we returned, and the next night we went out again,

and we walked under an apple tree. And I want to tell you about the best apple I ever ate. We walked under this apple tree and it was in the fall of the year, and no leaves or anything, but the apples had all fallen off. But there were a lot of leaves on the tree, and I stepped on something round, and it was an apple that I found in those leaves.

Q: Oh.

A: So I reached down and I got it. And I looked it over, and I showed it to the guys, and we whispered around, and we found some more and talked about, you know, we'd sit there and eat there.

So we were right out in no-man's-land in between the Germans and the Americans, and we sat there, and we ate those apples, core and all. We hadn't had any fresh fruit in weeks, and very few good meals. So it tasted so good.

Q: That you risked?

A: And we picked up all we could find -- two or three more -- and we took them back with us to eat later or give to other guys, whatever. But, anyway, that was the best apple I ever ate in my life.

Q: Oh.

A: Shortly after that, we attacked Woippy, the city of Woippy. And we advanced, I don't know, four or five miles

that day, that gives light resistance. But even light resistance is deadly.

And in that advance, Barter and I were scouts, and we walked about a hundred yards ahead of the company, and we picked out targets and pinpointed them with tracer ammunition. And, of course, that ammunition had -- that tracer made a streak of fire. And we could see, but they couldn't.

Q: Oh.

A: The people we're shooting at can't see that tracer.

Q: They can't?

A: They can at night, but they can't in the daytime.

Q: In the daytime, do you follow the smoke or what?

A: Well, the fire.

Q: The fire?

A: Yeah, you can see it. It's bright.

Q: Okay.

A: And we would see something we thought would be a suitable target, so we would fire at it once. And then the company behind us would concentrate on it. So we were pinpointing targets. And we walked up on a ditch there, and there was a German in this ditch with his rifle.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Well, I beat him to the trigger. And I fired two or

three times and walked on and left him there.

Q: Yes.

A: We continued until we got into Woippy, and we --

Q: You and -- what's the other name, the name of the other person? Who was the other scout?

A: Thomas Barter.

Q: Mr. Barter? Okay.

A: He was my buddy. We were privates at the time, private first-class.

And we moved into Woippy and, oh, we had -- it seemed like about two or three days of street fighting. I'm not certain just how long it did take us to take Woippy. Anyway, we got the enemy cleared out of that, and they retaliated with the bombardment that was just unbelievable.

Q: Was it during the day or night? Or what?

A: Afternoon.

Q: Afternoon?

A: And they just -- we got in -- the way the French town was, there was rows of houses, and we were in the last row at the edge of town, and the Germans were in a big fort over there, one of the fortresses around Metz, and they started shelling us, shelling these houses down through there. And by some miracle, we didn't lose very many men

at all. But it was quite --

Q: What does it sound like, the bombardment?

A: Oh, it's a huge explosion. It will blast your ears, and it feels like -- when one hits close to you, it feels like somebody hit you in the stomach. And it always left a funny taste in my mouth because I guess the fumes from the shell came out from the blast, the burning powder left an odd taste in your mouth.

Q: So if a shell -- if a shell from, say, an .88 landed over there in the corner, would we be dead here?

A: If it ___.

Q: I mean, if it landed over there?

A: Usually the shrapnel would fall.

Q: Oh.

A: If it went past you, you were fairly safe. If it hit in front of you, the shrapnel would come at you.

Q: Was there anything -- if you knew the shell was coming in, what would you do?

A: Hit the ground.

Q: Hit the ground?

A: Just lay down.

Q: Lay down and pray?

A: Curl up under your helmet.

Q: That's right.

A: Try to. That was the only protection we had.

Q: Oh, gosh.

A: Well, I was fortunate there was a lot shells hit near me, but not right at me except later on, and I'll tell about it later, when it came close.

But we secured Woippy, and then we moved into the edge of Metz, just they were very close together.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we moved in the edge of Metz. And we stopped and spent the night in an old -- well, a new building they were building. They told us it was a barracks, an army barracks. It was a concrete building but it didn't have any windows. The doors, it was just open. And it was cold at night. And we moved into that. And our platoon leader, Lieutenant Wade came around and he says, "Titner," he said, "Get your squad together. We're going out on a mission tonight." And he got, I think, another squad, too. There were several of us, anyway. And we had a boat there that the engineer had brought up. And they said we would go into Metz to the railroad bridge, which was in the city of Metz, and take the explosives off of it.

Q: Holy cow.

A: Colonel Gaylord said if we succeeded, why, we would receive a silver star for it.

Well, we headed up through the enemy territory. We left our lines and went in behind the German lines. They

didn't halt you for some reason. They weren't watching very close.

Q: Yeah.

A: But we walked up those streets of Metz, and we could hear the Germans in the buildings on both sides. And we got about, oh, three or four blocks from that bridge, and the Germans demolished it. They set off huge explosions.

Q: Oh.

A: And so we just sat down. We knew our mission was over for that part of it. And we sat down there -- before that, we had abandoned the boat. We was going to swim, rather than carrying that boat.

Q: Sure.

A: But we were sitting there, just kind of catching our breath. And all of a sudden, we heard a noise of something whirling in the air, and down came a great big piece of that bridge.

Q: No?

A: A big chunk of steel beam. And it hit just about 15 feet from us. Wham. It could have killed us. It scared us.

Q: Oh, my god.

A: But we got up and very quietly walked back to our lines.

Q: Oh, god.

A: Of course, if they had discovered us, no way would we have got away. But they didn't discover us. And we could hear them. So we knew they were there.

Q: And was that the bridge where you -- that wasn't a bridge where some of the people here got killed?

No, that was another bridge in Metz?

A: A day or two later, we lost several nearby.

Q: Okay, that's another thing.

A: We went back there and got a little bit of sleep that night, and we started out the next morning and it just happened that Colonel Gaylord was standing there, who was the commander. And he just spoke to me as we went by, and he said, "Where would be a good place for me to get to see the action today?"

And I said, "Come, go with me, Colonel. You'll see it firsthand." Just kind of almost jokingly. Of course, I didn't say it as a joke, I just said it, you know, straight-faced.

Anyway, he left, and he said I believe I would. So I went on.

But we fought our way to the -- almost to the Moselle River that day.

Q: Yes.

A: And then I believe it was the next day after that, why, they took us down to the river. We went down to the river, we walked down there. And there was a canal coming out of the river, and there's buildings there that protected us from the view of the -- from the people across the river.

Q: Okay, sure.

A: And they had a bunch of boats there. The engineers had brought in boats, the combat engineers, and one engineer with each boat. And we loaded up into those boats and got into the canal, where we were out of sight.

Q: Yeah.

A: But then we pulled out into the river, to cross the river in these rowboats, about 14 men to a boat. And I was in the second boat. The first boat -- about the first three boats had smokepots to put out. And we would put those -- they were ___ cans that had something in it for smoke.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we could set that off with a ___.

Q: And would it float in the water or --

A: It floated and we anchored it, see, with a rope and a weight.

Q: Oh, good.

A: They were anchored out. And we were supposed to set those out in the wind and put out a smokescreen.

And so we started out there. And we got setting

those smokescreens, and the Germans discovered us. And they opened up on us with everything they had, and they were just killing us right and left.

So I could see them across the river there, men and equipment. And I stood up and started shooting back. So Lieutenant Waver said, "Love, cut that out." He said, "They'll know we're here." And I said, "Flash, I believe they know we're here. I believe those so-and-so know that we're here."

Q: Yes, yes.

A: He said, "Well, then give them hell."

And then just a minute or so later, he got killed.

Q: Oh, no.

A: And I looked over at another boat there, and it was one of those combat engineers died in the boat, and I heard him -- I could hear him say, "Boys, keep rowing. Keep rowing." And he kept saying, "Boys, keep rowing." And every time he'd breathe, blood rushed out his back. They shot him through the chest. And the boy sitting next to me was a kid I had been on pass with. I knew him well. His name was Lorenzo Bell. And he got hit in the forehead

with a ____. And it messed him up.

And when we got -- we finally did get to the other side, I had to quit shooting and start rowing because we didn't have enough rowers. Out of 14, three of us got out

of the boat, that I know of.

Now, there's probably some injured that survived and whatnot. The first boat floated down the river to the railroad bridge that they blew up the night before, or a day or two before. And we got out on the bank and, well, we had to eliminate some of the Germans that were defending it. And I had a bazooka with me, and a kid named (?Keowen?) was carrying the ammo for it. And we loaded it up and fired it at a house across the street ahead of us. Shot that house. And the Germans had set up a machine gun next to there, and I guess it scared them, when we hit that house with that bazooka, and they went into a cellar there.

But I turned and looked to my left, and there was a German down there killing the men coming across the river.

Q: Holy cow.

A: He was standing there, picking them off.

Q: What kind of a gun?

A: He had a rifle.

Q: A rifle? Just picking them off?

A: And so we had to stop him doing that.

And then after he fired his bazooka then, why, our squad -- and at that time I was assistant squad leader.

Q: Okay.

A: I got promoted. We were crossing that river ___+

Titner told me to take over the assistant squad leader job. That was his squad, but he had to take over as platoon sergeant. Platoon sergeant. But he took that over, and he told me to be assistant squad leader. And John Clark was the squad leader. And we moved up on the outside of a stone wall there in Metz. And we got up there where that house was, and there was a hole blown in the wall. And our squad was on the outside, and the rest of the company was on the inside. But we was going to go through that hole in the wall. And all of the guys got through, but Barter and myself, and -- I had to think about that house hit with hard mortar. I said, "Barter, let's check out this house." And he was over there at the fence, he was going through the wall. And he said, "Okay." And he came back, and those Germans in that cellar, when they heard me say, "house" it sounded like "rauss, which means come out -- you know, out.

Q: Yes.

A: And here, they started coming out. I was standing

there by myself.

Q: No.

A: And Barter was over there, about 150 feet or so. And he started that way. But by the time he got over there, eight of them had come out. And I was pointing my rifle, you know --

Q: Oh, no. God.

A: -- and lining them up against the wall.

And I was acting brave, but I probably didn't feel that. But anyway I got them, those was eight up there. And by the time, Barter was here. And he was -- he helped keep them under control.

And I said, "Is that all of them?" And one of them, "Ja, ja, ja. Das all." And so I went over there and shot my rifle down into that cellar. And somebody down there yelled.

Q: Oh.

A: And I remember later what he was saying was, "Nicht Schussen," "Don't shoot."

Q: Okay.

A: And he was yelling that, you know. And I hit him in the foot, I guess.

Anyway, three more came up out of there.

Q: Three more?

A: Yeah. They were hiding out. See, I guess they were going to try to --

Q: They were going to come and take you?

A: And, anyway, I said, "Is that all?"

"Ja, das all."

And I threw a grenade in the cellar. And it shook the cellar up pretty good, and no more came out. And that was all of them.

And, anyway, if there was any more in there, they didn't come out.

Q: So it's you and Mr. Barter?

A: Thomas Barter.

Q: Thomas Barter, you have the eight guys against the --

A: Had 11 of them.

Q: Had 11 of them?

A: Yes.

Q: Had 11 of them facing the wall --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- with --

A: And by that time, the squad -- somebody discovered they was coming back.

Q: Okay.

A: And there was five or six guys out there, and one of these Germans, he kept wanting to tell me something, and

he turned, he pointed towards the packs.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He said, "Chocolat gut." And he said it three or four times. And so we marched them off. I told a couple guys to take them back down to the river and hold them because somebody could take care of them. And so he took them and left, and we looked in their bags, and they had cans of meat.

Q: Oh.

A: Cans of something. We didn't know what it was. It turned out to be meat. And they had these chocolate bars about -- oh, it was about five inches across, about half an inch thick, of bittersweet chocolate. Well, we hadn't had any candy for a long time, so it tasted pretty good.

Q: Oh, I'll bet.

A: And we hadn't had any canned meat. The meat tasted pretty good. It was red. We didn't know what it was. But it was -- it might have been beef, it might have been horse.

Q: Yeah.

A: But it was good eating.

Q: It was good eating?

A: And we enjoyed that very much.

But the thing we didn't enjoy, when we got across,

and we cleared out the Germans all from that area there where we were going to stay that night, to make sure that there was no Germans around there, and they brought the ones that were killed across the river, and they laid ten of them out there. And I knew each one of them by their first name --

Q: Oh, god.

A: -- which was rare in the Army, to know the first names.

Q: Which is what?

A: It's rare to know first names in the Army.

And that made me get kind of bitter because there were so many friends there in such a short time.

But we stayed in Metz there, I don't know how long. I'm not sure what we did. I don't recall much about it, but we did street-fighting. But it must have been fierce.

Q: As you sort of look back at it and it's sort of a blank?

A: Uh-huh.

But we moved out then after we got Metz all cleared, we moved out and headed out east, and we got to -- well, we had some skirmishes along the way, but nothing serious until we got to Boulay. And we spent the night in Boulay. We moved the Germans out of it and stayed there that

night. And the next morning we got ready for the attack, and there was a ____ old line, they had pillboxes there. And we -- well, they gave me four extra men. By that time, I was a squad leader. I got to be squad leader from down back there. I was promoted. And we -- we went to attack that morning, they gave me four extra men, and that made 16 in the squad. Each time we moved some, they'd give us more replacements, and build it back up to 12 --

Q: Okay.

A: -- in the squad.

But they raised it to 16 that morning. And we went into the attack at nine o'clock. At twelve o'clock, I counted them and there was five of us left out of 16. I don't know where they went, but they were killed or wounded. There was 11 men just out of my squad. And the whole company ___+.

But during the attack that morning, why, when it was fiercest, I told the squad to get in the ditch, get down out of that machine gunfire coming from the pillboxes. We didn't know where for sure but there were pillboxes out in front of us.

Q: How far out ahead? A couple hundred yards --

A: Oh, something like that, but I don't remember exactly. It seemed like there was about maybe 200 yards

from us is all. But there was some Germans somewhere else were firing at us, and we didn't know for sure. But we got down in this ditch and it had about six inches of ice water in it. It had a little ice on it, and it was cold.

Q: Oh, no.

A: But, anyway, we got down in that ditch, and the rest of the company -- some of them got all the way through where we were going, to move to the front.

But I'd raise up -- I'd raise up my head up and looked, and the -- and then I'd pulled my head back down, three bullets hit that bank. And I moved around to another position, I raised up, I quick looked, three more bullets hit. And that happened three times or so. And I decided that was time to quit.

Q: Yes.

A: And I told all the guys to turn around and stay in the ditch, and turn around and go back. And there was a cross -- a side road down there with kind of a high bank in the corner.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we got down around it, and it was comparatively safe. And there was our company commander sitting there, scared to death. He was sitting there shaking. And I think we called him Porky. And --

Q: {Changing a tape} This is a fact -- I always take -- have two things running at once in case something doesn't work.

A: So Porky -- I said, "Porky, what do you want me to do with this squad?" And I just had a few men there, but I got something to do with the squad, about ten of us.

And he said, "I don't know what to do." And I'm not sure just how I asked him. But, anyway, I told him I was going to take the men and circle around and go through some woods and get to where the rest of the company was. So we walked up this road -- or sneaked up there behind the bank, and got in this neck of the woods there and

walked up through it, and we was walking along, and we had, oh, probably -- it was about three or four hundred yards to walk through these woods, and the Germans could see us, I guess. And they started shooting at us, just tree bursts.

And I kept yelling, God, I said, "Men, keep going. If your knees don't buckle, keep going."

So we kept going. And we got to where we were going and didn't lose many. And they was just shelling those woods. You wouldn't believe how many shells were coming in.

Q: What's a tree burst like?

A: Well, when a shell hits a tree, why, it explodes in the air and it gives shrapnel a whole a lot more range.

Q: Oh.

A: And the compression is up in the air, where it comes down on you more so when it hits the ground. When it hits the ground, it blows up.

Q: Okay.

A: With a tree burst, it just blows down and hits you good.

Q: Does it feel like -- you said some shells feel like you're getting hit in the stomach?

A: Well, I guess, all of a sudden, it hits your whole body. But if you're facing right at it, it almost knocks

the breath out of you, if it hits you in the stomach.

Q: Okay.

A: We got up there to where the rest of the company was, and I counted heads in my squad, and there was five of us that was left out of 16 that we started with at nine o'clock. And it was about noon. And so we were sitting there, and we had some new guys there. There might have been one or two in my squad and some of the other squads there, and I've had some experience with artillery shells, and the Germans were shelling us. And I'd sit there and say, "Now that's going to land over so-and-so." I could

tell by the sound, where they were going. And all of a sudden one was coming right at us and it shut off, no noise. It was making a noise, and then it quit.

Q: Oh.

A: And I knew it was coming right at us, and I yelled, "Get down." And before we could get down all the way, why, it hit the tree right up over us. And, man, that really addled me. I was almost deaf in my left ear.

Q: Oh, my god.

A: A piece of shrapnel hit me in the back. Later, I found one in my arm. And it was like just a terrible concussion. It addled us where you didn't hardly know what you were doing.

Q: And did that hit -- what happened to the other four?

There were five of you?

A: Oh, there was a bunch there. A whole bunch of men. Most of them were down in the ditch, by a bank and protected. But one guy got his arm broken. The shrapnel broke his arm. But that was the most serious injury from that particular one.

But it shook me up pretty badly. I had shrapnel in the back. And later, sometime later -- I don't know how much later -- I pulled my shirt up and I was bleeding, and I got the medic to treat it, and he put a patch on it for

me.

That night, while we -- the guys told us that since we lost so many men, told us squad leaders, he said, "You fellows just sleep here tonight and we'll stand guard for you." So I had the fellows dig a -- I had a blanket, the rest of them didn't have any. We had one blanket for the five of us. And we dug a trench about the size that the blanket would cover and filled it full of pine boughs, to make kind of a cushion here.

Q: Yeah, like a bough --

A: Well, it rained through the night, and water came up underneath us, flooding the bottom side. It rained on top, and it got wet on the top side. And then it froze.

Q: Oh.

A: That bank was crusted with ice the next morning.

Five of us under one blanket, and it was so cold, it froze.

Q: Oh, god.

A: So we didn't sleep very comfortably.

Q: No. Did you get frost-bitten at all? Or did you keep yourself warm enough, all five of you?

A: I slept in the middle.

Q: Okay.

A: I made the guys lay on each side of me. So I was the

warmest one.

But, anyway, we pulled back, and the next night into Boulay, and they brought up some armor, some artillery and softened the way for us, and we made it on through then. Got up to where we was going. We advanced from there. And we advanced a day or two, I don't remember exactly. But we got into Germany. And in Germany, well, we stayed in this little town. About the second night we were in Germany, we moved into a little town. And Barter and I were searching a house there, and there were German people living in the house, and they wanted to know what we was looking for. We told them "soldaten" -- soldiers. And they said, "No soldaten." So we looked, anyway. We didn't trust them too much.

And they brought out a bottle there, and they said, "Schnapps. Gut." They was going to give us a bottle of

Schnapps, whiskey.

Q: Yes.

A: So we declined that because we didn't trust them.

Q: No, no.

A: And we didn't want to get drunk, anyway.

Q: No.

A: Not like that.

But that night, we stayed in a wooden building. And

we were foolish to stay there because bullets passed right through it. But we slept there that night, and the next morning we started out. That day, why, it was raining as usual. And we hadn't gone far until a machine gun opened up on us. And the heat of the machine gun made the steam rise. And when it did, we opened fire on it, and kept firing until they quit. And I walked right past there, and there was one little boy and a man. And we felt kind of bad about the little boy being in there, firing. But the bullets he fired would kill anybody else, so it was something we had to do.

And we crossed a big tank track, a big ditch they had dug. I don't know how far it went each way, we didn't -- couldn't tell. But there was a big ditch, so big that if a tank would go down, it couldn't get back out, and you couldn't run across, it was too wide.

Q: Yes.

A: And we got across that. And we walked up beside some woods, and here come two Germans carrying buckets, and they was talking to each other. I told my squad, I said, "Cut them down." And we started shooting at those guys, and they started running back up there. And finally they cut in the woods. We never scratched any one of them. They got away from us completely.

And so we went on through the woods and out the other side, and there was a machine gun nest out in the field there, waiting for us. And they opened up on us, and that's when Joe Napier, a good friend of Jim Whitney, he got shot. A bullet hit his rifle and exploded and cut his face, and he was bleeding all over and his hand was bleeding.

So I turned around and looked at him, and about that time, a bullet hit me. And my buddy, Barter, had just got hit, and he was laying out there in the field.

Q: Oh.

A: And so I couldn't use my right arm anymore because I got hit, I got shot through the upper right arm.

I stuck my rifle in the ground, put my helmet on it and Joe Napier said he'd help me back to the aid station. And there was a German medic messing around there, and we took him and stuffed a pistol in in his face and told him to go with us. We told him where we wanted to go so he

would take us. And we had an awful time to get across that ditch, it was raining and muddy banks and I couldn't move one arm.

Q: Oh, God.

A: And Joe Napier, take him and that German and what I could do. We got on the other side, and I think we ended

up stomping steps in there or something to get up.

Q: Sure.

A: We got back to the aid station, and it --

Q: Was it -- is it deep enough that it's above your head?

A: Oh, yes. It must have been seven or eight feet deep.

Q: Holy cow.

A: And we finally got across that. And the German took me on back to the aid station, and I think Joe stayed there to help Barter.

Q: Yeah.

A: I couldn't do anything for Barter myself. And so he got a couple other guys, and they put a ladder across that tank trap and scooted Barter across it and brought him back to the aid station and saved his life.

Q: So he lived? Good.

A: What?

Q: He survived?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Good, sir.

A: But I never saw him again.

He died of cancer a few years ago before I got a chance to see him.

But I got into the hospital then, and they operated

on my arm, and they patched me up. And we ended up moving a time or two -- well, when we left the front-line aid station to go to the M.A.S.H. unit, why, they loaded us into the ambulances, several of us. And, anyway, when we got back to where they were going to do the surgery, why, there was a couple sergeants, big fellows there, men of color, and they said -- well, they started getting me out of the ambulance there, and I said, "I'm able to walk." This one, big old sergeant, he said, "You walk when the captain says you walk. Right now, you're going to ride." So I rode, and I rode in for them to work on me. And they operated on me. And I woke up that night and I didn't know where I was or anything else.

Q: Oh, gosh.

A: I was in a tent with other guys. But, anyhow --

Q: Is this -- are you outside of Boulay? Or where are you in this?

A: Yeah, we were probably near Boulay somewhere. I don't really know because they didn't tell us.

Q: Okay.

A: But they put us on an airplane, a C-47. We were supposed to join a flight of about six or seven planes and go to England. But our plane got separated because of some bad weather or something. Anyhow, he landed in

Paris, and he ran off the runway. And he came back, the pilot did, and he was as white as a sheet, you know. And he said, "You men had the closest call you ever had in your life." And we started laughing because that wasn't a close call at all.

Q: No. No.

A: And then the next day, we was on into England. And I ended up at Lincoln, England, in the hospital. I stayed there two months, got out, and went through the replacement depots. We called them "repo depo." And we went through several of those, and ended up in Erding, Germany, about 20 miles north of Munich, as a -- in the military police. I wasn't able to fight for the infantry.

Q: Yeah.

A: So they assigned us, seven of us, to the administration on a stockade there of German prisoners, 1,800 prisoners. And I worked as that until the war was over and I got to come home.

Q: How many people did they have guarding all the prisoners?

A: Well, I don't know. We didn't guard them.

Q: You didn't guard --

A: We didn't guard them.

Q: It was your unit, and so what did you do with the

prisoners?

A: Usually they did work details on the air base. We was rebuilding the air base and a depot. It was a German air base, and we fixed it for freight, the air base.

Q: How do you look at the Germans? As regular soldiers just like you? Or how did you see them? Enemy or --

A: They were very good soldiers. They were very -- they obeyed orders different than what we did. We were flexible.

If the officer said, "Do so-and-so," we did, unless it was expedient to do something a little different. You know, if the situation changed. We could change and do different without his "okay." I don't mean just arbitrarily.

Q: Sure.

A: But if we had to, we could change.

Q: You could improvise.

A: But if Germans were ordered to do something, if they were ordered to advance, it didn't make any difference how rough it got, they had to advance, even if they all got killed. And so they were very obedient soldiers, very good.

But they -- their equipment was different. One of them told me, he said, "We had 47 trucks in our trucking

company," and he said, "We had 45 different kinds." He said the parts was a nightmare. He said, "You Americans, you've got 47 trucks. The parts are all interchanged."

Q: That's interesting. Sure. That's a nightmare. You're right.

A: So one time we were feeding the Germans, and they had their own system, so we just supplied the food. They had field kitchens. And they would cut it all up into serving portions and they counted out to the squad leaders. And then he would take that, and he'd divide it out amongst his men. And it would take three hours or more to feed them their supper --

Q: Sure.

A: -- after they had been working that day.

And they had a German colonel there, he was a figurehead. We gave him no authority, but he was in the stockade. He didn't work. But we told him we was going to show him the American way of doing it. And he said, "All right." Naturally, he had to.

And then so we made him cut everything up into bite size and serving size and run them through. And they said, "That won't work." Well, it was about 30 minutes, and everyone of them had the meals eaten.

Q: And what did he say?

A: The old German colonel, he said, "It's no wonder you Americans won the war." He said, "You're so efficient."

Q: Oh, that's interesting.

A: Anyway, it was -- I stayed there until the end of the war, got shipped to England, and stayed there two months waiting on transportation home. And I got home, and four days before Christmas of 1945.

Q: Is that -- when was your final discharge? On the day you got home or --

A: Yeah, I was discharged, I think, about the 20th of December.

Q: The 20th of December?

A: 1945.

Q: Oh, speaking of Christmas, do you remember where you were the Christmas before, on Christmas nineteen- --

A: Yeah, I was in a hospital.

Q: Oh, that's right. Christmas of -- Christmas of '44.

A: Christmas of '44, I was in the hospital.

Q: You were in the hospital?

A: And at home, I had the menu for what we had for Christmas dinner.

Q: You do? What was it?

A: I believe it was -- we had turkey and dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy. Boy, it was wonderful after

K-rations.

Q: I'll bet. I'll bet.

Is there any food that you just couldn't -- some people say they can't -- they couldn't stand to eat SOS or Spam anymore.

Is there anything you look at and you think --

A: We would have loved to have Spam on the front lines, but we didn't have. We had mostly dehydrated food.

And when I got in the hospital -- I normally, at that time, I normally weighed about 185. And I got in the hospital, I weighed 142, when I went in.

But two months later, I was almost back to normal. Because they fed us well, treated us great. All those baths were so wonderful.

Q: Oh, I'll bet.

A: Take a hot shower. I took two or three a day for the first week.

Q: How long was the longest you went without a shower?

A: We went 11 weeks without taking my clothes off. And that was crawling in the mud and stuff.

Q: Holy cow.

A: And sleeping in foxholes.

Q: And where was that first shower after the 11 weeks? And when was the first time you took a bath?

A: At Paris. When we got back there and when we landed

in Paris, they had hot showers there. We landed there just overnight, and then went on.

Q: And you got a shower?

A: I got a meal with -- we had hot dogs. We hadn't had hot dogs in a long time, and it just tasted better than steak.

I don't know what else we had, but it was a delicious meal, I know. Of course, everything was delicious for a long time after being so starved.

Q: I'll bet.

Did you used to get things sent from home like -- or did anyone -- did your wife ever send you any cookies or pies or anything?

A: Yes, they did, some.

I don't recall much about it. I got a lot of mail. But when I went in the hospital -- when I was in the hospital, my daughter was born. And I didn't find out she was born until I got out of the hospital.

And then I moved around the replacement depot. So when I first found out she was born, she was three months old.

Q: Oh.

A: And she was a year and five days old when I saw her the first time.

Q: Did you help name her?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: What's her name?

A: Her name is Carol Anne.

Q: Carol Anne?

So did you tell your wife what you wanted to name her in a letter while you were away?

A: We discussed it before.

Q: You discussed it with her?

And what was the name if she was a boy?

A: I don't recall. I would say junior, probably. Fred, III.

Q: Now, you told me that when you got back, did you take over your old job -- I remember you telling me about -- I think you took over your old job?

A: Yeah, they had to give our job back. That was the law. So I went back to work at the oil company. But it was very difficult working with my bad arm. But I stayed with them for four or five years. And I went in to sales for a division of AK Steel. It was ARMCO Steel then.

Q: Yeah, sure, I know ARMCO.

A: And I worked for a division of them, it was National Supply, selling oil field supplies.

Q: Sure.

A: And I stayed with those a good many years. I was a store manager for them for quite a while.

And then I left that and went to work for the government, the post office. I stayed with them until I retired in 1983. I've never needed the money since.

Q: Oh.

You told me, I think when you went back to the oil company -- what were you doing for them there? Were you pumping --

A: Maintenance work.

Q: Maintenance work?

You had told me that some guy -- some guy had said you had wanted to tell him about what was going on?

A: Yeah. I had been home about a month, and this fellow named Roy, we were sitting there with nothing to do for a little while, we were waiting on something. I don't remember now what it was. But anyhow, we were just sitting there in the truck, and I started telling him about some of my experiences that I thought he might want to hear, since he didn't go. And he said, "I don't want to hear it. You guys coming back, telling a bunch of lies, and we don't want to hear it." So I didn't. And he never heard another word out of me about it. And I didn't talk to anybody about it.

It was a good many years before I talked to anybody much at all about it. I couldn't have sat down then and talked to him like I have you.

END OF CD 1; BEGIN CD 2.

A: It was a good many years before I talked to anybody much at all about it. I couldn't sit down then and talk to them like I have with you.

Q: What started you feeling freer to talk?

A: Well, these later years now, coming to this reunion and talking with my old buddies, and then people putting the emphasis on the importance of World War II, like -- what was his name -- the name of the guy who wrote the book.

Q: Oh, Brokaw.

A: Tom Brokaw.

Q: Yeah.

A: About the greatest generation.

Q: Yeah.

A: And people wanted to know, so I thought I'd tell somebody about what I do know.

Q: It's good that you do, I think. Because people don't -- have no idea.

When you told me about that guy who told you that he thought you guys were liars and that you didn't tell

anyone anything else back then, you told me for 12 years, or for a long time, I thought -- I thought, "Oh, god, I always thought that was Vietnam." And then I thought it was probably all wars, people stay at home, and then

people come back, you see things, you want to talk, and the other people here, they didn't know how to listen, or they don't -- or they're resentful or something.

A: Well, most of them want to hear how many you killed or something like that. And that's not the story.

Q: Yeah. That's not the story?

That's like an eight-year-old's -- I remember, when I was six or seven, and my dad would tell me, I'd say -- because he was -- he was on the front lines, but not that long, maybe three weeks at Saar, he was a radioman for mortaring -- forward observer, I guess. For mortar, they sent him up -- he's in the Joe (?Janaskovitz?) Book. You know, he's just a regular guy from the Midwest. I think he was 29 when he joined. So he's pretty -- fairly old. And I remember asking him, "Did you kill" -- you know, I was eight -- "Did you kill anyone?"

And he said, "Well, someone was shooting at us through a window across the street, and I shot back." He said, "And I didn't -- I never heard anything again from him," he said, "So I don't know." And then he said, "I

hope" -- you know, when you're eight, you think, "What do you mean?" But everything takes it's -- everything takes its toll.

When you got back, how do you think -- how do you feel the war changed you?

A: Well, I was -- inside, I was pretty nervous. I didn't show it much out. But it didn't take much to upset me.

I've been kind of easy-going and very carefree before I went in. And when I came home, I was more serious about things. But it took me several years to get calmed down to where I thought I could go to school again. And by that time, my G.I. bill had expired.

Q: No.

A: So then I went to a vocational school and learned to be an electronic technician. At first, I've repaired -- I did TV repair, TV and stereo and radio for 19 years, along with my other work. It helped put my daughters through college.

Q: Good. Do you still do any of that?

A: No, I quit. It got so that somebody else took half of it. My net profit, I had to divide it.

Q: Between you and the Government?

A: Me and different governments: City, county, federal,

state. And when I deduct, half of it went to them, half to me, and they didn't do anything much to earn it.

Q: That's true.

A: But my daughters had gotten through college, and I just said, "No, I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm just going to quit." So I did.

Q: And I do -- I help people with their tax returns. I'm an enrolled agent. So I can defend people in audits. And I tell the people that are self-employed -- you know, and for me, doing tax returns, I say, "Every dollar of net profit I make, 40 cents goes to somebody else."

A: Yeah.

Q: And I said, so, you know -- I say to everyone, "Would you recommend the service for people now?

A: I think military service is -- it helps young men mature in a right way, it disciplines themselves properly, and I think that's good.

To be shot at? No, I don't think that's good for anybody. But it's a necessity in this war today to have somebody manning the defense. And if it requires shooting and bombs or whatever we have to do, and we have to have somebody do it. And our young men are the ones that's qualified to do it.

I hate to see our men get killed in Iraq and

Afghanistan and wherever they're fighting. But thank goodness it's not in big numbers.

And maybe we can keep the fighting over there and not bring it here to this country.

See, again, if we had lost the war, World War II, if we had lost that, we would have no rights. We would all be speaking German, probably, or Japanese. And we

wouldn't have the freedom we've got. We wouldn't have a modern nation. It would be terrible.

Q: No, it's -- it's easy not to -- sometimes I think that -- but because some of it was kept silent, people -- well, I don't know, it's hard, in the fifties things were more prosperous, so it's easy to take things for granted; to not appreciate that -- I remember reading that phrase, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." And I thought, oh, yeah, now it starts to make me say, "Oh, yeah, that's what it -- that's what it costs."

Do you have any final words of wisdom or any other stories come to you?

A: Well, I just summarized it. There's many stories. But there's one thing I want anybody to hear this tape to understand: That freedom is not cheap. Somebody has paid a dear price for their freedom to come and go as they please, to live the life they please, choose your own occupation, to go to church where they want to go, to go

to schools of their choice and higher education.

Freedom is so dear, that we take for granted, but somebody has paid a dear price for it, and they ought to appreciate it.

Q: What would you say for those people who don't appreciate it? How can they go about to understand it, or to appreciate it? I'll say the "the people," I'll start

to -- because I'm a lucky guy, I get to talk to you. I get to talk to people like you who have seen it and who know these things. But there are other people that just know television, so it's hard to --

A: Well, they don't have to go to war to appreciate their freedom. But what they should do is support their country. We see people that are anti our country. Everything comes up, they're anti, and they don't want to defend it, they don't want to go to war. They think that it's unnecessary to defend your country if you're fighting somewhere else.

If the war came here, they might think it's necessary.

Q: Yes.

A: But sometimes it's better to fight it on their ground. I'd much rather that we fought in Europe than in the United States.

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: And so the next war might come here. So we need to stand behind our people that are fighting the wars, our soldiers and sailors and all of our military people, we need to be standing behind them.

I think a true American, when they play the National Anthem, they'll stand up, face the flag if they can --

Q: Okay.

A: -- and feel pride in being part of a great country.

Not do anything against it, but do things for it.

Q: Okay. Okay, well, Fred -- this is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th.

It's now almost five o'clock, and we're talking to Fred Love -- a great honor -- Company E, 377th.

Fred, do you remember your number?

A: My Army serial number?

Q: Your Army serial number.

A: 35722963.

Q: There you go. There you go. Not that many people remember. I'm glad.

Fred, thank you -- thanks a lot. And if something else comes to mind, tap me on the shoulder. I'll have this with me.

A: That will be enough for my children and

grandchildren --

Q: That's good.

A: -- so they'll have an idea of what I went through. I didn't tell them about the suffering. It was worse than the war, probably.

Q: You mean, the things you saw in the people?

A: No, I mean, living in holes in the ground in the rain and the cold and the freezing.

Q: Was there a lot of mud?

A: Oh, yes. The water would come up on you when you were sleeping at night, and you would lay down. And sometimes we didn't even have a raincoat. We'd be wet two or three days at a time.

Q: Would you just get chapped and just get used to it, always being wet?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you do to defend yourself?

A: Well, we had on quite a few clothes, wool clothes. But we'd still get cold. And we'd start into an attack, and we'd get even colder-feeling. We'd start shaking from nerves. And after we got into it, we weren't nervous then. It was calm.

Q: Somebody had told me today that they were -- Mr. Lacy was talking about being in the Saar River, and he said he

thought he was going to drown, and things like that, and the sense of calm came around. Sometimes in battle there would be maybe a focus or a cause, something, you wouldn't be quite so --

A: Well, we didn't go around shaking or anything.

Q: No.

A: No, we were --

Q: But inside --

A: Just like everybody does.

Q: Yeah.

A: The thing I didn't like, we got awful hard, hard-hearted. We didn't care what we did. And that's bad.

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

When you came -- because now, you're so kind to me. You know, you're kind to me, and you're so soft-spoken, too -- did it take a while coming back for your heart to start easing up, or was it easy as soon as you got back?

A: It took a while. Of course, I got along with people. I didn't take out my opinions on my fellow Americans when I got back or anything. Outwardly, I didn't show much of any difference.

Q: I'm glad you -- I'm sure your grandchildren -- what are your grandchildren's names?

A: Well, I have two daughters, Carol and Phyllis. And Carol has two children, Alan and Amy Chapman; and my youngest daughter, Phyllis, has one son, Steve. My grandson, Alan Chapman, he has a son, A.J., Alan, Jr. And my grandson is Steve Waller, he has two children. They're Brandon and Ashley. Ashley is a two-year-old and Brandon is five. And A.J., Alan's son, is eight years old. They're my great grandchildren and my pride and joy.

Q: Oh, they are your pride and joy? Well, this will be for them, too.

END OF RECORDING