

**VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT
(95th Division Foundation)**

Narrator: William Magnussen
Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)
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MAGNUSSEN: Well on our, our first night of the attack, uh, as we went into, oh, I can't, ...

MEYER: ...Maizieres-les-Metz....

MAGNUSSEN: ... Maizieres-les-Metz..... Sure.

Well, we, I was in with Colonel Walton and he, he took off and they needed the a wire up to the line company and I was the Colonel's radio operator so, uh, Bill Lockerton, our Sergeant in Communications platoon grabbed me and we ran up and after we got close to that wall, they started throwing 88s (88 ml. Shells) on us and we fell down... to, you know, for cover. And I fell with my face up and I thought, my gosh, I better turn over.

And when, when I turned over my rifle, hit the Bill Lockerton in the helmet.

He said, "Maggie, I'm shot."

(much laughter)

That's why he thought that when the rifle hit it.

MEYER: Yes.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. I just went to tell you, well, it's kind of funny, it very funny,

MEYER: And your name is William E Magnusson.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.

MEYER: And headquarters company. Second Battalion.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.

MEYER: 377th

MAGNUSSEN: Right.

MEYER: And when, um, did you know, um, oh, what's your birthdate, sir?

MAGNUSSEN: Bill. Bill, they called me Maggie.

MEYER: And uhmmm did, um, after Maizieres-les-Metz did, were you with him to, when were you with him the whole time?

MAGNUSSEN: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. All the way to, uh, through. Saurleurtern, the Bulge, Northern Germany and I, came back, uh, went with the tanks in, you know, in northern Germany.

MEYER: Sure.

MAGNUSSEN: Came back and we were going over to when we came to the United States and we were going to Japan after.

MEYER: Yeah, sure you were, yeah.

Now did.. .. now .. now,, you were with headquarters, now I talked to a man a long time ago, a couple years ago named Mr. Watson. Does that make any sense? Walter? Wat I, I forget what his.

MAGNUSSEN: Well Headquarters had an intelligence platoon, a communication platoon, and a, uh oh, Oh, what, uh, one, uh, uh, something, um, in Pioneer, what was it that, uh, three different year platoons, you know, in, in, in

MEYER: In headquarters...

MAGNUSSEN: ... yeah. Battalion.

MEYER: Okay. Okay.

MAGNUSSEN: ... And I, I was in communication because I, I was with, uh, Colonel Walton, and he had to have a. Uh, I carried the 300 on my back while we went forward.

MEYER: Okay, sure. My father was a radio man. He was, was company H 379th.

MAGNUSSEN: Oh yeah.

MEYER: Yeah. He had to, he was, they were strafing. Germans were strafing one time and he jumped into a culvert with a radio on his back.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.

MEYER: Crushed him

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.. You know they shot the man with I was with, well then later on when Walton was hit - Savesta, I was, he, he, Major Savesta came and I was going with him up through, we just was going into. German and they something sniper shot the guy behind me.

Oh. I always figured he was aiming at me 'cause I had the radio.

MEYER: Okay, yes. That makes sense.

MAGNUSSEN: But, but anyway, they hit the guy right behind me.

MEYER: And could I ask you, did you, did you enlist or were you drafted?

MAGNUSSEN: Pardon?

MEYER: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

MAGNUSSEN: I enlisted.

MEYER: When, when? When did you enlist? Do you remember?

MAGNUSSEN: Uh, night after I got out of the university in 1942... about September, uh, of 42. I graduated in June. University of Nebraska, I went into ASTP, went to the 76th division, passed a exam and went to North Carolina and there they, what school was it? Uh, can't think of a North Car..

Anyway, then, uh, uh, they sent us to college at William and Mary.

MEYER: Sure.

MAGNUSSEN: Several others were in William and Mary that were in then.... And sent us all back to the 95th.

MEYER: Were you, were they at Indian Town Gap then?

MAGNUSSEN Yes. Yes. That's where I went back to and met 'em in Indian Town Gap.

MEYER: Did they, did the guys who were with them the whole time, did they. Did it accept you pretty easily?

MAGNUSSEN: Oh, sure, sure, sure. Yeah. They were still in training actually, you know? Yeah.

I suppose maybe they thought, we thought we were superior because we'd been there, but I know I never noticed it really.

MEYER: Okay, and, and did you go, what boat did you go across on, do you remember?

MAGNUSSEN: Oh, boat.

Oh,,,, it's like on the way bBack on the Coast Guard. I know I, queen was, was the old Queen Mary, I think. Uh, okay. They called it, they changed the name to USS America. It was that USS America? Yeah, I think so.

MEYER: Yeah. Yes. Mariposa and the America.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. And we went into, uh, Liverpool. In Liverpool.

MEYER: Yeah. Do you remember, I know you guys, when, when you left England, you, you landed on, uh, did you land on Normandy..

MAGNUSSEN: Liverpool first.

MEYER I mean, but when you left?

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. Yeah. Omaha Beach. Omaha Beach. Yeah. Nine, uh, D plus 99. I believe it was nine days. D plus 99. Yeah.

MEYER: And were you part of the Red Ball Express

MAGNUSSEN: Yes.

MEYER: Red Ball Highway?

MAGNUSSEN: Yes. Yes. I haul supplies up to the British room for over, for I don't know how long until they canceled it.

MEYER: Wait, did you drive for them?

MAGNUSSEN: Yes, yes. I drove. Never driven a truck before in my life.

MEYER: No kidding...

MAGNUSSEN: ... And they had me drive a truck with haul ammunition and, and cans up to them from Bayeaux to Brussels. Oh.

MEYER: And would, were they two of you in the cab?

MAGNUSSEN: I mean, no, I was, I was all, all alone.

MEYER: You were all alone.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.

MEYER: What if you had to, what if you had a. Plumbing problem.

MAGNUSSEN: A what?

MEYER: What, what if you had to go to the toilet?

MAGNUSSEN: You know, I don't, well, we took break rest, you know.

MEYER: Oh, you took rest?

MAGNUSSEN: Uh, British got are damn mad at us because we, they were always stopping for tea, you know, here comes Americans, you be going to beat hell.

And you were running in and out of them and, you know, we went, oh.

MEYER: And so was. Where was the first time you, you, you, you heard, uh, you, you saw some action...

MAGNUSSEN: , it saw, well, that Dawn, that initial night. Uh, oh. I can't, I'd have to get the book. I, I can't remember the name that, that initial night attack, uh,

MEYER: At Maizieres-les-Metz

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. Uh, I think that was it. You know, they had the, what did they call it?

Then we went into Woippy and then, uh

MEYER: Sure.

MAGNUSSEN: Went into Woippy..

MEYER: I know Woippy..

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah,

MEYER: I can...

MAGNUSSEN: There was a furrow farm on the first night attack. Where I ran, instead of going to the farm, we went to this wall beside it when I said I rolled over it..

MEYER: well, and after that, did, did you go into, you, do you, were you with... ,

MAGNUSSEN: with, uh, Patton. You know, art was Patton followed him up. To, uh oh. We went into Fraulautern in Germany after Metz and then into Saarlautern. And then they had the Battle of Bulge, and we went up there, went into Northern Germany, uh,

MEYER: ... Krefeld...

MAGNUSSEN: Hurtgen Forest, was it Hurtgen Forest?

MAGNUSSEN: There was a diplomat, what was his name that owned a castle out there and it was a place for prostitutes for the German army.

MEYER No kidding.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. I know I got a pretty bag I, I was going to bring home to, uh, my wife that was some prostitute's there.

... and when we come home and we got back into Belgium coming home, some, some guy stole it from me.

MEYER: ...ohhh..

MAGNUSSEN: I never did get it back.

MEYER: And, ah,

MAGNUSSEN: I did get some, uh, uh, uh, lace or what you and send it back home. And if it was a tablecloth for her, her wedding veil. ... Yeah, we saved it for her.

Oh, see, my wife was from Connecticut. Yeah. I met her in, uh, .. oh boy... in the 76th Division.

MEYER: Was she .. she was, was she a WAC?

MAGNUSSEN: No, she was a, uh, well she was a nurse, so she was, was training to go overseas, but she had had scarlet fever and uh, they disqualified.

So she worked in the hospital then at ...New Haven, Connecticut.

MEYER: Okay.

MAGNUSSEN: And, uh, I had a, in the 76th division, one of my sergeants, uh, had, uh, lived there and he said, I'll take you home and we had a three day pass, he said, I'll take you home for an Italian dinner. He knew each. So it's alone, isn't it? He says, I'll get my girl and I'll get you guys dates.

Another guy, mine and Mary was my wife, was my date.

MEYER: Was she?

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.

MEYER: Now when did you know that she was the one?

MAGNUSSEN: Well, we see, uh, that was on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday we went back to Fort Meade Maryland. Then, uh, in the station, uh, I was saying goodbye to her and some other guy there was kissing another gal.

So I reached over and kissed Mary and oh, she was horrified 'cause I was kissing her.

She thought her dad and mother would see her.

Anyway, we corresponded for years.

She got, and after I got to the 95th, she came down to, uh, Indiantown Gap.. what town was it? She stayed at that, I can't even think of the town now.

Indian town? Yeah. Uh uh. And she came down to meet me.

MAGNUSSEN (con'td): I got away. Once up, I got to, uh, Connecticut and met her.

We went out, it was on the beach. She knew somebody that owned the ca cabin out on the beach, which I don't quite, she could tell better than I, I can't remember.

MEYER: Yeah.

MAGNUSSEN: And we just corresponded all the way and we got back home.

I, uh, wanted to come out to Nebraska. Mm-hmm. And, uh. So I, uh, her dad said, you go out to that damn, uh, corn Husker out there, he said,

and he was a a Navy man. And I was an army man. But anyway, I, so I sent her the money to come out and she never went back. Never went.

MAGNUSSEN Daughter: Nine months later.

MEYER: Nine months. Did you grew up in Nebraska?

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. Yeah. She was born in.

MAGNUSSEN DAUGHTER: Tell him your date of birth.

MAGNUSSEN: Uh, June. Seventh, 22, June 7th, 1922.

MEYER: (repeats).. June 7th, 1922.

MAGNUSSEN: Mm-hmm. I'm 54 now, but ...

(laughter)

MEYER: That's great. Yeah. About my age.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. I look older though.

MEYER: Well, you've seen it a little.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. I can't remember anymore. My hearing's bad. I'm... I got a disability from my hearing and the Vets gimme a disability pension.

MEYER: (12:20) Is that from the, the shelling or from what?

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah. Yeah. That's what I blamed it on to ... from the 88s and another deal when the, uh, oh, German planes came over and dropped bombs and, uh, several incidents like that.

MEYER: ... were.. So you went to Huertigan Forest?

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah

MEYER: I just was there. I was, was ...

MAGNUSSEN: Von Papen was that, uh, was that. The diplomat I was telling you.. he had that castle Where the prostitutes.. Von Papen.

MEYER: Von Papen..

MAGNUSSEN: yeah. Von Papen.. P-A.... P-A-P-E-N.

MEYER: Good name for a castle for prostitutes

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.

MEYER: (to Mr. Magnussen's daughter) Well, is there any, anything Beryl that you, that you know, uh, that you'd like to have your father told about?

MAGNUSSEN Daughter Beryl: Gosh, I think he's told it all. Pretty much.

You've told it all other day.

MAGNUSSEN: All I can think of right now, uh, uh, we, yeah,

I know coming back from the Coast Guard boat coming back, we had a, a terrific storm and I was on the kitchen, uh, doing kitchen police work. And I tell you, I was stepping, I, it blew so hard and, and tipped it so much. I stepped in the barrels of, uh, potatoes that they had. (13:21)

No, I, I couldn't stand up because it was just pitching.

MEYER: Well, well, you know, if you, if you have anything I'm here through Sunday.

MAGNUSSEN: Pardon? I'm here till Sunday. Till after Sunday. Till Sunday.

MEYER: So we go to home Sunday too. You go home Sunday. Well then is home still Nebraska?

MAGNUSSEN: Yes. Yes. Ever since I got, well, I came home and I went to work for the railroads. When I got home, I was a Union Pacific agent.

Okay. Telegraph operator too. Will you?

MEYER: Were you Yeah,

MAGNUSSEN: I sent you copied Western unions and Oh yeah.

MEYER: That's amazing. Yeah. That's amazing. I've seen some, some You must have quick. Finger and plus to be able to,

MAGNUSSEN: well, you had what, you know the bug, what you called the bug and uh, I still got it there naturally. I worked 41 years . I quit. .

I retired in 86, I think.

MEYER: Now. When did they stop using the bug?

MAGNUSSEN: Well, they still, I bought that on my own. Yeah. Uh. Still. Oh, well they went to radio. That's when, yeah, they quit. That's when they, uh, actually, that's about when my job was abolished. Uh, so I just quit.

Okay. Well,

MAGNUSSEN'S Daughter: When the computers, yeah.

MAGNUSSEN: Ah, yeah.

MEYER: The computer's taking over everything.

MAGNUSSEN: Yeah.

MEYER: And your final rank was? T five?

MAGNUSSEN: Uh, no. Sergeant, .. uh, staff... Staff Sergeant. Yeah.

MEYER: Staff sergeant.

MAGNUSSEN: I started out as a T five, uh, uh, T five

MEYER: .. as T five...

MAGNUSSEN: , but as head of, uh, communications, uh, uh, was then the staff sergeant. Okay. When they retired. When they retired or when I discharged.

MEYER: Well, I'm glad you stopped by.

I am glad you now, anytime you see me, I'll have this or I'll have something else set up. So always feel free just to tap me on his shoulder. Okay? Okay. Who,

Mrs. MAGNUSSEN: I'm that girl from Connecticut.

MEYER: Oh, so you're the one from Connecticut.

MAGNUSSEN Daughter: He told the whole story about you.

MEYER: Okay. Goodbye. Okay. Okay. Goodbye. There you go. Connecticut Reserve. Well, thanks a lot.

MAGNUSSEN: You bet. I, I, I was thinking of that incident. It was also kind of funny at the time. My rifle lived there. He says, I'm here. I wanted to tell you that just,

MEYER: well, I'm so glad you did. Okay, thank you.

....

MEYER: What's your address?

MAGNUSSEN: 322 D street D like in Dog D street. Central City Nebraska.. 68826

MEYER: What's your phone number

MAGNUSSEN: 308-946-3060

End of Interview 16 minutes 14 seconds.