VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT
Veteran's Name: George Roudebush
Meyer: David Meyer (O'Shea)
Co-Interviewer: Kay Grosinske
Date of Interview: September 30, 2016 (Roanoke, Virginia)
Transcriber: Carol Slezak
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(Beginning note: This recording is in three parts: a short introduction made years after the initial interviews to explain that there are two interviews following; a two-person interview with Mr. Roudebush and Mr. Meyer recorded in the morning of 09/30/2016, which was stopped for a business meeting and resumed later that afternoon with the participation of Ms. Grosinske.)

(Part 1)

David Meyer: The following two-part interview was held September 30, 2016 with Sergeant George Roudebush, Company F, 378th Infantry Regiment, of the 95th Infantry Division. This interview was held at the 67th reunion of the 95th Infantry Division in Roanoke, Virginia. I'm David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division. My co-interviewer is Kay Grosinske, whose late father served in Company C, 378th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division.

(Part 2)

Meyer: This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th, 95th Infantry. Today is September 30th, 2016. And I'm talking a little more to Mr. Roudebush, would you say your name?

George Roudebush: George Roudebush. Three seventy-eighth [378th], Company F.

Meyer: What's your birth date?

Roudebush: I'm 5/1/25.

Meyer: 5/1/25

Roudebush: And I'm 91.

Meyer: Where were you born?

Roudebush: Born in Cleveland.

Meyer: Did you grow up in Cleveland?

Roudebush: Grew up in Cleveland.

Meyer: And what was your final rank?

Roudebush: I was buck sergeant.

Meyer: Buck sergeant.

Roudebush: Stayed put [laughs].

Meyer: Did you have any medals?

Roudebush: No, no medals. I'm griping about that lately, because I don't think our company gave many medals. But I don't care about the medals; but everybody's always asking, where are your medals?

Meyer: No!

Roudebush: Really. My daughters were asking me, "Well, did you get any medals?" [laughs] So, I never thought about the medals. I think we all needed medals for being there [laughs]. But anyway.

Meyer: I think you should.

Roudebush: But anyway.

Meyer: Anyway, I'm going to grab my drink right over there and then sit down for a second. ?: You're going to tell your story here.

Roudebush: Uh oh. Almost ready.

Meyer: We've started a little bit. Sit down.

Roudebush: Yeah, we've had a lot of sessions.

Meyer: A lot of sessions. So what did you think of to tell me tonight? I mean, what story right now comes to mind?

Roudebush: I started with a story and I believe that Joe [Joe Januszkiewicz] said that it was Fort Julius or Julian?

Meyer: Julien [Fort de Saint-Julien, Metz].

Roudebush: That the troops came out and I had to shoot the front gate down. The Germans were in the basement, waiting to surrender.

Meyer: What did you shoot it down with?

Roudebush: There was a gate about as big as a piece of the wall here. Eight feet tall, about 15 feet wide. And it was fastened on the stonework of an eight-foot-high brick enclosure. And instead of a big steel pillbox this one was an administration building, probably, or something. And it was about a three-story building.

Meyer: Was that in Metz?

Roudebush: There were blank black windows. We were wondering when they were going to come out and start shooting at us. But we were there so long. I came right out of the woods. And here are a bunch of GIs setting up their artillery. And they had a – I must have told you this story, but anyway here we go – a 75 millimeter anti-tank gun was set up. It was put in holes in the steel thing. A 90 millimeter came up and did the same thing. The balls were rolling right through with the steel penetrating thing. And I'm telling the truth, they said this is a 155 field artillery piece, and they're shooting about from here to the front door. I don't know why we didn't all get blasted. But it took just a couple, three shells, and they hit the stonework. And they just took pieces of the stone went right out of it. And so all of a sudden the gauges went pop.

Meyer: So they broke the stones around the gate?

Roudebush: Broke the stones like a fireman. You know, firemen chop the block down; they don't chop the door down. [laughs]

Meyer: Wow. Sure, sure. So then what did you do?

Roudebush: Well, then we went in. I was assigned to go to the second floor. And I never did see any prisoners. But it turned out there were 130 prisoners, all sitting down, probably playing cards in the basement, waiting for us to come in. They didn't want to stick their head out, so they stayed down in the fort.

Joe has a story in the book about this whole episode, told by the German colonel who had heard rumors and reports from everybody. But I was there looking at this thing, with about 20 guys. We were told there was a [unclear] coming out of the woods. This was our assigned territory. And these guys were already there. You have to be careful who you're going to shoot at. [laughs]

And so I found a tin can full of some marks. I think I remember hundreds. A hundred marks. I don't know what that amounted to and now I've forgotten whether that's fifty dollars or a hundred dollars. But anyway, I saved those, and I pocketed them. I went downtown, and I showed this – it was sitting in a can on an empty bunk, no blankets, no nothing, it was just sitting there. And so I went down and tried to buy a loaf of bread in town later, and they saw this wad of bills and they thought, boy, the World War I inflation is on. They said, "I'm not going to give you a loaf of bread for that stuff." [laughs]

Meyer: Really?

Roudebush: I don't know, German money. But then, okay. And so then the troops poured in from different places. And I saw German prisoners but I didn't take a head count. They said there's 130 in this report. But anyway, I went to the barn. It was in a stable in the same building, really. Wasn't a barn, I singled out a white horse where I have to get going down the road to Metz. I got a white horse, and found a bridle, and got on the horse, and I rode 10 or 15 miles all the way to town. [laughs]

Meyer: So this was out of town?

Roudebush: Well, from this fort they were way up in the hills, outside of Metz. And then we went right down the road to Metz.

Meyer: You went down the road riding a white horse?

Roudebush: Riding a white horse.

Meyer: You said before that you got rid of the white horse because you thought--

Roudebush: Well then I got down to the raid, yes. We heard firing and weapons going on, and the buildings were only three or four hundred yards away. I thought, hey, hey, this isn't so good. They're going to think I'm Patton [laughs].

Voice 1: That's what I was thinking when he said that. That's sounds like Patton on the way. [laughs]

Roudebush: I guess all the way down was dangerous. But I'm 18, I don't give a darn. [laughs] Twenty-five, I'd have given it a second thought maybe. [laughs] But then I took the bridle off, set the horse out in the grass field.

So then, I don't think I told these other stories. I got downtown. It wasn't very long thereafter that we stumbled into the motor pool. In a German motor pool.

Meyer: You did?

Roudebush: Yeah, it was full of sidecars, everything. Okay, again, I'm 18, right, we've established that. I get in, turn the key, and the Cadillac started right up. The Cadillac was made in Belgium, it said on the door.

Meyer: Yeah. And what color was it?

Roudebush: Black. And so three or four guys pile in there and we drove all over town. I'm telling you, we drove that damn thing. It had a, push a button, and a glass would go up behind the driver. And it was plush. Now, I don't remember if it had tinted glass or not, but again why didn't we get shot at? [laughs] So we went so far, I don't think I was seeing crazy – I saw

diamonds on the soldiers ahead of us which means it's the 5th Division. We're completely out of our territory. We'd better turn around. We're out of bounds [laughs].

Meyer: No!

Roudebush: We were running over cement blocks everywhere with this thing. So we took it back. Somebody, I didn't do that, but somebody took the keys to the captain. Next thing I saw as we were going on to the campaign, out of town now, they were carrying big buckets of porridge slopping all over the back seat. Blob. Blob. [laughs]

Then we came to an area where the pontoon bridge wouldn't take the thing. Now we're going across with jeeps. I don't think the tanks were going across this pontoon bridge. But I don't know why, but they left the Cadillac sitting on the beach. They probably figured they'd had enough out of it. [laughs]

Meyer: Did you cross the Moselle on rafts? How did you get across?

Roudebush: It was a pontoon bridge, finally. We tried once, and Moselle was probably, as I remember, from that door to this wall. It was very small. And at night we were loading boats to get across the river. First our barracks bags were coming in, and our overcoats and sleeping bags. I don't remember ever using them. We never saw sleeping bags; that's what they said these were. We loaded about three boats, and I'm telling you, as far away as the front door, the Germans were sitting there on the other side of the river watching this show. And about the third or fourth boat, they started shooting, spraying the whole bank. Boy, it didn't take more than five seconds, everybody was gone. The boats with all our overcoats, with the long, big, wool coat we never used anyway, they all went down the river. We left, about four boats were floating away, the rest of them on the shore. And they just skipped all over, the bullets, but nobody was hurt.

Meyer: But they were smart because they got rid of all your supplies.

Roudebush: Well we made so much noise all the time. They knew right where we were. Surprising thing is they waited in the night. We never had much night action like that. Usually they'd disappear at night and set up somewhere where they were ready for us the next day where we were.

Meyer: So you finally got across on a pontoon bridge.

Roudebush: Yeah but before we left Metz there was one other little thing that happened. I was walking down the street trying to find where our base was. But anyway, our squad was staying. But I see these guys with about 15 revolvers in their belt. And so we follow this line of guys, and ended up in a church. And this small church had no pews in it, and it was full of coffin boxes. Much higher than a full-sized church. Twelve feet in the air, full of coffin boxes. I mean, one end to the other.

And they somehow pried the lids off of some of these. God knows where they found tools for that. And here we were, they got candles all over the building. And everybody was poring over these boxes, pulling out revolvers. I saw one, looked like a machine pistol. It was in

a wooden case. And the wooden case came off and made a stock. And it looked like the Luger setup. Boy, I thought, oh that thing weighs a ton.

So I picked up all kinds of oddballs. I had Smith & Wessons, and everything else. And I gave most of those away. I kept three or four or something.

But, I heard later that in our home community in Cleveland, the police departments were knocking on doors while the guys were working, and they'd get the women to say, we'll give you 35 dollars if you'll give us his gun. And they picked up guns like that all over, and volunteers were parachuting them off to the French. [laughs] Right into the German Army's hands, the parachute comes down with all these guns in it. And so they figured they'd never get into Metz. So they stored them there.

My dad was in Europe, was an infantry captain for the I Regiment.

Meyer: In World War I?

Roudebush: In World War I. And he never got into Metz.

Meyer: Did your dad give you any, when he knew you were joining, did he give you any advice or say anything?

Roudebush: No advice, except he said he knew a general in Washington where I might be able to get a desk job. I said, Oh, gee dad, doesn't sound so good. So I'll just take my chances. So I turned down, I turned down that. When I'm 18 I turned down that thing. At 25, you'd jump at it to go. [laughter]

Meyer: Somebody said, I shared it at the table, but I don't think I got your answer. My cousin said ask, I said do you have a question? He said yeah ask him would you do it again?

Roudebush: Well, I don't know at what points you'd certainly say no. But my answer usually to that all the time is gee, it's too bad we can't tell you how to do it in Afghanistan or Desert Storm or certainly not Vietnam, we wouldn't say anything about that, Vietnam. But we know how to do a war, but I don't think the body would hold up. All that punishment we took, sleeping out. We just slept like dogs. My dogs sleep way better than we did. I mean, 15 minutes, a half an hour, and you're up. Every hour we're changing guard. We never slept all night. Never. In the whole war, never slept all night long.

Meyer: Would you use something as a pillow?

Roudebush: We were 18, we didn't need pillows. We just – your pack, you had a pack and you'd take your shirt out, we'd take the clothing out [and use that as a pillow]. We never took our shoes off.

Meyer: Did you have a blanket to stay warm?

Roudebush: Well, when we were in the foxholes it was fall, and we had our, probably we decided earlier that we probably had our sweater, and our wool, and our thin wool shirt. But I'm

telling you, that's all. Not two sweaters, or two shirts. And then we had that terrible cotton jacket, [unclear] jacket that we wore, which was not waterproof, or anything else. And it was thin, it was not insulated. A terrible, terrible thing. And goodness, if we'd gone into Dick's and picked up our ski parka, it would have been – of course you'd get killed for that. [laughs] Your buddy would shoot you for that. [laughter] So that was another way.

And then the shoes were one single leather boot. Which was really what we should have stayed with the rest of the war. Because when we got into rubber boots, the Bean boot type thing in the middle of winter, trench foot just started knocking guys down right and left. We had purple spots like an inch by two inches on your feet. I had that in spots. Pay more attention to your feet, change socks more quickly, and it went away for me. But some guys had their toes amputated and every other darn thing. Because your feet just rotted with moisture, closed. You'd never take your shoes off. The leather ones at least we'd dry it out, even though you froze. And you're always moving.

Then after Alsace-Lorraine area, we stayed in houses. And so, there weren't any blankets. I don't know what they did with the stuff, dragged it off, but there was no bedding on any place we ever went except the farmers. But we never bothered them. Even in Germany we stayed in the barn. We didn't kick the farmers out of their house.

Meyer: Were they scared of you when they saw you?

Roudebush: The Germans were hostile, terrible. The French people welcomed us. Oh yeah, the Germans were cold turkey.

Meyer: Oh they were?

Roudebush: Yeah. But I never remembered it being so cold. Now they said it was zero at the Bulge. I don't remember anything like that. I would say it was 20 degrees when we were there. We were only there for a day or —

Meyer: The last day.

Roudebush: Yeah, the last day, a short time, before we went somewhere, Belgium, I guess it was.

Meyer: I think you went to the British for a little bit.

Roudebush: Yeah. But I felt we were 20 degrees – I was chilly all the time, but never frozen like we would be in Alaska. Zero [degree] weather – I can't hardly believe it because – snow, yes, it was five, six inches of snow.

Meyer: Did you ever have to fall asleep in the snow? Or could you put a blanket--

Roudebush: No, no, because at that time of year we always kept on driving until we got into a town and took over the house. We never dug any more foxholes.

Meyer: So sometimes you —?

Roudebush: We never dug any more foxholes, I don't believe, until after we got out of Alsace-Lorraine. Because we were on the offense. We're not defending anything, we're just moving. And we didn't stay long enough to take time to dig a foxhole. So we were in houses, yeah.

Now the other thing we missed in our story – the Siegfried Line. I don't know before we went too far, we were in Saarlautern, up against the Siegfried, the teeth were right behind. They kept possession of a few buildings this side, so they used that for their quarters. So they weren't out in the open either.

But we had a street like this, and there was a turn at the end of the street, and they took over those buildings, and they had a machine gun at the end of the street. And in the daytime, you stepped out on the street and they'd shoot at you. And they shot at me running down the street. I didn't know anything about this, nobody said anything. And I'm telling you I got skinny and I – the thin man. I squeezed myself into a four-inch door frame, just like this. And they couldn't see me from that side, that side of the street where the gun was, I think. And I pounded on the door, "Open the door, open the door!" And finally somebody came and opened the damn door. But I couldn't stand back to get in the alley, where we should have been in the daytime. And I don't know how they did that. Somebody was there ahead of us or what, but the holes were four feet square, two feet off the ground.

Meyer: In the building?

Roudebush: One side of the basement, the other side of the basement. And we were all the way down, and the Germans were in the next house.

Meyer: So you go from house to house through the hole?

Roudebush: Right. Jumped across that alley. Sometimes the Germans were across the street, but that was a little bit of a weak position for them, because they were not [unclear] that way. It was a little bit vulnerable for them.

Meyer: I heard sometimes you could go into a building and you'd be on the ground floor and the Germans might be at the tope, in the same building, at the top.

Roudebush: Well, in the cities, like Dortmund. But not – I don't think that ever happened. But, they'd be in the next building, in a bombed-out building, and be mounted up there on the third floor or something. Shoot at us coming at them. Then they'd get out the back end. So we were pretty well protected in the houses. We'd get in the basement, because the first floor was vulnerable, throwing grenades in, and the basement was the safer place to be.

I was a machine gun sergeant, so I had the machine gun out of a basement window. And I piled all kinds of boxes – oh, it was a rickety thing. But I had the gun off the floor, and the belt was hanging there that I was ready to shoot out the window. And I think his name was Lieutenant Mason (PH), came down and just bawled the devil out of me.

Meyer: Why?

Roudebush: And for the first time I snapped back at him and said, "For God's sake, Lieutenant, send your carpenter up here. We don't have any tools, we don't have anything. What the hell are we going to—" and I said, "You know what? We're talking here like this, making a lot of noise, about five minutes ago two German ankles walked right by this window." [laughs]. I never saw him again.

Meyer: What did you think of your commanding officers?

Roudebush: Well, they stayed a mile behind me. There wasn't anything one way or the other having to do with them. I suppose they were doing their job. There was one lieutenant that got up with us, and he's about the third house back in this long string of houses. And he would bring us in for messages. And it was just crazy. He had blankets over the windows. It was in the room right where we were. And every time we opened the door the whole hall was lit up, and there was no front door.

So we'd go out on the street after one of these meetings, and right across the street I saw the red spark of their hand grenade, about as big as the end of your finger, like a LED light, like a red LED light. And here comes the hand grenade. I was running. Man, I was from here to our bedrooms before it went off. [laughs] One guy hit the ground right next to it. And he was, like I might have mentioned earlier—

Meyer: He was cut.

Roudebush: He was cut in the middle of the back. And they laid him on the table and we put our finger over a little, tiny pinpoint. I mean, it was as small as you could get, but it had pressure. And we all took a turn holding our finger over his back. And he had a torn lip that we didn't know about 'til he came back from the hospital later. He said, "Well that wasn't any problem. My lip was half ripped off and laying on the ground because this hand grenade—(laughs)

Meyer: How'd you like the food?

Roudebush: I never was hungry. We got used to the food. Traded my cigarettes for a couple extra cookies.

Meyer: You didn't smoke.

Roudebush: I didn't smoke. We always could go get more candy.

Meyer: Did you get letters from home? From Cleveland?

Roudebush: Yeah, yeah.

Meyer: Was that a big deal?

Roudebush: It wasn't a big deal for me. Somebody going to the grocery store or something [laughs], no news from home, really.

Meyer: Would you write back?

Roudebush: Oh, I wrote all the time. And my mother saved those letters, and they were razored to death. The letter, the piece of paper, could hardly hang together. The as, the thes, and like I said the proverbs and things were there…

Meyer: The things that didn't give any information

Roudebush: But there were no nouns or anything solid in the whole thing.

Meyer: They cut it out with a razor?

Roudebush: Right. Cut it out with a razor.

Meyer: So it wasn't like they blacked it out with a pen.

Roudebush: No. Cut it out with a razor. Let's see, I had something about that area I was going to tell you about. Oh, I told you about the story I got in trouble with. I never told anybody but you this, earlier, about this particular episode. We had two guys, because they're in the next house, by God we had to stay on the ball. I'm in the front door, on the street. The other guy's the back door. So I heard the Germans talking in the next house. What are they going to do? We don't know. We can't hear what they're saying. They're trying to whisper, but they were making a lot of talk. And sure enough, here comes the hobnailed boots, crunch, crunch, crunch, over the broken glass. And I knew what was coming next. So I ran out of the front row and got in the kitchen, got in the broom closet. Boom! The guy in the back was so dumb he hears something and he comes forward. So he had the – didn't get killed, but he had the blast in his face.

Meyer: So they threw something in.

Roudebush: And so, I went upstairs and I took a hand grenade and I let it flop. All right, this damn thing better be four seconds. And the handle's off now. Okay, one, two. And I slipped it around from the house, leaning out the window, and I heard a couple people, *Oooooh* – groaning. And it went off just as quick as it got there. [laughs]

Meyer: Oh!

Roudebush: So now, I went downstairs and got the old-time sergeants, who had been in the division for two more years than I had. The same age, of course, but West Virginia, Oklahoma guys, and hadn't gotten over the fact that we're the schoolboys. But, I say, "We'd better move back a house, or get a plan here, or do something."

And he just, "Errrrrrrr… it's not my charge, you're on duty, you go." Act like a drunk, really, and said, "I'm sleeping." And then he went and squealed on me to the platoon sergeant. And he just bawled the hell out of me: I'm going to fire you. You're ordering people around. You have no authority. I never ordered anyone around by saying, Hey, let's get together and get

a plan and do something. So I was trying to get him to make a plan. And so he bawled the hell out of me. He was always mad at me.

Fortunately, I got some debris in my thigh, from shrapnel in my thigh, from blowing up a window. And I decided to go to the MASH tent. I limped around for two or three days; I wasn't getting anywhere with that, it was getting worse. And I went to the MASH tent, and there comes the surgeon, and the lovely nurse, and, "I can still hear you, I can still hear you!" They knocked me out and just cut a hole right down to my bones. And so I was really in trouble then. So they sent me to the hospital. So I spent about three weeks getting that hole closed up. And then I came back.

Meyer: You came back to the 95th?

Roudebush: Came back to the 95th, yeah. They were up near Hamm someplace, by that time. That's what time it was, I think.

Meyer: When you came back, where were they?

Roudebush: Hamm.

Meyer: It was in Hamm. So when you left were they on the Siegfried Line, like Saarlautern, and when you came back they were in the Ruhr Pocket?

Roudebush: I think we'd gone on beyond the Siegfried. We were going through Germany, town by town. We were some way after that, yeah. Because I went to the Bulge, and it was after the Bulge, after January.

Meyer: Someone said that going to the Bulge, Patton said, "I'm going to move you guys up in a quick speed." So that you were just, some people went to the Bulge, you didn't march there, you went in trucks.

Roudebush: We marched down to a truck depot. We marched, I don't know, five or ten miles, and we got trucks in the mud, and everything was going slow. It was snowing. And we probably did take a couple days. 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? And the sun came out, and planes came, and the Germans tried to turn around and escape. We didn't get assigned to go pinch them off. We wanted that action. I think we just got back on the trucks and went to Belgium at that point. Somebody else tried to make the pinch. But can you imagine 220,000 prisoners got back out of the Bulge when it's a long way they had to go. And we only got 23,000 prisoners out of that, I read in the paper here.

Meyer: I'm going to ask you more questions tomorrow, but we've been talking a long time—

Roudebush: Yeah, okay.

Meyer: --and we have to get up early. But, do you have a question?

Voice 1: I'm just listening. But okay, that last part, though, you said two hundred and how many?

Roudebush: There was 220,000 troops escaped. I think I read here the laggards had to defend some of the area, and they picked up 20,000 prisoners, I think.

Voice 1: Okay. They got 20,000 but that many escaped.

Roudebush: Okay.

Voice: 1: Wow. All right.

Meyer: What did you think of the Germans?

Roudebush: Well fortunately they were like us, trying to get by and do a war, and pretty square shooters. And, boy, I sure was glad to be fighting Germans and not the Viet Cong. [laughs]

Meyer: Somebody said one time… I once read that some American soldiers felt temperamentally more like the Germans than they did the English. Did you get along with the English, with the British?

Roudebush: No. That guy's right. I probably did get along with the Germans better. [laughs] When we were in Belgium we were supposed to go attack this next apartment building down the road and they said, "It's four o'clock, we're not going anywhere, we're going to have our tea." So we sat around, waiting for these guys. And can you imagine they had about 20 aircraft search lights. They lined them all up. They'd be like sitting out here in the yard, and they're going to point these at an apartment building. And all the windows were blown out, so it was all black. And here we are setting up this searchlight. As well as any Germans there, they're blowing the hell out of us. They must have been five miles away. And they set these search lights up and then at a signal we run up and attack the empty building, and there's nobody there. That was the British war system.

Meyer: [laughs] That was the British war system.

Roudebush: It was incredible. [laughs] And it wasn't five miles away, it was one, two hundred yards probably to this building. We needed about a squad of GIs to go secure the building, and we had 200 men out there waiting for this, setting up these searchlights. [laughs] I can't imagine how long it took to set them up. I don't know. It was a long time, in the dark.

Meyer: And everybody knows, and the Germans know what you're doing so they just get the hell out of there.

Roudebush: Right… sure… It's a wonder the Germans didn't shell the hell out of it. But they're so far back they didn't leave any observers, I guess.

Meyer: Well, I'm going to stop for now.

32:42

Meyer: This is an introduction to an interview held September 30, 2016 with Sergeant George Roudebush, Company F, 378th Infantry, of the 95th Infantry Division. This interview was held at the 67th reunion of the 95th Infantry Division. It was held in Roanoke Virginia. I'm David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th of the 95th Infantry Division. Co-interviewer is Kay Grosinske, whose late father served Company C, 378th Infantry of the 95th Infantry Division.

Roudebush: You mean our socks and our boots?

Grosinske: Yes.

Meyer: Did you have enough?

Roudebush: I never had any trouble with that.

Grosinske: So he was saying his feet were size 12. And they didn't make combat boots in size 12.

Roudebush: I've heard that.

Grosinske: So they took shoes and they sewed on a different top.

Roudebush: You're kidding.

Grosinske: So they would look right, but they weren't.

Roudebush: Sure.

Grosinske: So I'm wondering if it's because of the size of his feet that maybe – maybe socks were – because the standard socks are not for that size feet. So maybe--and part of the reason is, when I went to the Air Force Academy they were not yet making combat boots for women's sizes. So I got men's combat boots. So not when I put that kind of shine on them. Are you kidding? It took way too long to get the shine. But they didn't make women's, you know, the slimmer ones. And so our feet kind of like slopped around in them all the time. So size 12 feet are big, and regular socks would not fit size 12 feet, I don't think.

Roudebush: No. They stop about 11, I think. They say 12, but I find they don't, not too big.

Grosinske: So I wonder if they had to give him different socks and then they were just horrible socks. Because he said they were always falling apart. I can't even imagine having – marching all that – and not having good socks.

Roudebush: That might be the beginning of a story. Then we had cotton jackets, no winter jackets. And the heavy, big, wool overcoat we had was useless. It weighed 25 pounds, practically.

Grosinske: Oh my God

Meyer: What, the wool overcoat weighed 25 pounds?

Grosinske: When it got wet.

Roudebush: Yeah. Nobody ever wore those. They show them in the movies, but I never saw one anyplace.

Grosinske: Were you issued one?

Roudebush: Yeah.

Grosinske: And then did you leave it behind somewhere?

Roudebush: Well they had a barracks bag full of your own personal stuff they kept track of. And they'd bring it up once in a while.

Grosinske: Okay, wait, that's another thing. In my mind, when you guys are marching, or moving for 108 days, so obviously you didn't carry everything. So there was a way that you had– what was, a barracks bag, you called it?

Roudebush: It was a vertical duffel.

Grosinske: It was a duffel, okay.

Roudebush: Well, it was a big…

Grosinske: It was a big duffel.

Roudebush: Yeah, it was a big thing. … It wasn't horizontal.

Grosinske: No, no, I know, I know what it – I got issued one of those when I was a cadet.

Roudebush: And so, every once in a while, every month or something, they'd bring them someplace when you were on reserve, bring all that garbage up, and you could change into that duffel bag. Maybe another shirt or something.

Grosinske: So he was saying that they didn't have a change of clothing for like four or five months over the winter.

Roudebush: Right.

Grosinske: So you never got those bags then?

Roudebush: I never had another shirt. What we did, we'd put our socks of course over our shoulders. We had two pairs of socks.

Grosinske: Okay. To keep them dry?

Roudebush: That would dry them out, then you'd change your socks every night or two.

Grosinske: Okay. And you only had two pair of socks.

Roudebush: Right. Two pair of socks.

Meyer: So it's the winter. You have your socks over your shoulder and you're wearing the big, thick, winter coat?

Roudebush: No, no, no. We never wore those. Never had 'em, never saw 'em, except in reserve.

Meyer: So you had the socks over your shoulders, over your undershirt?

Roudebush: It was a cotton field jacket we all had. And a single layer on the boots. 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.

Meyer: Well, it was so cold – what did you do? Did you just freeze?

Roudebush: Froze.

Grosinske: Froze.

Meyer: So all you had was the cotton jacket?

Roudebush: That's right. We had a wool shirt, we had a poncho. But--

Grosinske: Did you have a pull-over-the-head sweater-type thing, or no?

Roudebush: No. We had a sweater. And the other thing we had, we had a sweater. I can't remember whether we'd wear the sweater in newspaper or not.

Meyer: Somebody said that they took newspaper and stuck it in their shirt to keep warm.

Roudebush: I never did that, but I read about people doing that now. I didn't know about that trick then. [laughs]

Meyer: So back then you never saw anyone do that?

Roudebush: No. That's right. No, that was not in the routine. I definitely would have liked buying a newspaper, too. Now, as we started out, we started out in foxholes, we would, ammunition would be brought up. And that was in the fall, whatever those dates were, late September or early October. As winter came on, we moved to the housing. We didn't stop unless we were in the housing. We didn't dig anymore foxholes.

Grosinske: Okay. So through the winter were you, I mean, you went from town to town. So there were houses a lot of places you where you were, right?

Roudebush: Yeah. We'd go take over a house. There would be empty houses. They didn't have any blankets or bedding – I don't know what they did with them. They took them all into the shelters.

Grosinske: My father didn't talk about World War II. And he passed away 24 years ago.

Roudebush: Well, we never did that until I think the television came on with all these war stories, and movies, and everything. I had a roommate at Denison [University] 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.

Grosinske: You were roommates for four years and you never spoke about it.

Roudebush: We were rooommates for four years.

Grosinske: So everything I learn, it's been from men talking since I've been coming to the reunions.

Roudebush: Yeah, now we've opened up [laughs], he's got us opened up like crazy to tell some of these stories.

Grosinske: I'm not doing it completely altruistically to get you on tape. I want to learn, too. [laughs] That's why I ask so many questions.

Roudebush: Well, okay. My dad told me we should write a book when I got back. But it was blank. There were so many funny things. And I mean, like, nine out of ten things. Little things that would be funny, because the disasters were [inaudible], we blocked them out. But anything it could be. It could be a joke, or [break in recording]

Meyer: So you were talking about the funny stories.

Roudebush: But the funny things that I wish I could remember, I couldn't remember them enough to write a book like he's doing. You could write five books with all the information you know now.

Grosinske: He's got lots of books now. But they're all your books.

Roudebush: But I couldn't remember things enough to sit down and do that. And some of things are coming back now as we get probed. [laughs]

Grosinske: I have to ask a question based on where we just were. So I know that—

Roudebush: Back to the [unclear]

Grosinske: Well, were you in Saarlautern?

Roudebush: Yes.

Grosinske: Okay. So I understand that you fought through the houses. You would blow a hole in the house and go through. So, I've also heard--

Roudebush: In the basement, about a three-foot hole, up the alley. In the middle of the house, in the basement.

Grosinske: In the basement. That I didn't know. I thought it was the first floor. It was the basement.

Roudebush: No, it was the basement. The first floor was elevated a little bit, and so they'd pick a spot, I don't know how, all the houses I saw already had the hole in it at Saarlautern. But it was just above ground level, like a dog house, a dog door, you could step right through.

Grosinske: You'd just go through.

Roudebush: And you'd go all the way down the block, from one side of the basement to the other side of the basement.

Meyer: Mouse-holing.

Roudebush: What?

Meyer: Mouse-holing? They called it, did they blow the hole in with a bazooka, or how did they make the hole?

Roudebush: I never saw any of that. The holes were there in Saarlautern. Somebody else was there, I guess.

Grosinske: The British called the person that does that a "sapper." Does the American military have a word for the guy that does that?

Roudebush: I always heard that sappers were on Omaha Beach and in the Pacific. I never heard that.

Meyer: Yeah, blowing up the mines. Blowing up the mines.

Roudebush: I got one of those one time. I had a 20-pounder and a 40-pounder.

Meyer: A what?

Grosinske: How did you have one of them?

Roudebush: I used to go backwards a little bit down the line and pick up some supplies, if you wanted to. Because we were sitting there. There wasn't anything to do except take turns guarding the door. And so you could go back and pick. So I picked up one time a 20-pounder.

Meyer: A 20-pound shell?

Roudebush: I had a 40- and a 20-pounder. I don't know what they called them. It was dome-shaped, and it was about this big.

Grosinske: Was it a mine or a shell?

Roudebush: No. It was a, it was a blow-up.

Grosinske: It was something that blew up. Okay.

Roudebush: Yeah. They had a name for that. I don't remember that. But anyway, it had a timer on it, and you'd set this up against a building or something, and it would just blow the devil out of it.

Grosinske: So you would blow a hole in the building then.

Roudebush: Well, blew the whole building down.

Grosinske: Oh, okay, well that [unclear]

Meyer: Would they use it against bunkers?

Roudebush: Can use it for the hole. Huh?

Meyer: Would they use it against bunkers? If they came up to a bunker, they'd put it up there?

Grosinske: It wasn't strong enough.

Roudebush: Ah, those are steel, I don't think we'd ever do that with those things. I never saw them, before or after. I only did one. And I was shocked. Knocked half the guy's house down. [laughs]

Meyer: Tell us about that. You did one?

Grosinske: Yeah, I need to hear this story.

Roudebush: Well, I thought — okay, I'm in the last house now. Each house was guarded. The Germans sometimes were on the other side of the street, but where they really were was from here to the corner, in a building, up against the Siegfried Line, the teeth [Dragon's teeth], or right behind them. So they took part of the city, and that was their demarcation line. And so they had the street covered from that. In the daytime you couldn't go down the street.

Grosinske: Right. Which is why you went house to house.

Roudebush: And a machine gun, and by the way, that reminds me. I didn't know that. So I went walking down the street one day and the machine gun opened up on me, and it went all around me. I'm telling you, I got awful thin, awful quick. And I put myself into a locked door, with a four-inch frame, and I was like that.

Grosinske: You were four inches wide.

Roudebush: I was four inches wide. And I knew we were inside someplace. I knocked on the door, "Hey, open the door! Open the door!" I shouted, but they couldn't see me. The Germans stopped shooting. And opened the door, and I couldn't back up to go down the alley, which I knew was safe, but I couldn't move. So finally somebody heard me, they must have been a couple rooms away, came and opened the door. [laughs] I got out of that one.

So then what would happen at night, we would run down the street, and they would run down the street. And we didn't know who was in the street, so nobody shot in the street.

Meyer: Really?

Roudebush: Really.

Meyer: So if you —

Roudebush: You wouldn't dare open up fire in the street.

Meyer: Because you could kill one of your own.

Roudebush: Yeah.

Meyer: And is there any light? Or all the lights—

Roudebush: Oh it was pitch black. If there's light you're in trouble. Shoot at lights [laughs].

Meyer: Was the moon out?

Roudebush: I remember it just pitch black. There wasn't any moon. It must have been mostly cloudy. I don't remember any clear nights. So, all right, I'm in the end house. It's kind of a sticky story, but.

Meyer: No, say it, the stickiness is good. Just for once. So you're in the end house, and?

Roudebush: Well, we were there I think a week or two, waiting for gasoline to be delivered so we could go on to continue the war. So it was in the house. We had one guard at the front door, one guard at the back door. So we had about I think four guys in the building. And so we took shifts. So you'd go in the basement and sleep for one or two hours. We did different things, one or two.

And, okay, one night I was at the front door, on the street side. The other guy was in the back. I heard the Germans in the next house toward the Siegfried Line, which is extending the houses down the street. Okay. I heard the Germans talking over there, two or three voices. And I was flabbergasted. The hobnailed steel boots came walking down the street towards our house on the street. I knew what was coming. And so he threw a grenade in the front window. And somewhere in that time I moved around to the kitchen and got in the broom closet. And it went off and the stupid guy in the back — I remember his face, I don't remember his name. But he heard a noise, he heard the grenade going across the floor. Well, he knew I was upfront, what the heck did he think – why wouldn't I be making some noise?

So he comes up, gets glass in the face, unhurt, but got too close, got air blasted at him. But he was unhurt. And so, I thought, well, I guess we're under attack.

So I went upstairs, and I pulled the pin on the grenade. You have four seconds on our grenades, the American grenades. And I let the pin, the handle, flop, you know? So I'm looking at this thing like this: I got two seconds; one, two. And left handed, I pitched it out the window, and landed it over the teeth. And so the Germans were over there, thought they were going to wait until, I don't know what, but we were all quiet, and move in?

So I landed it on people and I heard some groans — *oooh* — you know, that kind of a thing.

So then I went down and got the other two guys. I remember he was one of the original guys, a sergeant from West Virginia. Sergeant Winston. Winston. But he was the old guard. I'm a newcomer from Carnegie Tech. So we had to be kind of careful, dealing with the old guard people.

Grosinske: Because you were a college kid.

Roudebush: We were all about the same age, of course, but we couldn't boss them around. Well he was equal sergeant ranks, but I said, "Hey, I think we'd better get alert here. Either we're going to move back a house, and maybe get out of the way, or what."

Well, the Germans stopped on that episode from bothering us. And boy did I get bawled by our platoon sergeant, Sergeant Gus, I didn't know what his last name was. I never knew anything like that. And he said, "What the hell do you think you're doing? I'm going to bust you to private." Meaning machine gun sergeant. "I'm going to bust you to private."

I never said a word. Now, should I have argued or defended myself? I've spent the rest of my life wondering about that.

Grosinske: Probably in the moment, maybe not.

Roudebush: Fortunately, I got some shrapnel in my thigh. A couple of weeks later, a week or two later, I didn't have to deal with that. I went to the hospital. I was hobbling around.

Meyer: What do you mean you wondered the rest of your life? That you didn't speak back to him?

Roudebush: Well it was one of the episodes where I wondered what were the other options to deal with the sergeant, our sergeant. Should I have answered him and said, "Hey there's another side to the story." I just let it go. He was mad at me forever then.

Meyer: But he didn't bust you.

Roudebush: He didn't bust me. He might have, but fortunately I got injured with some shrapnel in the thigh with the window busting open, I got a few pebbles in my thigh. And I was limping from that. Just hobbling. It wasn't extremely painful after a few, three hours, but it was interfering with the quad muscles. And so I thought, well, I'll go to the MASH tent and take a look at this.

Well that was probably a mistake, because I went over there and they said, "Where is this stuff?" And boom, out comes a knife, and the anesthetics, and I was diced to pieces. Looking for this stuff. Diced to pieces looking for this stuff.

So, I was in the hospital about three or four weeks. And this was getting toward the end of the war at this point, I think. But I got assigned to go back. So I showed up just about a week to go, and like Paul Madden said, same thing. He showed up the week of the end of the war [laughs].

There was one other episode happened in this kind of a thing. We had a lieutenant I don't think was too bright. But he was being brave, and coming right up two houses from the end of the line, right in the middle of us. The only platoon leader, officer, we had that was, whole war, anywhere near the front line.

Grosinske: Really?

Roudebush: Right. The movies showed, like the Confederate, Civil War that is, leaders being out in front. There wasn't any of that [laughs]

Grosinske: I never heard that before. That's very interesting.

Roudebush: But, all right. We had blankets over the windows, stupid idea. He's sitting in the house, and people would run in and get messages, and go do this, go there, go get some more ammunition. Go, anything. Go for. We were all gophers. And so, all right, the four of us were there. We all went out in the street. To go back to where this house is. Me forward, everybody else back.

Grosinske: What town were you in?

Roudebush: It must have been Saarlautern. Right up against the Siegfried? It must have been Saarlautern.

Grosinske: And the first story, you were in Saarlautern also?

Roudebush: Same place. Same house.

Grosinske: Okay. Same house. Okay.

Roudebush: But it went back to the lieutenant thing. Well, guess what? The front door was off, there was a hallway. Every time you opened the door, all these candles. Europe has an unlimited supply of candles. We always, I don't know where we found matches, but we always found candles. And the place is lit up like a firehouse. And we stepped through the hall, went out in the street. As soon as we got out on the street — the Germans have temporarily moved into the house across the street — I see a, fortunately, coming out of a window right across the street, I see a red flare. Just about as big as the end of your finger. Kind of like a LED light. And here comes the grenade. So, I shouted out, "Grenades." Three of the four of us — we did so much training, hit the ground — one guy hit the ground. Three of us, oh boy, we were 40 yards away when it went off [laughs]. It had terrible timing, it must have been six seconds, you know. [laughs] And he got a little pin prick in his back. His name was Sergeant Semerof (PH). And we put him on the table, took his shirt off, and there was a little spurt out of his artery in his back. And it would be about this high. And just like the Dutch boy in the dike, we all took turns putting our dirty fingers over this and stop the bleeding. You take your finger off and it would just keep squirting. And so he got evacuated. He walked out of there right way before he did any bleeding. Fortunately it was as small as possible pin prick you could get.

Meyer: Holy cow.

Roudebush: But what I didn't know, it tore his lip. I never noticed that in the dark. It badly ripped his lip. He told me afterwards. He got sent back. He came back.

Grosinske: Oh, he had, okay. To fight again.

Roudebush: So he survived that episode. So those were a couple little stories. When I set this thing off, I thought, well, the Germans are living in the last house, why not blow a piece of it down? [laughs] So I went and got this great big bomb. It had a name for it, but.

Meyer: Where'd you put it in the house?

Roudebush: I put it in the alley up against the house in one corner. A blockhouse. Up so far. And it just tore the corner of the house off [unclear] Germany.

Meyer: Did the house fall?

Roudebush: No, it just took the back corner down. [unclear] Blew the second floor off, and made a vertical hole right up through the roof. [laughs]

Grosinske: Were they still able to use the house then, or did that stop them?

Roudebush: Oh [unclear] we didn't do that in France. But in Germany, so what?

Grosinske: No, I mean the German soldiers. Were they still able to use the house, or did they have to leave? That's what I meant.

Roudebush: No, there was a lot of house left. So it wasn't big enough to blow the house down. Nice to have, we had a little room. But on the other hand, it was probably a good thing. We needed a little bulkhead between that machine gun that was at the end of the street. [laughs]

Meyer: Sure. Did you feel like you were—with everything going on, was there ever any closer call than the ones you're talking about?

Roudebush: Oh, 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.

Meyer: So that wasn't uncommon?

Roudebush: No. I had it go by my ear several times. I tell you what. I'm 18 years old. A guy says, "I'd like to put the bazooka shell in a house across the street." I said, "Well, I'll do that." And I went out in the yard, and I'm fiddling around, how's this thing work – zing! – bullet went right by my ears. [laughs]

Grosinske: Shot by an American?

Roudebush: No, by a German shell, shot right by my ears. So I pull the trigger, guess what? I hit the foundation block on the second floor. Didn't go in the window, it went in a piece of solid stone. Didn't do anything. [laughs] I almost got myself killed firing a bazooka. So that was one of those things.

Meyer: What was your usual, were you a rifleman? Or you were sergeant.

Roudebush: I was a sergeant of a machine gun squad. North platoon. Which means, I think we had two machine gun squads and two mortar squads.

Grosinske: And how many were in the squad?

Roudebush: Forty.

Grosinske: Forty? Four zero?

Roudebush: Yeah.

Grosinske: And how many machine guns would you have then?

Roudebush: Well, we had two 30-caliber machine guns. Five on a team. So, we only had 20. Because there's five and five, five and five. And the extra guys carried ammunition. In other words, one mortar guy, and another gunner, or whatever they call themselves. And then we had – it took about three guys to fire our machine gun. It was a terrible time.

Grosinske: Why is that?

Roudebush: Well, we had a fabric belt, and 250 in the box. And you had a tripod, this thing dropped in front of it. All right, now the box sat on the side and you keyed the shells into the machine gun. And if it was off a quarter of an inch, kind of like this, the shells going in this way. But one stuck out, and they'd loosen this cotton cloth belt. They'd hit, and stop. So you'd have to push that back in so it would go through. You'd pull the bolt back and feed that in, and it was automatic after that.

But what a terrible weapon. I don't know what it weighed, but I'll bet you it weighed 100 pounds. The top part probably weighed 30-40 pounds, we had to carry. And the base weighed probably a little less, 15 pounds. The rest of us, I was, being sergeant, carried the ammunition. And if you had a 10-15-mile walk, you'd throw that big box in a bomb hole.

Grosinske: Would you, seriously?

Roudebush: All the time.

Grosinske: A full one? I mean you just--

Roudebush: Oh yeah, for the whole walk, sure.

Meyer: Because someone else would come?

Roudebush: If you had too long a hike, yeah. As long as we had an extra box of ammunition we didn't need six boxes. So then at night you'd go back half a mile to the supply line being brought up, and pick up another box. If we were only a few hundred yards and tacking city to city, we wouldn't do that. But if we got a long haul, 10 to 15 miles.

Grosinske: So how many men did it take to carry the big machine gun itself then, two or three?

Meyer: We had one big Texan carry the gun.

Grosinske: A Texan.

Roudebush: And another guy carried the base. I never did carry that darn thing. I picked one up, the American Legion had one, and I could hardly lift the thing. I was astounded, the weight. That was 10 years ago. So 20, 30 years after the war I couldn't lift it anymore.

Grosinske: How did he carry it, then?

Roudebush: He just carried it right over his shoulder.

Grosinske: Over his shoulder, so it wasn't like a backpack or anything?

Roudebush: It had no straps.

Grosinske: Oh my God, no straps.

Roudebush: No straps. And they didn't gripe at all. They just went and did it.

And that reminds me the next story. This Texan, we came upon a bar that was a party. We heard the music. And we're going 10 yards apart coming out of these woods. We come up on a hill into a little village.

Grosinkse: Where?

Roudebush: In France.

Grosinske: In France. Okay.

Roudebush: This is France. And so we join the bar party. Nobody could talk to the Frenchmen, but there's a lot of music, and a lot of activity. And they were giving us drinks. We were drinking too much. And after the Texan got a snootful, he pulls out his .45 and starts shooting through the ceilings. Well, there are apartments above, like we would have. And who knows what baby's in the crib? So they all jumped on him. So I left the bar with three .45s tucked in my belt. [laughs] These people were getting out of hand.

Grosinske: So if the French were able to celebrate in a bar, the Germans were gone then at that time?

Roudebush: Yeah, most of them. Well, soon as we came up, the Germans got out of the way. We didn't have to defend that, that particular bar wasn't--

Meyer: You mean in France.

Roudebush: Yeah. Usually all day long. I remember we took 10 villages in one day. Because from here to the corner might be a grain field, maybe half a mile apart. They're not like we are.

Grosinske: Right. They're quite close together.

Roudebush: They're three miles, four miles, five miles apart. And we went to 10 villages. So what the Germans did, they left a machine gunner and a mortar man in each village. And you had to confront them. And once they were gone, and the German army was gone.

Grosinske: So they left, essentially, two men behind in a suicide—

Roudebush: Right. Exactly. Exactly.

Grosinske: Because they'd be killed. Wow.

Roudebush: Either that or they'd surrender at the last minute. They'd shoot the devil out of us, and then surrender, was their usual pattern. I never saw anybody do anything but shooting the guy that was surrendering.

Meyer: So everybody always shot whoever surrendered.

Grosinske: No, never shot. Never shot.

Roudebush: Never shot.

Grosinske: The American way, you know?

Roudebush: I never saw any atrocity that way at all.

Meyer: First story I ever heard was about Company G, I think of 379th, or 378th, and they were near the end of the war. They come across a wolfpack, just some kids, shooting. They disarm them. The lieutenant says, "The war's over for you, go home." He goes around the corner. One of the kids gets another gun, kills the lieutenant. John Komp told me this story. He said he'd heard that at headquarters they'd have weekly meetings or something. And headquarters said, a few weeks later, "How come everybody else sends back prisoners, but not Company G?" And John Komp said and then they started sending back prisoners. So they went three weeks; everybody who surrendered they killed them.

Roudebush: We had something like that happen. We ran into a youth squad, a unit. Seems to me there were 30 or 40 that come out of the woods. And these kids were in position shooting at us. And so we shot back, and we just shot them to pieces. And then they got up and started running away, and they just kept on shooting. So we shot, and there were high school kids all over the place, maybe a dozen. And they weren't shooting, they were running out. So guess what? I picked up a rifle, a German Mauser. And we got in reserve four days later. I went in the

closet, picked up a German uniform, wrapped it up, and sent it home. And they said, to hell with the gun. They see the gun in the basement, and my mother or whoever was trying to sew the German SS uniform – black it was, I remember – back together. [laughs] She put the uniform together – I'd ripped it up to pieces for practice. [laughs]

Grosinske: And she tried to sew it back together? Not realizing it was even--

Roudebush: Yeah, right. Thought that was a good souvenir. Can you imagine being allowed to send that thing home? We couldn't write letters without having them all diced up, but you could pick up the gun.

Grosinske: It's kind of like Radar in MASH sending a jeep home in pieces.

Roudebush: We didn't finish well enough on the clothes. We were always cold, and once in a while when we were, especially in a line of foxholes or defense, once in a while, well, in that early part of the war where we were in Alsace-Lorraine, we first started, we'd go back and get a hot cup of coffee. And man, I wasn't a coffee drinker, but I'd hold onto the coffee to warm your hands so you were warmed up. And then the coffee, up in our foxhole, we'd always have to bail the water out. Next thing we had to do. [laughs] But, we were always cold. I think we had the sweater, the shirt, and the jacket. And we had the poncho for rainy days that we used. We never hardly used the poncho. And a change of socks. But the boots were single leather. Think how stupid it is. Now we have hunting boots that are efficient and have cold-proof, whatever the word is, weatherproof, zero boots and all that, like the Dunham boots. And then we got issued, took everybody's boots and gave us like a Bean boot, a rubber bottom, leather top. And that was even worse because we got trench foot. If you wore your boots for a week, all that moisture and the cold, you'd get, I don't know, they called it trench foot. I don't know if it was a piece of gangrene or not.

Grosinske: Right, yeah.

Roudebush: You'd get a purple foot.

Meyer: You'd get a purple foot?

Roudebush: Yeah, you'd get little spots that were purple. So you're desperate and you then have to try to do more changing your boots. But if you wore it too long, those guys were a casualty. They had surgery on their feet, taking those purple spots off. So, that was bad, too. They never solved the problem of boots in that war.

Grosinske: If somebody had a problem with their boots or a boot, if it fell apart or got ruined or whatever, how quickly could they get--

Roudebush: Oh, a matter of hours. They'd run back to, it was half a mile to the supply line. They had everything.

Grosinske: Okay, so they had clothing items. Okay.

Roudebush: I never remember being hungry. We never ran out of food. And I always had the two cigarettes so I'd trade those for a cookie or part of the other guy's food, and he'd take the cigarettes.

Grosinske: So my father did not smoke before the war. But he said because of those two cigarettes per rations is why he started. And he smoked until he was like 66, I think.

Roudebush: Oh my God.

Grosinske: So, I'm glad they don't have them in there now. Cigarettes in the rations. But it was interesting that they had two cigarettes in the rations. But we've learned that cigarettes are a very easy tell. You can smell the smoke from quite a ways, actually.

Roudebush: Yeah, boy, especially now. Going into a building I can smell it from here to the corner. And I'm getting lung disease from secondhand smoke. My wife smoked until she was dead. She quit after 25 years, but it was too late when she got leukemia 10 years ago. So somewhere I've gotten lung disease – COPD – this last year.

Meyer: You do?

Roudebush: I'm starting up with some problems. But I take the medicine and I'm still keeping my 100-yard dash at 33 seconds—

Grosinske: Are you serious?

Roudebush: Which puts me about tenth place in the world at 90-year-olds.

Grosinske: Oh my goodness.

Roudebush: I got out of that terrible 85-year-old class, in the nineties.

Grosinske: I think that's the title of your book.

Roudebush: And so I jog a half a mile, and then I run two 100s for training. I've got to find a high school out here and go run a 100-yard dash out here somewhere.

Meyer: We'll find something.

Grosinske: We'll set one up in the parking lot. That could be the title of your book: *Thirty-three Second 100-Yard Dash.*

Meyer: In a Holiday Inn parking lot.

Roudebush: For 90-year-olds, the top guys in the world can run 19, 20 seconds. And downwind. I like to run downwind in a 30-mile-an-hour wind. I had mine timed out a couple years ago. Twenty-seven seconds, which was marvelous. And my heart seems to be good, and my body's in good enough condition, but I'm not sucking enough air.

Meyer: Did you run in the army?

Roudebush: I'll tell you what. At Fort Benning I just came off the cross-country team. And boy I just loved to go out on that obstacle course. And put one step in the wall — and I was always the hurdler in high school —put one step in that wall and I was over that wall lickety slip. And then you grabbed the rope, and coasted across a puddle of water. So, thinking back, I wish we'd had races. Competitions with that, because I would have run those. [laughs] Simply because I was in shape. I'd just – boom – a month before we went to Fort Benning, in fact two weeks before we went, I just had come off the summer track team.

Meyer: And when was that?

Roudebush: That was in '43. Summer of '43.

Grosinske: So you entered how many days after– did you graduate from high school?

Roudebush: I graduated high school. I was of age May first. Graduated in June. Drafted in September. We went two weeks to Fort Hayes in Columbus, and one of the big bands, the clarinetist, that was playing in town, they came over and played a few tunes.

Grosinski: Buddy Herman, maybe?

Meyer: Benny Goodman?

Grosinski: No, Benny Goodman. That's what I meant. Benny Goodman.

Roudebush: No, it wasn't Benny Goodman.

Meyer: Paul Whiteman?

Roudebush: No. One of the big bands. I'll think of it sometime. And I'd just went to summer school at Denison. At Fort Hayes I climbed over the back fence.

Meyer: At Denison?

Roudebush: No, at Fort Hayes, I climbed over the back fence, and went to Denison.

Meyer: At Denison?

Roudebush: No, at Fort Hayes I climbed over the back fence and went to Denison. And I disappeared Friday night 'til Sunday morning. And I'd get out on the highway, and 30 miles away, we ran [inaudible] for Denison. And then we could go, for 25 cents we could sleep in the V-12 Navy bunks. And they had a head count. And so for 25 cents you'd take the [navy guy's bed] for the night.

Grosinske: Oh, wonderful! I've never heard that before – that is such a cool thing to do!

Roudebush: Really?

Grosinske: No. I like hearing about stuff getting away, like getting away with stuff like that. That's so smart!

Roudebush: God knows where they went. [laughs]

Grosinske: You got a place to sleep and they got a chance to get out. It sounds perfect to me.

Roudebush: And so I remember we were in the GI boots. I jogged from Route 40 back to [McGrand?], where I was going to get a ride. And then about halfway, and they said, "Oh, we'll give you a ride." And I said, "No, I'm going to see if I can make these boots jog eight miles. So, that's what happened." [laughs]

Meyer: Woah! You're Columbus, Ohio?

Roudebush: Yeah, from Columbus. So that went on for two weeks.

Grosinske: Where did you?

Roudebush: Oh, somebody will be able to think of it.

Meyer: Where were you born?

Roudebush: I was born in Cleveland, downtown hospital.

Meyer: And you grew up in Cleveland?

Roudebush: Yes.

Meyer: Eastside or Westside?

Roudebush: Eastside. I'm an Eastsider.

Meyer: Like Cleveland Heights?

Roudebush: No, I went Shaker [Heights]. My dad was a lawyer, so we lived in Shaker. My wife came from Cleveland Heights.

Meyer: Where were you when you heard about the Pearl Harbor attacks?

Roudebush: Even though it was December, my dad's recreation place was a log cabin. And we'd go out there almost every weekend. It was a younger brother, two years younger; a younger sister, five years younger than the brother. We each brought a friend. So my folks stayed upstairs and we had bunks everywhere. Finally we had a little bunkhouse built out in the yard. And we were there and somebody came running over to us and told us about Pearl Harbor.

Meyer: How old were you then, in '41? December '41.

Roudebush: Well let's see. In '43 I was 18. So, 16.

Meyer: And what's your birth date?

Roudebush: May first.

Meyer: May first 19--?

Roudebush: Twenty-five. We're all '25, all men, all us youngest guys.

Grosinske: You're one year younger than my father. You're one year younger than my father. So, because we just came from a winery, when you were going house to house, did you come across any stores of wine or other liquor? And if so, did you do anything?

Roudebush: I got drunk on one bottle of wine. And I didn't know anything about wine. Passing it around a room, I got drunk on one bottle of wine. A half a bottle of wine. But we very seldom found them. I hear about guys running into wine factories – never happened.

Now, every house had a coal pile -- about three or four wheelbarrows full in every house. Coal. In the coal pile you scrape away the top and they had their canned goods. And always, always could find home canned cherries in the coal pile.

Grosinske: Where they hiding them?

Roudebush: Yeah. They were hiding them from us. And everybody seemed to have this same idea. Of course it didn't take us long to figure out that was the first place to go to get a treat. [laughs]. And in Germany they're all in bomb shelters. In France, we didn't bother the farmhouses. We slept in the barn. We didn't kick people out of houses. But in Germany we didn't see any people anywhere. Until we got in the big cities where some of the young girls, high school girls, might walk down the street and venture out somewhere like that. Never saw any of the men do that. But girls would do that once in a while. In some big city like Dortmund we were in, we were astounded. Three girls just walked right down through the middle of us,

whistling and talking to themselves. Didn't pay any attention. You'd say something to them, they didn't even look at you. Right down through the middle of the action. [laughs]

Grosinske: Was this at the very end of the war?

Roudebush: That was in the middle of the war.

Grosinske: It was in the middle of the war. Wow.

Roudebush: That was a little bit earlier.

Meyer: After Metz. The Ruhr Pocket.

Grosinske: Yeah. I'm just surprised that they did that. I mean, I figured it was near the end of the war, they realized it was going to be over and they were safe. But I'm really surprised they did it earlier.

Roudebush: Yeah. Well I guess they knew – I don't know how they knew they were pretty safe. But they really were. I'm looking at my notes, I'm scribbling things. I told you about '45 going through the roof.

Meyer: About what?

Roudebush: I told you before, probably. [break in tape] Same place.

Meyer: In Saarlautern?

Roudebush: Yeah. The first thing that happened, before we got to our final zones of action to stay for a week or two, we were searching houses to make sure Germans weren't in the house, and we found a keg of beer. And it was ripe. It was a big keg – they said 60 gallons. But it was about this size, so I always said 90. It was probably 60. And I said, Oh, we've got to remember where that is. And we came back about 10 o'clock at night and it was gone. The GIs had already rolled it out of the basement. [laughs]

Grosinske: Americans had.

Roudebush: And in Saarlautern, I think Patton came up to the line. Because what we see in the movies, that car with tinted windows, no markings, no flags on the boarder like the movies, on the fenders. And he came up and turned around and the mortar was slamming every place – 120 millimeter German mortars, which blew the roof off a building everywhere as we approached the city. So I guess that was the only time we ever ran into Patton.

Meyer: So you didn't see him outside of his car, but you saw him in the car?

Roudebush: There were tinted windows. You couldn't see anything.

Grosinske: But likely it was him because--

Meyer: Well, my father saw him from a distance one time with the boots and the—That was one thing, he said you would know where you are, you know, you couldn't write home and tell anyone where you were, but if they knew that you were with Patton it was good, because Patton was a press hound, so you--

Roudebush: Yeah. We had our letters razor bladed. My mother saved them. I don't know where they are now, but they were really funny to look at because they saved the "and," "these," "or," "this."

Meyer: They What? They saved those?

Roudebush: …but any solid noun, words, or anything of any consequence, was just razored out. It was just – you barely could hold it together. I told you the story that I got to save for – how do you pronounce that – Jazowinski (PH).

Meyer: Oh, Januszkiewicz.

Roudebush: Huh?

Meyer: Januszkiewicz. Joe Januszkiewicz.

Roudebush: Joe, I'm going to call him.

Meyer: Yeah, Joe J.

Roudebush: It was a story I told you before, but you're not counting that now. But I don't know if you want to take time for that or not.

Meyer: That's okay.

Grosinske: We have a lot of time. Talk. Because I haven't heard it.

Roudebush: Okay. We're 10 yards apart coming out of the woods. Ten yards apart. Kind of Pickett's charge, shoulder to shoulder. We were ten yards apart.

Meyer: Year. Are you in Germany, or Metz, or where are you?

Roudebush: This was approaching the Maginot Line. We come out of the woods and the GIs are already there. There's a big – I think I remember Joe saying it was Julius, Fort Julius [Fort de Saint-Julien, Metz]. But anyway, it was a cement, or a brick wall around a brick building. Sizable. It was as big as about four barns. And the windows were all exposed. But nobody was shooting. And I'm telling you, it was just amazing the scene that was taking place.

They got there at the beginning of this episode. He put it in his book, the story told by the colonel on the inside of the building. But I was there, from here to there, on the outside, watching it. There were about 20 guys there. They brought up a 75 mm. artillery anti-tank gun. And they shot at this steel door, which was hanging, oh, 12 feet wide, about 8 feet high, in this brick wall. They shot holes through that door, did nothing. I'm telling you they brought up, I don't forget, whether it was a tank – I think it was a tank with a 90 mm. – was the next thing. It did the same thing. And I'm telling the truth, they brought up a 155 field gun, and it was from here to there, right smack. I don't know why we didn't all get killed from the repercussions, but they fired point blank right at the bricks holding the door. And it went down in no time. It knocked the wall down. Not the door. Then finally the door went kerplop. And we go inside and 130 Germans were sitting in the basement, waiting for us. I heard. I never saw too many of them.

Grosinske: They surrendered?

Roudebush: Yeah, they surrendered. It was a colonel, I believe, was in there. But they had 30 horses.

Grosinske: Hidden in the building?

Roudebush: Yeah. In a part of the building, in the back.

Meyer: That happened at the Maginot Line.

Roudebush: Right. Part of the Maginot Line.

Meyer: And who was the colonel who it, do you remember? Was that Geiger or who? In Joe's book.

Roudebush: It was a German colonel.

Meyer: Oh, a German colonel.

Roudebush: Yeah, he [Joe J.] got the story and wrote the book. And I flipped through the book, I said, I was there at this particular story.

Grosinske: What happened to the horses?

Roudebush: Well, I don't know what happened to all the horses. But the thirtieth horse, I picked up a white horse, and found a bridle that would fit, and rode the horse down into Metz [laughs]. Bareback. Everybody else was walking. Boy, it was a long way from there, it was probably ten miles. We walked a long time. And it got down in where you could see the buildings – oh, twice the distance of that hill – and we could hear the gunfire going on, and I thought, oh boy, they're going to think I'm George Patton. [laughter]

Meyer: Oh, on the horse. Sure.

Roudebush: So I got off the horse, took the bridle off, spanked it lightly on the tail end, and said, "Hey, go find the grass." [laughs] Turned the horse loose and nobody picked up the horse. It took off. It was a lightweight draft horse they used all day. Couldn't imagine. All the mechanized equipment they had, they still had horses.

Meyer: I'll hear people talk about coming across wounded horses in battles. Did that ever happen to you?

Roudebush: I never saw that anywhere. I hoped they saved the horse. But I don't know what happened to the horses. I hope they didn't eat them all. [laughs] All right. Then, downtown Metz.

Meyer: Yes.

Roudebush: So I run into the motor pool. We happened to be going and there was a bar down the street or in line. And we go in the motor pool, and I decided to turn the key. I said, these Germans left way too fast, sabotaged this whole place. They fled someplace. And I turned the key on a Belgian-made stretch Cadillac. And it started right up. And it had the window between the driver and the general. We had the general's car. And we got three or four more 18-year-olds, and we started driving all over hell. We drove over cement blocks like a tank, and we came up to a place – the 5th Division, Red Diamond, was going into the building. We said, oh, we're getting out of bounds. [laughs] Turned around, went back the other way.

What finally happened, somebody, it wasn't me, turned the keys over to the captain. The next time I saw the Cadillac, they'd put a 30-gallon garbage can, or a big bucket of oatmeal, on the back seat. They're bumping over, and oatmeal was flying all over the back seat of his car.

And then the next thing that happened, we ran into a pontoon bridge. The Cadillac wouldn't get across the bridge. They left it right there sitting on the bank. Patton would have given up his horse if he'd known he could—[laughter]

Grosinske: That that car was there. Was the bridge too narrow for the car? Or why couldn't get over it?

Roudebush: I don't know what the problem was. You'd think jeeps and tanks and everything else go across. But that's what I heard. We went on and the Cadillac came up later, and the story was it was left there.

But I don't think I ever told you this story. One other thing happened in downtown Metz after the limousine. I see a line of guys coming the next street. They had pistols tucked in their belt.

Grosinske: Who were they? Americans, German, French? What were they?

Roudebush: All of the above. All of the above.

Meyer: And they had the pistols stuck in their what?

Roudebush: In their belt.

Meyer: In their belt.

Roudebush: I mean, 10 or 15 pistols. So we followed this line, and guess what? They had gutted a small church – took the pews out, that is. And it was full of coffin boxes, and full of pistols.

Grosinske: Full of what?

Meyer: Full of pistols.

Grosinske: Pistols!

Meyer: Hidden in the coffin boxes.

Roudebush: Right. Not rifles, but pistols. And they were piled to the ceiling.

Meyer: The coffin boxes?

Roudebush: And I don't know, but somebody found enough way to get enough light. It was light. There was daylight coming through the church windows, I guess. And so we joined the parade. And we opened up coffin boxes. And there were a lot of, I remember there was a – I always wondered about – it was a German, I suppose a machine pistol. It had a shoulder, it had a shoulder, the stock was a case for it. It folded up, and covered the whole gun. That's what I should have saved. But I thought hell. I picked up an antique pistol, I picked up about four or five Smith & Wesson .32s and .38s. I gave them away to other people. And saved some oddball, screwball stuff. So I had about 20 pistols, and I couldn't – I realized finally I couldn't carry these things, and started giving them away. [laughs] But, I got four or five, six of those screwballs. Because when I went to Fort Dix, our baggage was brought up. And nobody paid any attention so long as you had your name on a duffel bag. Duffels were really long. The vertical ones we had.

But anyway, okay, I went over and I took lots of things away at that first [security line] at Fort Dix. You went through a long buffet line with kids that were sorting things out. Well, you can have your umbrella. You can have an extra shirt, and so on. So I got my sticker that I had passed inspection.

I'm telling you the truth. I threw five duffel bags over the fence. I had five bags survive all the junk. And my prize was, I thought it was just great, I stuffed them with olive drab blankets. I had about 10 or 15 blankets. And I thought, this is the best piece of gear we can find – I don't need any more shirts, or pants.

Grosinske: You threw them over the fence. Did you collect them, then?

Roudebush: Oh, yeah. Then I walked around. I had my tickets there and I was home free.

Grosinske: Okay. You were a really wily character.

Roudebush: Here's my paper, here's my approval. Some guys had German typewriters, everything like that.

Meyer: Do you still have any of the guns?

Roudebush: I still have a couple of things. I think one was a French pistol. I think I gave away most of them. But. Okay. My dad did the same things we did. He was an infantry captain. He'd been in Nancy, Reims, all over in the first war. And I had his .45 revolver and a 45 pistol. But I had my pistol. Somewhere along the line I picked up a, it was on the neck of a German prisoner.

Meyer: You picked up a what?

Roudebush: A 1911 automatic .45. It was hanging on this guy's neck. And I still remember the expression of other people standing around me. And I took it off of his neck, and they looked at the guy. He didn't know what to think. He wasn't afraid, he wasn't scared. But it was kind of an expression of what's next? What are they going to do to me? And of course we did nothing. I should have thanked him. I didn't do that [laughs]. And so I have those things.

And I had somebody, a gun connoisseur, come in, who was an amateur guy. He said, boy these are valuable. Because the belt said 1917. And here we are now 99 years ago.

But I'm going to tell you something more interesting. I don't know what to do with those. My daughters are anti-gun. They made their grandsons anti-gun. Nobody wants anything. I'm selling my shotguns. I don't care about the extra ones. I shoot trap all the time, but I don't care about the extra ones. [unclear] for them. Nobody wants them.

Grosinske: What about a museum?

Roudebush: No, they're sort of, I have some Brownings, I didn't like the Brownings because they had a fixed choke. I like the newer guns. But, then my dad said he had an attaché case, he always called it, and it was a beat-up piece of canvas with a leather folder over it. And I just suddenly thought to look for that and I found it stored in our basement. Guess what I found when I opened it?

Meyer: What?

Roudebush: It had tissue paper. And I mean really thin tissue paper. And it was a list from France of the roster. It was a two-page list of an Ohio regiment. It was his own thing. Now I don't know if that's full intact thing or not. I was going to take it to the local – I got a lot of family information about what relative did I have in the Civil War, she helped me a lot. And I was going to check whether she thought this was, it would give all the names. They're very readable.

Meyer: So it goes all the way back to the American Civil War.

Roudebush: Very delicate. So I just left it there. I just--

Grosinske: Was it World War I or was it Civil War?

Roudebush: Oh no, it's the first World War.

Grosinske: Okay.

Roudebush: The Civil War, I was talking to her about my relatives. I found my grandfather's brother was in 10 or 12 Civil War battles, including Sheridan, Antietam, Gettysburg – and the list was – he survived about 10 battles, can you imagine that. But what to do, I don't think it's valuable enough for the Smithsonian, but who would preserve a piece of junk, leather like this that was 99-

Meyer: Well, if you figured out what it was or something, you could scan it, put it on the internet, at least. And maybe the company--

Roudebush: Well the library [unclear] always find out where Ohio people served, and so forth.

Meyer: Yeah, they were all around.

Roudebush: And so I think that would be a little bit helpful that way.

Grosinske: I think an Ohio museum would like it, actually, if they were local.

Roudebush: Long as somebody, I certainly don't have any use for it. I fortunately went to an Amish guy; the strap is broken on it. Fortunately, he wouldn't fix it. And I thought, uh-oh, if he fixed it, it would be tampered with, so I thought I'd better leave it broken.

Meyer: That's right. That's right. I had a watch that was my brother's that needed repair and this one thing. And I didn't get it repaired. Then it sold at an auction and the guy said it's good you didn't repair it, because it wouldn't be worth half as much.

Roudebush: Yeah. It was repaired with some string. It had a buckle, snaps, on each end. But it had been, one of those broke loose from the leather, and it was tied with string to try to hold it together.

Meyer: Did your father, when you joined up, did he give you any advice? Did he tell you anything?

Roudebush: Huh?

Meyer: Did your father tell you anything when you went into the service?

Roudebush: He didn't tell me anything about that. No, I had no advice. Well, I did get some advice. He said, "I know a friend of mine that was a general in Washington." He said, "I could

see if he could find you a job to get out of the infantry" where we're all heading. But I said, "Ah, don't want to do that, I'd rather take my chances." Stupidly.

Grosinske: And you ended up in the infantry.

Roudebush: Yeah. Stupidly. Not smart enough. Not smart enough to take advantage of that.

Meyer: Why the army and not the navy?

Roudebush: Well, good question. I went down during the summer, volunteered for the navy. And he said, "You can't see, we don't want you."

Meyer: Whoa.

Roudebush: Yeah. I volunteered for the navy. And so I said, okay, my draft number's coming up, I guess I'll just go that route.

Meyer: So you waited to be called.

Roudebush: And I just got assigned to the army. Yeah. Yeah, I waited to be called.

Grosinske: But yeah, you went to Carnegie Mellon.

Roudebush: Yeah, then all of a sudden we got the break to go to Carnegie Mellon. But boy we worked like the devil. We really had to study because, guy's backing up in front of the bus. (laughs) The professor happened to be a Jewish guy, but that's no deterrent, or rather, anything bad. But he said, "You guys better study or you'll go in the army." [laughs] And so we were scared to death. We tried to put our nose to the grindstone to do something. So we were there only four or five months. They marched us around the campus, got on the train, went to Wilkes-Barre for maneuvers.

Meyer: To where?

Roudebush: Wilkes-Barre. The woods of—

Grosinske: Pennsylvania?

Roudebush: Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Meyer: Did you meet up with the 95th in Indiantown Gap, or where?

Roudebush: Let's see now. How did that happen that we got into the 95th? I guess we were assigned from school. They put us on the train, and yeah, I guess they just shipped us to the 95th.

Grosinske: So they were in Wilkes-Barre? The 95th was at Wilkes-Barre?

Roudebush: They were on maneuvers. I guess that's what happened. We got shipped right – they said, here's where you're going. They shipped us into the woods and they were on maneuvers, A Team, B Team, go over the hill and chase each other. But guess what happened there? We were taking a break. We were sitting on the side of a hillside, it was grassy, in the middle of the woods. And they passed out lunch. Just like we had at home. A breadbox with a shaggy paint job on it. And they were passing out ham sandwiches to everybody. It would be like, almost as many people on a bus – right next to me they ran out. "Sorry mister, no more sandwiches." Guess what? They got poisoned. They had ham poisoning. And I'm telling you, they were — everybody was unconscious, lying on the ground, white as sheets. How could a body get so white? Rather than death being purple or something, it was white. Everybody was unconscious.

Grosinske: Oh my goodness. I didn't even know that was possible.

Roudebush: Yes, it was amazing. Nobody died. And somehow they got the local fire department, I guess, to come up in the woods, and stretchered everybody down to the road, got them all in the hospital.

Meyer: Was that on mountain maneuvers or when?

Roudebush: Yeah, mountain maneuvers.

Meyer: In West Virginia?

Grosinske: But you were okay.

Roudebush: No, in Pennsylvania, next to Wilkes-Barre.

Grosinske: But you were okay. Because they ran out.

Roudebush: Well, they ran, I didn't eat that ham sandwich, so I was okay.

Meyer: So how did the older veterans treat you as the new young guy?

Roudebush: Oh, I think their nose was out of joint at the beginning. We were talking about that a while ago with Madden (Paul Madden Jr.), and I kind of agreed with that. They were out of sorts probably for a month or two, with these smart-ass college boys coming in. We kind of kept our mouth shut because we knew we couldn't say too much. We couldn't tell anybody how to do something. And they'd been through Camp Swift, and San Antonio, and all this stuff. Some were from West Virginia. I remember, it seemed to me, most of them I ran into were from Oklahoma, in our unit. So we finally, I think we finally got accepted, I think especially after the war started, that was over.

Grosinske: So you got drafted in September.

Roudebush: Right.

Grosinske: And when did you go to Carnegie Mellon?

Roudebush: Artie Show [remembering the musician].

Meyer: Artie Shaw – yeah, Artie Shaw is the musician.

Grosinske: I love Artie Shaw. So you were drafted in September?

Roudebush: Yes.

Grosinske: And then when did you go to Carnegie Mellon?

Roudebush: Went to Terminal Tower [Cleveland]; we were sworn in in the basement of the building. A downtown building, which is the train station. It was Penn Central for Cleveland. Shipped through Columbus, to Hayes; it was just a barracks holding camp. It was nothing. Right downtown next to Ohio State. [laughs]

Meyer: Right next to Ohio State. What was the name of the camp? What was the name of the camp again?

Roudebush: Hayes, H-a-y-e-s. President Hayes? I don't know.

Grosinske: So how long, thought, until you went to Carnegie Mellon? You did training for a certain amount of time?

Roudebush: Well, we went to Fort Benning for our basic, and it was pretty quick after Fort Benning, I guess.

Grosinske: Really?

Roudebush: Yeah.

Meyer: Did you know when you joined that you were accepted into ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program]?

Roudebush: Nope, had no clue.

Meyer: No clue. So you got in Fort Benning—

Roudebush: The army said, oh, the navy's got this deal. We ought to have our own deal, I heard was the reason for that.

Grosinske: Had you started university or not?

Roudebush: What's that?

Grosinske: Had you already, had you started going to university?

Roudebush: Well, I took some Denison summer courses. College summer courses. That paid off because I had enough credits – we couldn't get out when the war was over until October; that spoiled that semester. So I made up for it in three and a half years instead of four. Yeah. I started in February at Denison. Woody Hayes was there then.

Grosinske: Woody Hayes? Really?

Meyer: Where, at Denison?

Roudebush: Yeah, he came from Massillon High School. Went to Denison [after] they won the state championship. He came over to track and field. [unclear] come over and play games with him. I sat on the bench in high school; I never really liked football. But anyway, it was something to do. And, I don't know if told you this or not, but one of the dummies is the length of the bus, from here to the windshield. They tackle each other. And the guy would run at you full blast, and smack you and knock you down. That was to toughen you up. And when they hit my thighs by the shrapnel that was still in there, it only took about eight tackles. So when I went home that night all this stuff came up in the middle of my thigh. And I had an uncle who was a college surgeon. Well it wasn't so bad. Seemed to me I just picked the stuff out, you know. He just cut a hole down, and man I was out of business. He cut me down to the bone trying to find a bullet or something. There wasn't any bullet in there. Little pieces. And so, that was the end of that season.

The next season, Woody Hayes, fortunately, saved my knees. Fortunately, I had four glasses of tea, with a lot of sugar in it. I burst my appendix. Boy, I was in the hospital for two weeks. Those days, they just ruined you. Nowadays you could play football in a week I guess. So that was really lucky because now I can still use my knees.

Grosinske: (laughs) Good thing. You can still run.

Roudebush: Yeah.

Meyer: So you went, so you met the, what ship did you go over with?

Roudebush: We were in the Mariposa.

Meyer: Did you go back on the Mariposa, too?

Roudebush: I went back on the Mariposa.

Meyer: And how were you with seasickness?

Roudebush: How was I at sea?

Meyer: Yeah.

Roudebush: I was seasick. I couldn't eat for a week. [laughs] 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. And I thought I should have gone to the navy and said, "Hey, I have good eyesight, not doing anything. I'll go look for submarines." We zig-zagged across the ocean, that's how we did that. And dodge the submarines.

But the funny thing was, when we landed in Southampton – I don't know if you knew this or not, but he would know – but when we landed in Southampton there were little blimps holding up wire screens, 500 feet in the air.

Grosinske: For what?

Roudebush: To keep the Germans from strafing underneath that. They made the Germans come up over the top of that, [unclear] shot--

Grosinske: They were holding up screens. I never heard that before.

Roudebush: Yeah, they had wires. There were wires dangling. And they held those things up. I don't know – I think there was a strand horizontally, and the thing hangs from them. But, when we landed, there was a lone stevedore ran into the lines. And we pulled up against the dock. And this British guy said, "Why don't you bloody," shouting out, "you bloody Yanks go home!"

Grosinske: I'm sure you would love to have.

Roudebush: And boy oh boy, wasn't that the best advice we would ever get? [laughs] "Captain, turn around, we've got to go!" And then everybody jeered. Now you could look at him and say, "Boy, buster, you're right." [laughs] But everybody jeered – Gah [laughs]! Six thousand troops screamed back at him.

Grosinske: Wait, this was coming or going?

Roudebush: This was landing [unclear]

Grosinske: When you were landing there. And so how long were you in England?

Meyer: A month?

Roudebush: A month.

Grosinske: A month?

Roudebush: Yeah.

Meyer: Did you go to Camp Barton Stacey?

Roudebush: We were--

Meyer: Near Winchester?

Roudebush: Winchester. And we were in tents, and the officers were in a British berth. [laughs] And we were in the tents in the yard. And a thousand plane raids were going on then. And boy that was something to see.

Meyer: The what?

Roudebush: The thousand planes a day. And planes would come back from Europe with their engines on fire. We'd hear explosions. And hopefully everybody got out, and they let the plane go and land into an apartment building, wherever they were going. And they were wobbling coming in. Engines out. It happened a lot.

Grosinske: So these were American planes going to Germany.

Roudebush: Yeah. The outgoing to Europe were way up high. The incoming were down low; I mean 1,000 feet, even. And trying to find a place to land.

Meyer: Holy cow. So you'd look up in the sky and you'd see all these planes.

Roudebush: Oh yeah, 20, 30, 40 planes of B24s and 17s in the air at the same time. Amazing. See, another interesting thing following continuity here, at that time I had an uncle who was hired from shave (CK) headquarters, from them, to do something in the signal corps. I had no idea what he did, but he was a technician for AT&T. He was a colonel. And he found me, and got me a weekend pass. And can you imagine all that stuff, go out and find Roudebush and sent him over here? And so I got a train ride, and a buzz bomb was going overhead. Everybody's running every direction. Hey, what the hell they all running for, it's going that way? And then it cut off and landed in an apartment building down out of sight someplace.

Meyer: What did it sound like?

Roudebush: It had a, like a helicopter; it had a very heavy special sound. A big, grinding kind of a sound. Not like an airplane.

Meyer: And if you looked up, could you see it?

Roudebush: Oh, it was right low. It was coming in 1,000 feet. And, not like our rockets now – it wasn't that fast – but it was moving quickly. I looked at it from the train station quite a while. Oh, it's kind of going like this, going across the sky.

And so, he was a bachelor, and he took me to the Rockettes-type thing; I forget what they called that in London. But the girls were clicking their heels.

Meyer: Semi-clad or all costume?

Roudebush: Huh?

Meyer: Were they semi-clad or were they all—

Roudebush: Oh, they were all clad, it was like the Rockettes. It was a show on the stage. Then he took me to Savoy, and it was empty. Boy, it seemed like it was 50 yards long. And there was a little old lady under the [inaudible], and he and I testing tea and crumpets. And whatever things I saw, Buckingham Palace and things.

And guess what? He did the same thing in Paris. We were in the mart, someplace, and he got me to come to Paris for a weekend. And same thing. We went to Folies Bergere, and I saw Napoleon's tomb, and cathedrals, out for a weekend. They'd commandeered a hotel. The GIs were in a hotel, all by ourselves. I ran into a guy from high school in there. But another unit. I was back in the mud (CK). I went to the officers' club, and I thought, gee, I better be polite. And I took my .45 off and hung it on the hat rack. It was right next door to the table, so nobody was going to steal it. But if I'd given it to somebody in the unit, they'd say, what .45? You couldn't catch anybody with that. Because some were issued .45s, but we weren't. So I had to save that one.

Meyer: You had to save it. So did you have to watch out for your things? Any souvenirs you picked up?

Roudebush: Well, everything seemed to be safe that way. We got a rendezvous and brought our bags up. I had a little .25-caliber pistol sitting on the top of the thing. And I went to the bathroom. I came back and guess what? Some GI had picked it up and pulled the trigger. And I'm telling you.

Meyer: No!

Roudebush: And I'm telling you, the room was full of as many people as there is on a bus. And it went right smack through the whole crowd, hit nothing. He said, "Well why do you keep it loaded?" Well isn't everything loaded? What the hell? [laughs] It was an odd-sized bullet so I left them in there.

Grosinske: What an idiot for doing that.

Roudebush: So that's the way things went in the war. [unclear] going off.

Meyer: Did you get to know any of the French, any of the native French?

Roudebush: No.

Meyer: How about the Germans?

Roudebush: No.

Meyer: No fraternization?

Roudebush: No. Never met anybody. We had a German captain one place, that came out, speaking, I'm telling you, perfect English. He must have lived in New York. And he said, "I don't know why you're fighting us. We should be joining forces to go fight the Russians. The Russians are going to turn on you."

And we booed, booed, booed. "Oh no, no, full of baloney." So I'd like to talk to him some more. Particularly I'd like to have talked to somebody, well, what are you going to do after the war? Are you a manufacturer? Are you related to crook? What are we going to do that's productive, you know? I never ran into any of those.

I did, when I was cross-country skiing, cross-country skiing, I ran into a German businessman from Frankfurt. He befriended me, and his buddy was anti-American. Boy, he wouldn't talk to me. Must have shot his father or something. But he was wonderful. And I was at Lake Placid for a world ski race, a cross-country ski race, and he befriended me. And the Americans were all independent. They all went out and tested their ski wax by themselves. The Germans all got together and 40 guys tested their own skis, came back, and had a meeting. And I said, here's what we've got to do. It's a little complicated. You put one kind of wax on the bottom, and mix in two more on top. And the way you test it, you go down a hill, and to ski the furthest, by two, three, four, or five feet, is a big deal. So he told me what the wax was. He knew I wasn't going to do anything; I'm 60 years old and he knew I wasn't going to hurt any German team. So I mixed up the German formula, it worked fine for me. [laughs] I'm going down those Olympic hills, I would never ski a cross-country ski with no edges. And the trees are going by, and I'm going probably 30, 40 miles per hour, I thought, just way out of control. And I said, I hope they know what they're doing. And then it widened out to, wider than a road, with bales of hay. They could skitter into the--I got a lot of those kind of sports stories.

Break in recording

Roudebush: And we went up to this camp, you could see the people inside. And I opened the gate. And it was just a, like a pasture gate. A thin wire, field fence, cattle fence, around this thing. And it was full of Russians prisoners, men and women.

Grosinske: Men and women

Roudebush: Nobody could speak any Russian. And they hugged us and screamed, and celebrated. And the Germans had disappeared.

Grosinske: It wasn't just soldiers if there were women there, too.

Roudebush: Huh?

Grosinske: It wasn't just soldiers if there were women. Where did they come from?

Roudebush: No, they were civilians. They were civilians. They were probably factory workers, or I don't know what, why they were there.

Meyer: Were they thin?

Roudebush: No, they seemed to be well fed. They were happy and--

Meyer: What were they wearing?

Roudebush: Just like us. Regular clothes.

Meyer: So no sort of like prison uniforms

Roudebush: No, no uniform. Civilian clothes. Now, we were there for a few days. And they were put in 40&8s [train], and shipped away. And we always, then we read the stories that, when they repatriated Russia, Stalin murdered these kind of people. They thought they had too much exposure to freedom. So I don't know what happened to them. I don't know, there was more than a thousand. A thousand or two people.

Grosinske: He thought they had too much exposure to freedom? Is that what you said?

Roudebush: Huh?

Grosinske: He thought, they murdered him because they thought they had too much exposure to freedom?

Roudebush: That's what – I always heard that story, that Stalin thought they'd been exposed to the west. Too much anti-communism, and murdered a lot of the returning people.

Meyer: Do you remember the name of that place?

Roudebush: Nope.

Meyer: It started with a "W," I saw.

Roudebush: Nope.

Meyer: Let's continue with some closing things, and other things, and other basic questions. You were born in Cleveland, and you joined at Terminal Tower. You got drafted. That was in September forty—

Roudebush: Forty-three.

Meyer: Forty-three. And you get out in October ’45?

Roudebush: Correct.

Meyer: October ’45. Do you go back to Camp Shelby with them?

Roudebush: Yes, I was Shelby.

Meyer: So, Shelby. So you thought you were going to Japan, didn’t you?

Roudebush: Oh my, yes. We were all re-equipped. Bags were packed. Getting ready to, seemed to me we even started to line them up on either the railroad track or a truck stop. In another week we were supposed to go to San Francisco and get a ship. And the one division that Madden was talking about, got off, and got sent over. I think we were the third division getting ready to go. And the 95th was supposed to land on top of Japan, on the beach.

Grosinske: The top of Japan?

Roudebush: On top of an island in Japan.

Meyer: Hokkaido?

Grosinske: So where were you when you found out that we dropped the bomb?

Roudebush: Shelby.

Grosinske: Did you realize then what it meant?

Roudebush: Yeah.

Meyer: Did you have a celebration?

Roudebush: You’d think they’d say, “Open the gates and get out of here.” It’s too much to figure what the hell they’re going to do with us. [laughs] So we played baseball every day. No discipline, no marching.

Grosinske: My dad played baseball. That’s what he did. He was a really good baseball player. And I’ve tried to find guys for years that played ball.

Roudebush: Yeah, we played baseball every day, all the time we were at Shelby.

Meyer: Did you play, too?

Roudebush: Well we were playing intramural baseball.

Grosinske: But..But.. I've got a couple of clippings from the paper from Camp Shelby, where his name was there because he'd scored whatever home runs. So it was really pretty cool.

Roudebush: I don't know about home runs. I was in the outfield catching flies, I remember that. [laughs]

Break in recording

Meyer: Somebody said that some new people got taken into the army, and they were complaining. People who hadn't had any combat. And they were complaining about going over to Japan. Do you remember any new recruits grousing at Shelby?

Roudebush: Well, oh yeah. Wasn't just the new troops. The whole division was rebelling. I mean everybody. Everybody.

Meyer: Including you?

Roudebush: Well, I just listened. I didn't go bellyache.

Meyer: No, you didn't bellyache.

Roudebush: Yeah. And the officers would just sit around and smile. Cliff's grandfather gave a speech, "You're spoiling our reputation, quit doing this." Guys had gone to the Western Union, sending their congressmen telegrams saying, "Hey this isn't right, we've already been through the war." Fifteen thousand guys were standing in a parade route. And they were bellyaching and boo boo booing really. And it wasn't just the new people. It was all of us, all of us. I didn't boo. I was, what's next? What's going on here? So it wasn't the newcomers. And officers didn't jump on you and say, "Hey, wise guy, shut up." They just, I remember our officers were smiling. They thought this was a good idea, I think. [laughs] But with Western Union, I wouldn't do that. That would take a real rebellious leader, wouldn't it?

Meyer: George would you spell your name?

(Announcement made that a meeting is about to begin so closing is rushed.)

Meyer: This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379th, 95th Infantry. And today I've had the great pleasure of talking to, George, what's your name?

Roudebush: George Roudebush.

Meyer: Can you spell your last name?

Roudebush: R-o-u-d-e-b-u-s-h.

Meyer: What was your final rank?

Roudebush: I was a buck sergeant.

Meyer: Buck sergeant? In what company?

Roudebush: In Company F of 378th.

End of Interview - 2:04:46 (2 hours 4 minutes 46 seconds)