

## **George Roudebush audio log**

Narrator: George Roudebush

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

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Transcriber: Carol Slezak

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Log compiled by: Teresa Bergen, May 2024

### **Track 1**

- 00:00 Meyer introduces interview, which took place at a reunion of the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Roanoke, Virginia
- 00:48 introduction repeated. Roudebush was in 378<sup>th</sup>, Company F
- 01:12 Roudebush born May 1, 1925 in Cleveland, making him 91 at time of interview; grew up in Cleveland
- 1:23 final rank was a buck sergeant. No medals. "But I don't care about the medals; but everybody's always asking, where are your medals?...I think we all needed medals for being there."
- 2:34 tells story about shooting front gate at Fort de Saint-Julien, outside of Metz, capturing German soldiers hiding in basement
- 5 :20 found a tin can full of German money
- 06:07 about 130 German prisoners found; Roudebush took a white horse and rode into the town of Metz; realized he might be mistaken for Patton
- 07:39 found a German motorpool, took a black Cadillac joyriding around Metz
- 09:47 getting shot at by Germans while crossing the Moselle River on a pontoon bridge; "Well we made so much noise all the time. They knew right where we were."
- 11:18 finding a church in Metz full of coffins packed with weapons
- 12:33 later learned that police at home in Cleveland were buying guns door-to-door; these guns were sent to parachute them into France, where they wound up in German hands
- 13:07 Roudebush's father was an infantry captain in Europe during World War I
- 13:25 father tried to connect him with a desk job, but Roudebush said he'd take his chances on going into action

- 14:05 war is hard on the body; “We never slept all night. Never. In the whole war, never slept all night long.”; description of sleeping conditions
- 16:05 footwear and foot problems
- 16:53 staying in houses and barns in the Alsace-Lorraine area
- 17:33 dealing with cold temperatures at Battle of the Bulge
- 18:17 took over houses rather than sleeping in foxholes
- 18:46 getting shot at while staying in Saarlautern, near the Siegfried Line; basements were the safest place to stay
- 21:10 as a machine gun sergeant, Roudebush set up his machine gun pointing out of a basement window in Saarlautern
- 22:01 didn’t have much interaction with commanding officers
- 22:37 dodging a hand grenade; fellow soldier injured in back and lip
- 23:36 tolerated the food
- 23:53 writing and receiving letters from home; censors cut out chunks with a razor
- 24:51 attacked by German soldiers staying in house next door, Roudebush lobbed a grenade at them
- 27:09 hospital stay after getting shrapnel in thigh from blowing up a window
- 27:48 rejoined the 95<sup>th</sup> near Hamm
- 28:25 description of getting to Battle of the Bulge; “And we got there, and it was just like another football stadium out in the Ardennes Forest. I mean, 90,000 people standing around in the woods, all shoulder to shoulder. Well, now what?”
- 29:25 huge number of prisoners taken at Battle of the Bulge, many more escaped
- 30:17 opinion of German soldiers—got along with them better than with the English, who took too much teatime and had poor fighting strategies
- 32:42 break in recording, start of new session, reintroduction
- 33:39 availability, sizing and condition of footwear in military

- 35:00 inadequate outerwear—one jacket too light, wool overcoat weighed 25 pounds when wet
- 35:35 troops didn't carry everything with them; occasional access to a duffel bag so they could change clothes
- 36:28 Roudebush had only one shirt, but carried an extra pair of socks so he could change them
- 36:57 surprising inadequacy of gear: "Now if I had known this I'd have gone to Dick's Sporting Goods, gone into war and bought a decent pair of boots."
- 38:00 as weather got colder in winter, they stopped digging foxholes and took over houses
- 38:50 veterans didn't used to talk about the war: "I had a roommate at Denison for four years, and I never knew until his funeral that he was in the same thing we were, in the next division to us, going through France. Never spoke a word."
- 39:26 now people share at reunions
- 39:52 remembers funny things about military, blocked out disasters
- 40:40 fighting house to house in Saarlauten, moving between holes blasted through basements
- 41:46 definitions of word "sapper"
- 42:00 picking up a 20-pound explosive device
- 43:30 tells a story about avoiding German machine gun fire while walking down a street in Metz
- 44:55 at night, both sides would run down the street; they didn't shoot at each other because they couldn't tell who was who
- 45:40 while spending a week in a house in Saarlautern, waiting for a gasoline delivery, an incident where he threw a grenade out the windows at some attacking Germans; his sergeant reprimanded Roudebush for his action
- 49:55 went to the hospital a couple of weeks later with shrapnel in his thigh, which prevented further altercations with his sergeant
- 50:55 regretted reporting his shrapnel: "Boom, out comes a knife, and the anesthetics, and I was diced to pieces looking for this stuff."

- 51:41 incident in Saarlautern where Germans threw a grenade and one of Roudebush's platoon members was injured in the back and the lip; "And there was a little spurt out of his artery in his back...And just like the Dutch boy in the dike, we all took turns putting our dirty fingers over this and stop the bleeding."
- 55:18 setting off a bomb against a house where German soldiers were staying
- 56:44 "There were close calls every day. All around. I mean, bullets go through your clothes and inside of your arm, between your arm, and your body. All the time."; examples of close calls
- 57:49 Roudebush was sergeant of a machine gun squad; description of squad and machine gun operation
- 59:50 traveling with the heavy the machine gun and ammunition; when he tried to pick up the same type of machine gun ten years ago, he couldn't lift it
- 1:01:14 a soldier from Texas got drunk at a French party and started shooting with his .45
- 1:02:29 capturing French villages where only a couple of German soldiers were left behind; "They'd shoot the devil out of us, and then surrender, was their usual pattern."
- 1:03:23 they never shot soldiers who were surrendering. "I never saw any atrocity that way at all."
- 1:03:41 Meyer tells a story he heard about Americans killing Germans who surrendered
- 1:04:40 altercation with a youth squad, picking up guns and a German uniform as souvenirs
- 1:06:13 always cold—describes holding onto coffee cup for warmth, their warmest clothing, inadequate boots; foot problems: "You'd get a purple foot."
- 1:08:30 supply line was close, so it was easy to get replacement gear
- 1:08:45 had enough food, traded cigarettes for extra because he wasn't a smoker
- 1:08:59 Grosinske talks about the problems of including cigarettes in rations—addiction, enemy smelling the smoke
- 1:09:41 Roudebush's wife was a smoker and he's developed lung disease from secondhand smoke; "I'm still keeping my 100-yard dash at 33 seconds, which puts me about tenth place in the world at 90-year-olds."

- 1:10:30 they discuss where he'll practice his running during the reunion
- 1:10:53 optimal wind conditions for 100-yard dash
- 1:11:21 ran cross-country in high school, was in excellent shape during training at Fort Benning in 1943
- 1:12:28 attending a big band performance while at Fort Hayes in Columbus; describes how he would sneak out on weekends without getting caught; jogging back to base in GI boots
- 1:14:17 born in Cleveland, grew up in Shaker Heights
- 1:14:44 his family was spending the week in their log cabin when they learned about the Pearl Harbor attack
- 1:15:37 he was born May 1, 1925, so was 16 years old when Pearl Harbor was attacked
- 1:16:03 seldom found wine or liquor when going from house to house, but often found canned cherries hidden in coal piles
- 1:17:28 in Germany, they hardly saw any people, except for young girls who would sometimes venture out
- 1:18:45 finding a huge keg of beer in a German basement
- 1:19:28 thinks he saw General Patton's car at Saarlautern
- 1:20:15 Meyer's father once saw Patton from a distance
- 1:20:41 mail censorship
- 1:21:12 tells a story about capturing 130 German soldiers and 30 horses hiding in a building at the Maginot Line; Roudebush rode a white horse bareback into Metz
- 1:25:00 dismounted when he realized he could be mistaken for Patton
- 1:25:29 draft horses were still widely used in Germany, despite advances in mechanization
- 1:26:05 taking a Cadillac from the German motor pool, driving it around Metz
- 1:28:09 finding a huge stash of pistols hidden inside coffins in a church; taking guns and other wartime souvenirs home with him in duffel bags

- 1:31:54 souvenirs he collected, including a pistol hanging from a German prisoner's neck; his father collected souvenirs during World War One
- 1:33:10 a gun connoisseur told them his collection is valuable
- 1:33:25 isn't sure what to do with his collection because his daughters and grandsons are anti-gun
- 1:33:57 found an old roster of a World War I Ohio regiment among his father's things
- 1:35:10 great uncle's US Civil War involvement
- 1:35:35 doesn't know what to do with the old Ohio regiment roster
- 1:36:20 important not to repair antiques because that reduces their value
- 1:37:13 his father offered to contact a friend who was a general and keep Roudebush out of the infantry, but he said he'd take his chances
- 1:37:59 he was turned down when he volunteered for the navy because of his vision, so he waited and got assigned to the army
- 1:38:38 attended Carnegie Mellon for a few months before being sent by the army to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania for maneuvers; assigned to 95<sup>th</sup>
- 1:40:07 during training in Pennsylvania, everybody else got poisoned by ham sandwiches
- 1:41:51 older veterans vs. new recruits from college
- 1:43:00 sent to Camp Hayes, training at Fort Benning, accepted into ASTP
- 1:44:13 took summer courses at Denison College
- 1:45:25 later complications of shrapnel
- 1:46:04 burst appendix
- 1:46:46 was on USS Mariposa to and from war; "I was seasick. I couldn't eat for a week. It was cloudy, about 25-foot waves, the wind was blowing like hell, and nobody was in the galley. Six thousand troops, and they're all laying on the deck."
- 1:47:45 at Southampton, England, blimps holding wire screens kept Germans from strafing underneath
- 1:48:23 a British guy cursed them and told them to go home: "And boy oh boy, wasn't that the best advice we would ever get?"

- 1:49:03 spent a month in England; watching 1,000 American planes per day leaving for raids on Germany
- 1:50:32 description of a buzz bomb
- 1:51:54 his uncle arranged for and escorted him on leave to London; sightseeing
- 1:52:35 his uncle took him on a similar leave to see Paris
- 1:53:30 theft among soldiers; a soldier who fired Roudebush's .45 in a crowded room while Roudebush was in the bathroom
- 1:54:49 met a German captain who said he thought Americans and Germans should be allies, that it's the Russians they should worry about
- 1:55:43 later meeting a German businessman while cross-county skiing at Lake Placid; ski waxing strategy, ski racing
- 1:57:37 liberating a Russian prison camp; later read stories that Stalin murdered these kind of people: "They thought they had too much exposure to freedom."
- 1:59:45 Roudebush was born in Cleveland, joined in Terminal Tower in September 1943. Got out of army in October 1945
- 2:00:16 was at Camp Shelby, preparing to go to Japan, when heard about the atomic bomb
- 2:01:27 nothing for the soldiers to do: "So we played baseball every day. No discipline, no marching."
- 2:02:13 all the soldiers were unsettled, waiting to see if they'd be discharged or what would happen next
- 2:04:39 Roudebush's final rank was buck sergeant in Company F of the 378<sup>th</sup>
- 2:04:46 recording ends