INTERVIEW OF PAUL MADDEN, JR.

BY DAVID MEYER

HAMPTON 2005

DISK I

MEYER: Hi, I'm David Meyer. I'm the son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th. This is Saturday, August 26th, 2005 in the hotel room. I'm with Paul Madden … Paul, do you have a middle initial?

MADDEN: Middle initial is H.

Q Paul H. Madden. And what company were you in?

A Well, back to the name, I still go by Junior. Although my dad passed away a number of years ago, I felt like, you know, I started out as Junior. I may as well keep it.

Q Sure.

A A lot of people dropped the Junior, but I just kind of kept that.

Q So your friends call you Junior?

A No. Well, no. I had -- on my dad's side of the family, his brother and sisters always referred to me as Paul Junior. And then my dad and my mother, they called me Sonny. And let's see. On my mother's side of the family, I was probably Paul Junior there too. But, anyway, I just kept the Junior.

Q That's good.

A But I was in -- back to your question, I was in Company A, 379th Regiment, the 95th Division, World War II.

Q Where were you when you -- did you get drafted or did you enlist?

A Yes, well, at that time, you really couldn't enlist. You had to be drafted, but you could volunteer for the draft. I was, of course, 18. I registered for the draft. But at that time in the State of Louisiana they only had -- had like seven years in grammar school and four years in high school, which made 11 years. And so we were graduating at 16. And so I had a year of college and summer school.

Q Um-hum.

A I turned 18 during the summer school session, and, of course, you had to register. And then I had always kind of favored the military. In fact, I would have liked to have gone to West Point, but I didn't have the political connections to get an appointment. And so I volunteered for induction. And I was inducted in August of 1943.

And then at that time, they gave us about two or maybe three weeks, and then we reported to go to the induction center and -- which was down at Camp Beauregard in Louisiana.

Q What did your parents think about you joining?

A Well, I'm sure my mother would have preferred that I hadn't volunteered. But I felt like I was going to be drafted anyway.

Q Yeah?

A And there was no need to kind of stay in school and kind of sit on the bubble, so to speak, never knowing when it's going to pop. And my dad, he probably would have preferred me stay home, but he understood. He had been in the school program in World War I. He only spent a short time in the service, but I think he was up in Washington Lee for a little while before he was -- armistice, and then they canceled that program and discharged him. And --

Q So once you joined, where did you go next?

A Okay, well, the -- like I say, we were sworn in, given a three-week leave and then reported to the bus station. And we went as a group from Shreveport down to Alexandria to where Camp Beauregard was located.

It was an old National Guard camp and the induction station for Louisiana. And that's where you would get your uniforms, started getting your shots, you take your AGC test, which was the Army General Classification Test. And those scores sometimes determines where you might go. If you had a certain score level, you were -- they put an AC on your tag that you wore around your neck to show them what you finished and what you hadn't. And they AC meant that you were qualified for the air corps.

And in my case, I went into the ASTP program, which was the Army Specialized Training Program, which theoretically you would go to college, depending on what

courses you were taking -- and the bulk of them were in engineering. And there were three -- I think there were three nine-week sessions or 12-week sessions for basic engineering. And if you completed that, then you took advanced engineering, which was three different sessions, and then you would be commissioned a lieutenant.

And if anybody had thought about at the time, they would certainly have known the army didn't need 250,000 Second Lieutenants in engineer corps. And I think the program was probably to help keep the colleges and universities going because of all the males being drafted.

Q Sure.

A Or volunteering for the various services earlier on. And -- but by early '44, they had seen from the casualty rates in North Africa and Italy that they were going to need more people in the infantry, and here was maybe 250,000, 18-, 19-, 20-year-olds that were available.

But back to the -- kind of get back in sequence again from Beauregard, there were six of us that -- who were pointed towards the ASTP program. And we went -- the six of us together went to Fort Benning, Georgia where we took our basic training there at Fort Benning.

Q Before you went to ASTP?

A That's right. We had our basic -- we had a good infantry basic. In fact, we had probably the same training

that the OC -- infantry OCS was getting. The infantry OCS was located at Fort Benning also. We probably had the same course they had, but just not the command classes --

Q Okay.

A -- that the OCS students would take.

Q What was a day of basic training like?

A We had a lot of physical training. You know, you got in -- well, first you started out with your close order drill, how to stand at attention, right and left face, about face and then from there, marching. And then, like I say, we had PT every morning, which was just conditioning exercises. And then we would also have an obstacle course that we would run periodically.

We had the different military classes, first aid, hygiene, things like this. We'd have -- I remember they had _____ series of why we are at war.

Q Why we fight.

A Why we fight.

Q What was that?

A It was just a series -- I don't really recollect how many there were, maybe six or eight, you know, that kind of progressed. And they kind of, you know, why we got into the war, the background, Germany, Japan and sometimes there would be some combat films, training films and the various, like sanitation, did I mention?

Q Um-hum.

A Then as you progressed, you were issued your rifle. You learn, you know, take it apart, put it back together again, clean it. Then you went to dry runs and sighting, sight pictures and aiming. And after about a week or two of that, then you go to the rifle range. And in our case, we would go out to the rifle range and just stay there for two weeks, tent camps out there. And you just spend the two weeks at the rifle range. And --

Q Just learning how to shoot?

A Just learning to shoot. And then after you had your, say, practice, then you would fire for records. And that's -- depending what your score was, you were either a marksman -- if your score was a little higher, you would be a sharpshooter. And then if you topped a certain score, you would be an expert.

Q And what were you?

A I think I was a sharpshooter. I missed expert by, you know, a few points, you know. But you would fire at different ranges. And M 1 you would fire, say, at 200 yards, 250 yards. And then you'd would move back to 300 yards. And then we did -- they had one sequence of firing from 500 yards.

And an interesting thing there was you would have -- say half of us would be up on the firing line, and the other

half would be in the rifle pits where the targets were and you would raise and lower the targets. You would pull the target down after they fired and then you would mark where that round hit with a little piece of cardboard with a little wood peg in it. You would stick the peg in the hole and then you'd raise it back up so they could see where that round that they had fired hit. And they are supposed to adjust the windage and the elevation knob on the M 1 to bring it back, you know, to the bull's eye.

And you -- first, you zeroed in your rifle and that's what you were doing then, because most of them needed some kind of little adjustment. And depending on the wind, you had windage that you had to move your sight one way or the other to bring it from side back into your target.

Q Were you assigned one rifle for the whole war or --

A Actually, when we started, the first rifle we had at Benning was the 03 Springfield, which was from World War I. I think it had a five-round clip, and it was bolt action. And we had that probably when -- that's when we were starting our training and close order drill and manual to arms and things like that. And then I think around the fourth or fifth week, then we were issued the M 1 Gerand. Of course, then we -- you know, you had to learn to strip it, take it apart and put it back together and all. And then that's what we fired on the range, rifle range when we

went to the firing range.

But besides the M 1, we also fired the 30 caliber carbine. It was more famililarization. We were -- in arms, we were basically the M 1 Gerand, but we also fired the carbine. We fired mortars. We fired the .30 caliber light machine gun. I think we were firing it maybe like a thousand-inch range. In other words, where the gun was to the target was a thousand inches. And they just kind of interpolated from that, I guess.

Q Okay.

A Your carbine, I think the ranges on it were maybe a hundred and two hundred yards.

Q Okay.

A And then like I said before, the M 1 went on up to 300, 500.

Q Now, the -- in the movies that, you know, gangster movies, they are always holding the --

A Tommy gun.

Q The tommy gun.

A We never got -- we never got into that.

Q With a machine gun, was it handheld or was it mounted?

A You need a tripod.

Q Tripod?

A I was a .30 caliber light, which was the machine

gun -- it was within the weapons platoon of a rifle company.

Q Okay.

A Each rifle company had three rifle platoons and a weapons platoon. And the weapons platoon had -- their weapon was a .30 caliber light machine gun which fit on a tripod and the 60-millimeter mortar. Then the battalion, in addition to having three rifle companies, would have a heavy weapons company. And the heavy weapons company had the .45 -- I mean the .30 caliber water-cooled machine gun, which was a large barrel that had the water jacket where the water would keep the barrel cool. And it was a much heavier tripod for it.

And they -- in addition to the .30 caliber heavy, they had the 81-millimeter mortar, which was a larger mortar tube and it's heavier. And they usually had -- I think they had three-quarter ton truck maybe to carry it in a little bit farther. Since the weapons were so heavy.

Q Sure.

A But the .30 caliber lights and the 60-millimeter mortars were within the rifle company.

Q Okay.

A It's like saying basic, we had the mortar and the .30 caliber light machine gun and the carbine. We were just more or less famililarization firing. So if we ever had them --

Q Sure.

A -- we would have known what they were instead of saying, "What is this?" You know. Which end does the bullet come out of?

Q Sure.

A How do you set this mortar up to fire it? Just a familiarization thing.

Q So you are there for 15 weeks?

A I think our basic was -- if I remember correct, it was actually 17 weeks.

Q Seventeen weeks.

A We started basic about the first of -- I would say the first of October, and we finished just about the middle of January.

(BEGIN TRACK TWO, DISK ONE)

And then it would be January of '44. And then from -- from Fort Benning, we was assigned to different schools, because we had some fellows that got sick, you know, they had to drop out and go with a later company and training to pick up where they had gotten sick and go on and finish.

We started out with probably 200 men in our company. And of that 200, 128 of us wound up going to Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is now Carnegie Mellon.

Q Mellon, yeah.

A And we got up there the latter part of January of '44. And we went up by the troop train from Columbus, Georgia. And after we got there, they were in semester break between these, you know, three-week terms that they had. And so they said, "Well, we'll give you a six-day delay in route," since we were already there. And I got -- I figured, well, I could get home in two days and spend two days at home and two days back so I would use up my six days. So that was my first leave after I had gotten into the service.

Q Did they know you were coming home, or did you surprise them?

A Well, I called them when I found out I was coming. So they knew. And then the trick was to get on -- get a train. And, fortunately, I remember a fellow named Novak, Richard Novak. He had been in the third platoon in basic and I had been in the fourth. But we both got down to the train station about the same time. And at that time, the Pennsylvania Railroad had an all-coach train which they call the Jeffersonian. And I think it started either New York or Baltimore and then went to St. Louis. And like I say, it was all coach, and all the seats were reserved.

So we got our tickets, and the fellow told us just go to the gate, you know, and see what will happen. Well, they had hostesses on the train like they stewardesses on

airplanes, you know. And so they were changing the crews there. And at the gate, we got to talking to one of the young ladies that was going to be -- she was in the new crew that was going to change in Pittsburgh. And we told her we didn't have any seat. And she said, "Well, you just stay here.

Interruption. Knock at door.

Q Hold on just a second. I'll just cut this out.

(BEGIN TRACK 3, DISK I.)

A Okay. Where were we? Trying to get on the train. She said -- she just told us to just wait and then she would check. And if she had some empty seats, you know, somebody didn't show or something, then she would get us a seat.

And so we were standing there, and the train had been in. And people had gotten off. People had gotten on. And we knew we were due to leave. And then she came back and said, "You all come on with me."

And so she took us back to the observation car, which was just -- you know, there were seats in there but it was just for the people that had seats to walk back. And so she said, "You all stay here, and when I get a seat, I will come and get you and give you an assigned seat," you know. And I believe it was in Columbus or Springfield -- I believe it was Columbus -- she came back and said she had found two seats for us. So we had a seat. We knew we were going to

get to St. Louis then.

And I think Richard lived somewhere in Missouri, maybe St. Louis. And then I had transferred a train down to Arkansas. And then I think we got to Hope. Had a train change, changed trains and get into Shreveport. So we were kind of -- I forget how long it took.

Q Did you -- as a serviceman, did they just -- was it free for you?

A No, we paid, but I don't really remember what the fare was. I would guess it wasn't any more than 15 dollars.

Q So you got -- it was -- was that --

A Round trip.

Q -- a discount fare?

A I guess that's what it was. Now, some people -- I seen some people recently have said, you know, you just got on the train and went. But I --

Q Not your experience.

A -- I still remember buying tickets. The only place I remember riding for free was the metro system in Paris. You just get on and get off, you know. But the trains, you had a fee, but it was -- it was real minimum, I mean compared to what you think about now days.

Q Yeah, 15 dollars round trip is incredible.

So now after your leave's over --

A Okay. When I get -- I go on back to school. And

then actually, they took three or four of us. We were assigned to basic engineering one. And for some reason or other, they picked out three or four of us. And apparently, since we had had some college training already, they skipped us to basic engineering two. So we essentially skipped the first 12 weeks, which really didn't make any difference, because they were getting ready to zero the program out anyway.

So I moved from the group I was in -- I went to a group that had already been there 12 weeks and finished 12 weeks of school. And at that point, we were living in fraternity houses. And I think our -- our company there, probably we were staying in about three or four different fraternity houses. And we'd pull them up in the morning and march across Forbes Avenue and go to breakfast and then we'd go to classes.

And like I say, there were beginning to be rumors of the ASTP program being abolished. And sure enough, about the -- oh -- the middle of March, I guess it was, or -- it was when we were put on a troop train and went to Harrisburg and to Indian Town Gap military reservation.

Q Oh, gosh.

A And that was where the 95th division was. And since then, I have learned that -- now, our group was from Carnegie Tech. There was a group of ASTP at the University

of Pittsburgh. I think there was some from the University of Pennsylvania.

Q Pennsylvania.

A Penn State. And I know some guys came into our company had been to BMI in Virginia and some friends of ours from -- mine from basic training had gone to Randolph-Macon in Virginia. And all of these schools, I know their people went up to Indian Town Gap.

Q How many of you, do you think?

A I heard there was about 4,000 ASTP students that went from college, went to Indian Town Gap. And of that 4,000, about 2,000 of them were assigned to other units and other places.

Q And the men you met, how many do you think were there? I mean with 11,000 -- I mean, when you joined how many people -- of the veterans had been training already, how many --

A Oh, the 95th had been activated in July of 1942.

Q Okay.

A The initial. They -- the official activation date was July 15 of '42. And the first group of draftees that came in were from the upper midwest, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Dakotas. In fact, when we went overseas, the division at that time was about 15,000 people. And when the division went overseas, I have been told that

there were over 4,000 men from the State of Illinois alone, which was better than 25 percent of the division, which was a little unusual.

Q Yeah.

A And after July, they had a group of draftees that came in. They were from Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. And I think there was -- and some from Connecticut, because we had some people -- a few people in our company from Connecticut.

And then going back to the 95th, from -- from their basic training at Camp Swift, Texas. And then they moved into Fort Sam Houston, Texas. And they always said they were only there on the weekends. On Monday, they would go out to the -- some surrounding camps, Camp Bullis, Cibalo. I think Leon Springs was the place where they did field training. And then they would come back in on Friday or Saturday. So they spent most of their time out training in the field.

Q Okay.

A And where they had the basic training at Swift and go more into unit training once they got to Fort Sam Houston you know, by companies, by battalions, by regiments.

Q Sure. I -- just to go back for a second, since you mentioned this, you said you had troop training in Columbus. What is troop training?

A I just changed trains in Columbus.

Q Oh, you changed trains. You changed troop trains?

A Yeah.

Q I thought you said troop training. I thought, oh, that's a whole different sort of training.

A If I thought about it awhile, I could find that we had some troop training.

Q Probably could.

A But, anyway, from Fort Sam, then the 95th division went to Louisiana for maneuvers.

(BEGIN TRACK 4, DISK I)

A I used to recall the number of maneuvers. They numbered each maneuver. And they maneuvered with -- I think one of other -- other infantry division and maybe an army division. And when the maneuver was finished, they went into Camp Polk, Louisiana. But within a very short period of time, maybe less than a month, they moved it to California to the California desert training maneuver area around Needles and I believe it was Camp -- Camp Coxcomb, C-O-X-C-O-M-B, California. And that was kind of their base. But they -- they operated all over that area out there. And that was -- that was along in November, I guess.

Q Of '43?

A End October, first part of November of '43. And then when they moved from there to Indian Town Gap in

Pennsylvania, I believe it was in February of '44. And then the ASTP program kind of --

Q Came in?

A -- came in in March. Those fellows from there.

(THIS STARTS DISK II)

Q How did they -- how did the veterans treat you guys coming in from college?

A Well, I think they called us whiz kids and some other names. And I can understand, because they -- they -- they had -- they had been, say, the Louisiana maneuvers. They had been through the desert maneuvers and they had been in -- let's see -- say, July '42, '43. They had been in over a year-and-a-half. And we had been in school eating three meals a day, you know, and white sheets at night and -- but we were -- I mean, on the GCT course, I think they have got -- you had to have 115 to go into the ASTP and that was five more than OCS. OCS only required 110.

And -- but in retrospect and seeing things the last several years, the infantry wound up with what was left. And when they got to the induction centers and they took the test, the air corps, you know, they took off -- you had to have 110. So, you know, they took the top.

And then I -- a number of years ago -- and I haven't found that book yet, but there was an army publication that we referred to, and I think it was the green book that the

army had these books written after the war, something about combat and the different campaigns. And they got down to the one I am thinking of specifically was like the procurement and training of ground forces in World War II. And there was a chart in there that kind of compared the different branches based on the AGCT scores.

Of course, the air corps was up at the top line and the next line, I think, was maybe the engineers. And maybe the next line might have been the chemical. You could see what you are getting. You are getting people educated in certain fields and specialists, so to speak.

And then the bottom line was the infantry. And they had this like starting in '40, '41, you know. And in March of '44, the infantry line swung up above the air corps line. And it was only because they had the influx of these ASTP, which were -- they were either right out of high school or they had had one or two years of college. There was a small percentage of the ASTP program were people who had been in service, but they still had to score. They might be in their middle twenties or even upper twenties.

I know of one man personally that I knew in Shreveport after the war. He was probably 30 years old or better when he was drafted, but he was a college graduate and a school teacher. And so, to me, when they took that AGCT course, if they had been in school and used to tests

and questions -- and they were multiple choice. So these people, to me, had an advantage.

Q Sure.

A Whereas I can appreciate a lot of people grew up in the Depression, and I know I have learned since that one of my assistant squad leaders had dropped out of school in the fourth grade. It wasn't his fault. I mean, he had to, you know, work on the farm to support the family.

Another one told me -- I think he dropped out maybe in the seventh grade. But it was the facts of life during the '30s. And these people had been out of school, not used to taking tests and things like this. So naturally, they are not going to have the scores.

Q No.

A So when the ASTP program -- back to your question -- when they went into the infantry, there was some resentment with the fellows that were already in. And I think that it was justly so. I mean, I can remember one of the sergeants telling me since I have been going to reunions, that he had a man in his squad that he read the letters to him that he received from home. He wrote his letters. He couldn't read nor write, either one. But it wasn't his fault.

Q No.

A But like I say, I could remember one of our people from ASTP -- I didn't know him until he got to the company

because he came from somewhere else. But unfortunately for him, he wasn't the first to say he didn't belong in the infantry. And this didn't -- that was a lead balloon that never lifted. He just -- he brought it on himself, you know. And but anyway --

Q So -- and what sort of thing -- was he just hazed or just disliked?

A Well, just disliked. He was too good to be in the infantry, you know. He was educated. He needed to be somewhere else where his education was appreciated.

Q Oh.

A But most of us, I felt like -- I was happy. I was glad to be in the infantry. I thought about that when I was a kid growing up, you know. And I looked forward to it. It was an adventure for me.

Q Sure.

A And I think we got along -- some of us got along better than others.

Q So people responded to your enthusiasm?

A They saw that, you know, we weren't trying to live on a cloud. That's where they had sent us, you know. And we were just doing what we were told to do wherever we were.

I remember the first Saturday we had inspection after we got assigned to companies. And I was happy to be in the third platoon, so I noted the company commander that

was inspecting the first and second platoons, the only ones that he was looking at their rifle was the new people that had been assigned that week.

And so he got on down to our platoon, and he was coming around through the ranks. And he got to me and he grabbed my rifle and looked at it. And, fortunately, it passed his inspection. And he said, "What is the serial number"?

Well, I just read off the serial number to him, you know. And then he said -- immediately, he said, "Backwards." Well, fortunately, I had learned it backwards. So just he said backwards and I came at him backwards, you know. And he looked at me and he handed my rifle back. And I could see over his shoulder, lieutenant platoon leader was standing back there and he was grinning from ear to ear. And the captain gave me my rifle back and then he went on down the line. The captain never looked at my rifle again the rest of the time I was in that company.

But just, you know, if you were ready for them, you really surprised them. They didn't expect it. I know farther down the line, one of my friends -- well, I just had known -- met him then, but he was a very good friend later on. The captain got looking to his rifle and he said, "Soldier, there is a piece of lint in there."

And the fellow says, "No, sir, that is not lint.

That's steel wool." Which was a no-no. You weren't supposed to clean your rifle with steel wool.

The captain, he must have gone two feet off the ground. But anyway, the young fellow, just to carry it forward, he was later in regimental scouts after we got in combat. And then when combat was over, there wasn't _____ in the organization, so they moved them back to wherever they came from.

After he got out of the service, he became a successful surgeon in New York. He went to medical school. In fact, that's where I found him. I happened to run across his name in the medical directory. Somebody told me they heard he might be a doctor. And I found a medical directory in the local library and I looked through and found his name and I wrote and got a card from his nurse. She said Dr. So-and-So told me that he was the man that you were looking for that was in Company A. But anyway, that's a side story.

Q That's a side story. Just as a side note, since you got out, did -- while some people didn't try to find people. It sounds like you -- it's your nature to try to make contact.

A Well, I -- I -- you know, I thought about that because to me, they were my family. And at the time -- and they still are. And maybe some -- I know some of them don't feel that way. I mean, I feel that way towards them even

though they may not feel that way towards me. I feel like we were together. We lived together. We were in combat together. And you kind of look after each other.

And I kind of like that. I felt like somebody was there when I needed them, and I tried to be there if they needed me. And -- but it was a long time before I ever really got to go to a reunion. I became a member of the division association when it first started. I happened to see a little note in the paper one day, and all this was in probably in '46, that different infantry divisions were forming organizations to kind of keep in touch with one another and so forth. And if you were in a division, you could write this box number and, you know, they would put you in touch with your division if there was such a proposed organization.

And so I sent -- wrote in, and I got a letter back from General F_____ who had been our division commander. And he said they were in the process of forming an association and my name would be on the roll, and I would get further information, which I did. It led to the 95th division association, which like I say, I joined from the beginning. But I never got to go to a reunion. We had reservations to go to a reunion in '74. The division had started reunions in, let's see, '49 or '50, because this is the 56th reunion this year. And we were going in '74. It

was going to be in San Antonio, which was close to where we lived in Louisiana. But my work prevented me from going. And I'm sorry that I didn't, because at that reunion, our company commander had retired. He had a physical retirement from the military by then. He was a lieutenant colonel. And he lived in San Antonio. And the men from the company got to see him, you know. And he died a few years after that.

(START TRACK 5, DISK I)

A Are we still going?

Q (BY MR. L):

Q Yes, we are still going. What I do is every once in awhile, I'll stop and I'll start another track.

A Okay.

Q Just so that if there is a flaw on the CD, it only affects a small portion.

A Okay.

Q Because one time I was in -- when I was in Metz and I was talking to someone, I -- at the end of this whole long talk, I looked down there and it said CD error. And I thought what was that? And it was one long track, because I hadn't broken it up. I hadn't learned any better. And the whole thing was lost.

A Oh.

Q So now -- now I have learned every year.

A Just like save.

Q Just like save. Just like save.

And the other thing I found out is on these -- these are gold CDs. These cost around two dollars apiece. And that's because they say they don't have that many bad places. So --

A Oh. Okay.

Q Yes, so every week I learn something that I should have known before.

So back -- let's see. So now we are still in Indian Town Gap. And you -- and you are getting ready.

A While we were at the Gap, we were integrated into various companies. Well, about this -- I think in February before we got there, a bunch of inductees had gone into the Gap. And they took their basic training with the 95th. And I remember they were staying, say, like some of them would be in each barracks. And in the morning after breakfast, they would fall out as a group and the sergeants would take them off to wherever they were doing whatever class or classes they were going to be doing that day. They lived in the barracks and they had the meals in the mess hall. But during the day, they were training as taking basic training.

Q Okay.

A Now, I think these folks only had maybe eight weeks of basic training, whereas like I said, I think we had 17.

So -- but that was a fact of life that some people didn't have as much basic as other people did.

Q Sure.

A But, anyway, these people, as they finished their basic, then they were right there in the company.

Q Yeah.

A Assigned to whatever platoon maybe that their barracks -- that they had been staying at a particular barracks. So we had the inductees there. You had the AST people there. And so then we took, you know, we were just training with our company from then on. Whatever the training schedule was, that's what we were doing.

And then along in May, they started going down to West Virginia a regiment at a time, for some mountain training. And then I think we ended up with like a regimental problem. Some of the fellows were selected and went down there earlier to mountain climbing school or to mule-packing school. And I remember I had one of my sergeants from -- well, he wasn't a sergeant then. He was later. But he was from Chicago, and he was selected to go to mule-training school. And he asked why -- well, if you seen the tape that David Cole (ph) made about the 95th, it was his grandfather.

He said he didn't know anything about mules. Why were they sending him to mule school. But anyway, like I

say, these people from mountain climbing and mule training, mule-skinning school, they went maybe a week or ten days earlier. And then the rest of the regiment went down. And like I say, we had small unit problems there in the mountains and then wound up with a regimental problem. I remember we made -- we were winding up regimental problem on June the 6th of '44. The captain that we were marching down the road, he came down the line and told us that they had invaded in Normandy then.

Q Now, regimental problem, is that something to take or --

A Well, there was a mountain out there, and they had a theoretical, you know, enemy up here. And so we, you know, went up a mountain. And I believe there was a live firing movement. In other words, we had live ammunition and firing real bullets instead of having blanks, you know.

Q Really?

A And --

Q How were you at mountain climbing?

A Well, we -- to be perfectly honest, we really didn't do any mountain climbing. About all we really had -- well, we walked up them, but it wasn't climbing like you see now days, you know, hand over hand up the side. We were just going up the sides and --

Q Climbing on trails?

A -- walking along the sides. Right. Just going across country but wasn't any real rock climbing. We did do a little repelling. We would get up on the cliff and they would have the ropes down there and they would show you how to hitch yourself to the rope and push you off and bounce against the wall, you know, going down to the bottom. But probably 30 or 50 feet was the most, you know, we ever went down like that.

Q Okay.

A And then you see repelling now days coming down board walls.

Q Sure.

A But that's about all we did. It was just more outdoor training really, physical more or less.

Q Okay.

A But we were only down there about two to three weeks, I think, and then we went back to the Gap. And this was -- like I say, we wound up our training part on June the 6th. So, you know, by the 10th, I am sure we were back at the Gap.

Q Yeah.

A I know I got a three-day pass around the first of July, because they took the company picture at the Gap on July the 1st. And there is only 100 -- I think 132 men of the company that were in the picture. Well, the company at

that time had about 187 men in it. So these other people were either off on detail or they were on a pass or they were on furlough or one reason or another, they weren't in the picture.

Q Is that the big, official picture?

A That's the official picture for me, because that was the period when I was in the company. And I got a copy of it even though I wasn't in it. And I just wrote everybody's name on it, you know, like the first row, second row and third row.

And there again, most -- 99 percent of us just went by our last name. Some people had some nicknames, but everybody knew by last names. And I remember the first reunion I went to in '76, I just carried my copy of the picture with me. And apparently nobody had ever done that before, you know, had the company picture there. And so I had it and opened it up.

Well, I told my wife if we get there and there is nobody there from my company, I'm not interested in staying you know. And -- but we had -- counting myself, I think we had 17 fellows from our one company. And we've always had a good turnout at reunions, which I am appreciative of to see these fellows again after all these years.

But any rate, we were looking at the company picture and they'd say, "Who's that"?

And I would say, "Well, turn over on the back and count down." I said, "All the names are on the back."

Well, they couldn't -- they _____ about that, you know, "Well, you wrote everybody's name down." I said, "Well, that's the only way I thought I would ever remember them," you know. And then in '76, I remember the -- our first sergeant who got a battlefield commission was there. And when I saw him, he looked exactly like he had looked 31 years before when I last seen him, you know.

And I was amazed at how many that I could recognize after 35 years. Of course, some of them, I didn't. But there again, some of them I really didn't know, especially after we got overseas. I think I knew everybody that had been at Indian Town Gap. But as we got replacements overseas, especially if they were in another platoon, you never saw them unless you happened to be pulled back or in reserve or something, you know. And then you might meet some of them.

But there would be people come into the company and, you know, go to the hospital and never saw them.

Q So how many are here at this reunion?

A We have got ten this time. We had two come in yesterday afternoon and one of them, I thought, would be there because he lived close by. But he really never did say that he would be here. But he's got two sons. One of

them is a current brigadier general in Saudi Arabia. And he had been -- come back to have some classes or something that maybe at the Pentagon. So he took a week's leave to stay here and bring his dad down here. They came in yesterday afternoon.

Q That's nice.

A And was glad to see him. And he had been to the --

Q What's his name?

A I think 1980 reunion. It was Clinton Anderson was the man in our company. His son is Brigadier General Clinton Anderson. Well, he goes by Clint, because his daddy is Clinton. But I am sure his name is Clinton too. But he was a graduate of BMI in '74, I believe he said. And two members out of that class have become generals. And a very nice, very nice man.

Q Now, why didn't you stay with -- did long did you stay with -- did you leave the army as soon as you could?

A Oh, yeah.

Q So --

A I was going to go back to school.

Q Okay.

A And that's why I got out. I wanted to finish school. I'd been premed when I was a freshman, but I didn't really want to -- I didn't really think I'd do as a doctor, although I, you know, started out at that direction.

Q Um-hum.

A And I wanted to say that I had been to college. And I might say here, I think one of the greatest things the Congress of these United States ever did was pass the GI Bill of Rights. It enabled -- I have no idea how many obtained a home on the GI bill on the loans, you know. But more than that, it gave them an opportunity to get an education, which they never would have had otherwise.

I know I went to a small school there in Louisiana in Shreveport, Centenary College. It's a Methodist denominational school. And they had a big influx of veterans at the close of the war. And I know from personal experience that half of those would never have gone to college if, you know -- if it hadn't been for the GI bill.

A lot of them were already out of college. I mean, out of -- out of high school. They had gone into the army or had gone to work. And then because of the GI bill, giving them a chance to, you know, to go to college.

Q And kept all these colleges alive too.

A That's -- well, of course, after the war, they would have had a lot go back. But they had a lot more with the GI bill than they would have had otherwise.

Q Yeah.

A So I think Congress did one good thing that year anyway, whatever year that was, '43 or '44. I'm not sure.

But anyway --

Q Anyway, so we are at Indian Town Gap. You are probably getting ready -- you are done with mountain training?

A Right.

Q It's after D Day?

A And like I say, it was sometime in July, I think when --

Q You had your leave.

A -- alerted for overseas shipment. And then when we left Indian Town Gap, we went to Camp Miles Standish in Massachusetts, which is below Boston. And I think the nearest town to it was Taunton, T-A-U-N-T-O-N, Massachusetts. And I say that, because I have heard people say when they say they were at Miles Standish, they talked to people who live in Massachusetts that never had heard of it. But it was a camp for the Boston port of embarkation, Boston POE.

(START TRACK 6, DISK I)

Q As a camp, was it just barracks or --

A Yeah. I remember, it seemed to me like that camp might have had just what I referred to as tarpaper shacks. They were -- they were some of us barracks we had at Fort Benning at basic, you would have 12 to 16, 18 or 20 people in a barracks if you just had single cots. Now, if you put

double cots in there, of course, you double bunk, you would double it. But looking at it from the outside, it was just -- just tarpaper shack and had a little lathing strip to kind of hold the tarpaper up there.

Q Okay.

A And I know when we first went to Benning, we were in some little huts that are left over from World War I. And we had -- I think we had six or eight -- let's see, one, two, three, four, just trainees in there. We would have eight, just a square tent on a -- not a tent. It was kind of plywood on a concrete floor and had a coal stove in the middle. And that was my first experience with coal. And then if you had -- had to be in one of those huts with a corporal -- we had a corporal for each squad -- he had a single bunk, and then we had two, three double bunks.

And then when we moved, after about six weeks on the main post, we moved up to an area they called Harmony Church. And that's when we had some tarpaper shacks, and we had a squad in each one. And our squads in basic were 12-men squads.

Q Before I forget, my wife -- my wife always asked -- asked me, she said what was it like to go from living at home and then you go into this situation where you're with all these other guys? You have no privacy.

One person said to me today, he said he knew certain

guys who would have to wait for everyone else to go to the toilet, because they couldn't stand to go to the toilet with people around. Was it a big adjustment for you?

A Not for me.

Q But you see --

A I don't recall having any, you know, aversions to anything. I had been a Boy Scout and gone to summer camp. And in summer camp, we had small cabins we stayed in, you know, and you would have your latrine and shower facilities in the building by themselves or shack or some sort. And, you know, I was used to that.

Now, you mention like the toilets, when -- when we got up to Indian Town Gap, we had two-story wooden barracks.

Q Okay.

A And the latrine was downstairs at the back end. And I think I remember you step down and, of course, a concrete floor and you had your wash basin along the wall and urinal along this wall, and you had your stools around over here and then the shower. And probably it -- probably the shower wouldn't probably take more than four at a time.

Q Really?

A I've kind of forgotten. I can't remember whether the showers were just on one side or whether, say, they had two rows. Might have had two rows. You could get eight in there.

Q So when it came time to take a shower, was there always a long line going in and out?

A No, they just kind of, you know, adjusted or you might have -- you might go down there and not be able to get in, but it wouldn't be long before somebody would be coming out.

Q Okay.

A While we are talking about showers, let's jump ahead of time.

Q Good.

A When we got over to -- when we first got up online in combat -- I better backtrack. We were, like I say, in Normandy. This was in probably September, early September when we first got to France, because all the division trucks -- and a lot of men out of the division was driving, and assistant drivers, and they drove the trucks on the red ball for a period of maybe a couple of weeks. And then when we moved up, we initially started out going to the 9th army. Somewhere in between the time when we started and the time when we were supposed to stop, we got transferred to the 3rd army. Instead of going up into Belgium, we stopped in northern France.

And I think it was around the middle of October that we relieved the 5th division. And in our particular case, we went across to Moselle. They had a bridge they had on

the bank of the Moselle south of Metz. And so we had showers, say, back in September when we were still in Normandy. But then, like I say, how ever many days it took us on the forty and eight (ph) because troops were not a priority. Supplies were the priority. If they had a supply train coming, you got shifted. Your train was shifted off on a side track and the supplies flowed through and then you got back on and went. And if another supply train was coming, then you had to get off again.

So we were probably three or four days, maybe five, you know, getting across the short distance of France that we went.

But back to the shower, I can remember several years ago I got a copy of the first battalion journal, which was just kind of a log what happened at different times during the day. You had a sheet for each day. And I can remember that one day they -- they received a thing that said that I think six men from each company -- we were online by then -- but each day, six men were to report back to battalion to go to regiment to go back for showers. They were supposed to bring their raincoat and their blankets, because it would be overnight before they would get back. And so they took them back for shower.

Well, a few days later, they upped it to eight men per company. Well, you got, say, 100 -- well, say on the

line like that, three platoons, probably got 150, 160 men maybe be online if the company is at full strength. And so you take out eight a day, you know, it's 20 days before your number comes up for a shower. And so then -- but we weren't there 100 -- you know, that long a time. So we got back. But to shorten the story, from September, I got my first shower, I mean full shower in December.

And, you know, people like now, their jaw would drop and hit the ground. It was cold weather. So, you know, you -- we didn't perspire and have a body odor which you might have otherwise. Everybody was in the same boat so --

Q So you probably didn't smell. Didn't notice.

A And then when you took the -- when we got our fresh -- fresh shower, we were off the line for -- in reserve. And I can remember you took your clothes off. You would turn them in and get clean clothes. You went into the showers. They the blew the whistle. You started to soak. And when they blew the next whistle, you better start getting the soap off, because the next time they blew the whistle, you were coming out.

And I don't remember the sequence. I would say maybe -- you might have had two minutes, you might have had three minutes. But I'm sure it wasn't anymore than that. And then you came out, you got the new uniform to put on. And I can remember that in my case, I got a shirt that would

fit, but the pants -- I couldn't find a pair of pants that would fit me, so I had to go back to my old pants and wear them about an another three or four weeks before I could get back to my duffle bag. And they were standing up whenever you took them off. They never did fold -- fold them.

Q Never?

A But anyway, back at the Gap --

Q Sure.

(START TRACK 7, DISK I)

A I didn't feel -- you know, what would you say?

Q Embarrassed.

A Embarrassment about, you know, the showering and all that.

Q Okay.

A Because I guess because I had been used to it. Even in high school, you know, you would have PT and you'd have to shower before you go back to class or something like that.

Q Well, the mix of people one person said his first night, he sat down and asked this -- what -- a person said to him, "What were you doing before"?

And he said, "Well, I was a student."

And he said, "What were you doing before?"

And the man said, "I was a highway robber. And my judge said to me, 'Either join the infantry or go to jail.'"

And he said the guy was okay on weekdays, but on weekends if he had a little beer in him, you had to watch out because he became mean. So I just thought there is a huge mix of all people that you have never seen before.

A Right. I -- that part of it I liked and the fact that, you know, when you went to the induction center, the first thing after you drew your uniform, once you drew your uniform, you bundled your civilian clothes up and they were mailed home. So during World War II, you did not have any civilian clothes. The only thing you had was a uniform.

And it's not like, you know, since then and now days, that you don't know anybody's in the service, because they are dressed like everybody else is. I liked the part that we were all the same, you know. You had the same shirt, the same tie, the same shoes, boots, what have you. It was all the same, and so nobody stood out.

Q That's right.

A Either way, you know, to the top or to the bottom, it was all equal.

Q That's great.

A And this was an equalization thing.

Q Just when they give you the fresh uniform, did you have patches? Did you have to take out your old patches and sew them on the new one?

A Well, of course, we didn't -- let's see. At basic,

we didn't have any patches at all.

Q Okay.

A And then, in fact, the fringe on your cap, you didn't -- you just had a plain cap with no fringe. So the fringe denoted what branch you were in. Like blue was the infantry. I think maroon and white kind of mixed was like medical corps. Red was artillery. Yellow was cavalry or tank corps. Chemical corps I think was orange -- orange and white mixed. So the piping around, which was the fringe around the cap, denoted your -- you know, what branch you were in. But then when we got in the ASTP program, they had a patch that they had. It was the lamp of knowledge, which some of us referred to as the flaming piss pot.

And then, of course, when got to the 95th, we were issued a 95th patch. And as I recall, it was -- wasn't anything ornate about it. So we would go to the military store in town and get one that had a little white border around the red name, you know, made it stand out a little bit better.

Q Make it look nice.

A So you had your division patches then.

Q Okay.

A And speaking of that, I got to collecting division patches. And the different camps you went to, the unit that had gone through, if you went to the military store in town,

you could get patches for other divisions. So I started kind of collecting these. And I started -- after the war, after I got a pretty good collection, I started putting them on a field jacket that I had and -- not a field jacket, but my fatigue jacket. And I think I got the last division patch in the early '70s. So now I got my fatigue jacket that -- I got all the infantry patches from World War II and all the army patches on that one jacket, you know. And I remember the jacket -- to back track a little bit --

Q Yeah.

A When you were in service, your laundry mark was your last -- first initial of the last name and the last four digits of your serial number. And this brings up another story. My serial number, as I was at the induction center, they said, "Okay, line up in front of this desk here."

And then when I got close enough to the desk, I realized that this corporal that was sitting in back of it, he had a ledger there with numbers down one column, and he was writing your name down. And I decided, well, that's going to be my serial number. And so I was looking, and I counted back to where I was. And where I was, my serial number was going to wind up in four nines. Well, the next number was four zeros. So I debated to myself, do I rather have four nines or four zeros? And I elected to go to four zeros. So I got to talking to the fellow in back of me.

And as I talked to him, I kind of eased around to the side. And then I eased around a little more to where he was in front of me. So when he got up there, he wound up with 38519999 and I got 38520000. And so my laundry mark became M0000, and so I was "moo" for quite awhile.

(START TRACK 8, DISK I)

Where did I digress from?

Q Okay. You are still at Indian Town Gap. No, you were in Camp Miles Standish.

A Okay. We got to Camp Miles Standish. And we weren't there very long, and then went to Boston to load on the ship. And the first battalion of 379th, of which Company A was a part, we went on a day early. And they named us the MPs for the trip over. And as I recall, all we did was stand at the foot of the steps going up to the officers' deck. I'm sure the navy had a different word for those steps. But we would stand at the bottom of the steps to keep enlisted men from going up the steps to get to the officers' deck.

So since we went on early, we got good accommodations. We got a state room. But the trick was -- I think there were 18 of us in the state room, which was, you know, usually -- well, like probably about the size of this room here, maybe a little bit smaller.

Q Okay.

A But they put triple bunks in there, you know.

Q Okay.

A And -- but we had a shower and commode and lavatory in there in the little room just like a motel room.

Q Okay.

A In fact, it was a little smaller than this.

Q So maybe like 12 by 10 or 14 by 10 maybe?

A Yeah, but like I say, there were triple bunks in there, and I think we had 18. But, of course, most of the troops were on the lower deck. Now, there was a group -- I seen -- I believe they were on the same deck with us, what had been maybe the dining room. And they had just put three-deck bunks, all that in, you know, and actually there was an open area as you were going down the companion way where you could see up maybe about four or five feet and then it was open to the ceiling and then you could look into the bunk beds and see the dining room. And they had barbed wire strung along there. And they told us, well, when they'd make the return ship, they would bring German prisoners, you know, back to the states.

Q Yeah.

A And now the ship we were on was the West Point, USS West Point, which had been at one time the SS America, which, as I understood, was the largest American luxury liner at that time. Of course, the army took it over early

in the war. In fact, I think it took a group of British soldiers. They landed in Singapore just as the Japanese beginning to bomb Singapore in early December --

Q Okay.

A -- '41. But the West Point, I think there were two or three troop ships that took British soldiers in, and they all got out safely, I think. But anyway, we went over to West Point. And it was large enough to carry all the division except I think the 378 and maybe the artillery went over on the Mariposa. And we went -- we didn't go in a convoy. They said it would go fast enough, we could outrun a submarine. But we kind of wondered, well, okay. It can outrun it, but what if it meets it, you know?

Q Yes.

A It's there waiting. But anyway, that didn't happen. And I think we crossed maybe in about five to six days. I think they said we went east until we got to the Azores and then went north up around Ireland and came back into Liverpool.

Q That's what I heard. You went over northern Ireland.

A Right.

Q How were the seas?

A Well, one thing, being a big ship, even though, you know, you might have some waves, I really never noticed it

coming over, going over. Now, I did coming back. We were on a smaller ship, and it had -- there was a storm through the north Atlantic about that time. In fact, I think what I did when we left Le Havre, I laid down in my bunk and I don't think I got out until we got to Boston. I think somebody went and bought me a box of Baby Ruths, and that was my ration for the trip back. But as long as I stayed --

Q Prone.

A -- prone, you know, I didn't get sick. And I really didn't get sick at all. But I felt like if I got up, I would begin the get woozy, so I laid back down and just stayed.

Q But on the way across --

A The way across, like I say, we didn't have any weather, and it was just like sailing on a lake. Of course, that's the first time I had been on a ship. I didn't have anything to compare it with.

Q What was the food like, or how would you get your food with that many people?

A Well, the food was -- well, you -- I think we may have eaten twice a day. And you stood up, you went through the line, and then they had I guess what you would call maybe a half a table. But it was, say, chest high. You didn't sit down, you just stood up.

Q Sure.

A You had a tray. There was room for your tray on there and you just stood there and ate and then dumped, you know, when -- as I remember, that's the way it was.

Q Okay.

A Like I say, coming back, I didn't go -- so I don't know what -- it was just our regiment on the ship coming back, which was the U SS -

disk1.doc

(PART MISSING FROM DISK I,

CONTAINED ON DISK II)

(START TRACK 9, DISK I)

A You'd have -- you'd turn on the machine with water running in it, and it would rotate. And it looked like cloth inside. And this was would, you know, as the machine was rotating, the potato skin would be scraped off and the water going in there would flush them on out.

Q That's interesting.

A And the only thing you had to do was be sure and watch, or you would wind up with golf balls or maybe marbles instead of potatoes. I thought that was the great for the English to have that when we still had to use paring knives to hand clean and then peel them.

But anyway, we were there at Barton Stacey long enough that they started giving, I think it was, a 24-hour pass or 48-hour pass to London. And they kind of had, like I say, six a day. So they drew, and I was lucky enough to

be able to get one of those passes and go into London and, you know, you saw the new things. I think we went into Victoria Station. And then you were on your own, you know. I think I stayed at a Red Cross overnight facility.

Q Like a hostel or something?

A Yeah. And then I, you know, saw Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square. I remember Piccadilly Circus. There was a statue out, but it was completely covered to protect it. And I found out later that it was -- is it Eros?

Q Yeah.

A The statue in Piccadilly Square? And then, let's see. Where else? St. Paul. I went to St. Paul. I'm not sure I did Tower of London. I don't think I did. Most of the stuff, you know, that I saw there --

Q How were the people?

A They were friendly. They were friendly. They were very friendly. Of course, naturally, if you were in London, you saw some damage somewhere. You couldn't miss that. But I remember when I started back to the camp, went back to the train station and I was asking the Englishman, you know, station man there which track to get the train. And since he was speaking English, I didn't understand him. And so it wound up that I got on a train, and I didn't go where I was supposed to. When I got -- when the train stopped at the end of the line, I was about 15 to 20 miles from the town I

intended to be at. And I found out later that in telling me, he said if you got on that train to be sure and get off at a certain town and get on the next train that came through, because the train I was on was going to take a fork and go a different direction.

And so I thought, well, I'm going to be AWOL, you know, and I started walking down the road toward where I was going. And, fortunately, a jeep came along and picked me up. And I got down to the train station about the time the train got in.

Q That's good.

A So that was an experience. And then from England -- let's see, from Camp Barton Stacey, we went to South Hampton.

(START TRACK 10, DISK I)

Q Did you -- well, that's our renaissance man. So, as --

A Well, I mean, I say renaissance man. Jerry tells me the story about one time they were in combat. Charlie was on one side of the street and Jerry was on the other, you know. And the Germans were firing at both of them in the street, you know, and everybody else.

And Charlie hollers over to Jerry. He says, Jerry, did you reach such-and-such a book? And Jerry said a few choice words, and said he wasn't thinking about reading

books right at the present time, you know.

But Charlie -- Charlie -- well, Jerry, both, they -- they -- they were great guys.

Q All right. Did your feet ever give you problems? No?

A Yeah, they were -- they were real cold in the wintertime. When you freeze them, I think it affects your circulation.

Q How did they freeze?

A Just being in cold.

Q Just being in the cold?

A I really think -- probably -- I probably did it over a period of time, but I tried to keep my feet dry, because if you got your feet wet, you could get trench foot, and that was bad. But Patton had fresh socks sent up with the rations. So when you drew rations, you know, you could get a fresh pair of socks.

Now, I give Patton credit for that. Of course, on the flip side, he said if you get trench foot, you might get a court martial, you know. But if you kept your feet dry -- if I got my feet wet, the first chance I had to get, I would put on dry socks and then I would take the wet socks and stick them inside my shirt. You know, if they were real wet, I would wring them out and get as much water out. But if they were just moist or something, I would stick them in

my shirt and just let the body heat dry.

Q Dry them.

A And then, you know, I would just switch socks or get another fresh pair. _____ get a fresh pair.

But when we went from Charlotten, we were transferring the 3rd army to the 9th army. Charlotten, we were in convoy up to -- well, in fact, our company went to -- through Houffalize to some little town out from Houffalize in Belgium. And the platoon leader said, you know, "You ride in the jeep with me."

Well, I was riding in the back of the jeep. And I think that's really when I froze my feet. It was cold that day and just not being able to move around --

Q Yes.

A -- you know, or get me any exercise.

Q Sure.

A I really think that's when probably when I froze them.

Q So anyhow -- anyhow, I just, it's --

A You going to be in Chicago next year?

Q Yeah. So we will talk --

A If you do, maybe we can finish this.

Q We will finish this thing.

A I overstayed my time.

Q Yes, I know, but you have overstayed your time, but

never overstayed your welcome.

This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th. And I have had the pleasure of talking to Mr. --

A Paul Madden, Company A, 379th.

Q And what was your final rank?

A PFC.

Q PFC. And your serial number again?

A 38520000.

Q Okay. It's August 26th. And we have been talking for about two hours. Thank you very much. Okay.