

## VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

**Veteran's Name: Edward D. Snell**

**Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)**

**Date of Interview: July 20, 2007**

**Transcriber: Carol Slezak**

**Transcribed on: November 16, 2014**

*Interviewer: Hello, this is David Earl Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379<sup>th</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Today is July 20, 2007, and I'm conducting an interview with, Mr. Snell, can you say your name?*

**Snell:** Edward D. Snell, S-n-e-l-l.

*Interviewer: And we're at the Clarion Meridian Hotel Convention Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. And Mr. Snell, what company were you with?*

**Snell:** I was Company F, 378<sup>th</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup> Division.

*Interviewer: And was that your name at birth?*

**Snell:** Edward DeWayne Snell was my full name. But I had to go to Edward, you see, when we went into the service, you see, they call you by your first name. So you got to go with your first name in service.

*Interviewer: What was your birth date?*

**Snell:** July 3, 1920. I just turned 87.

*Interviewer: Happy Birthday.*

**Snell:** Thank you.

*Interviewer: And what was your final rank?*

**Snell:** T-5 [Technician 5].

*Interviewer: You were Company...?*

**Snell:** Company F, 378<sup>th</sup>. Actually Second Battalion, 378<sup>th</sup>.

*Interviewer: Where were you born?*

**Snell:** I was born in North Manchester, Indiana. It's north of Indianapolis, 100 miles.

*Interviewer: And what were your parents' names?*

**Snell:** Melvin R. and Treva P. Snell. (CK)

**Interviewer:** *Did you have any siblings?*

**Snell:** I have three sisters, and one brother.

**Interviewer:** *And what are their names?*

**Snell:** My baby brother was Robert. My oldest sister Lucille, the second was Lillian Louise, and then Joanne. (PH)

**Interviewer:** *Did you grow up in North Manchester?*

**Snell:** Yes I did.

**Interviewer:** *What was your family like growing up?*

**Snell:** We went through the Depression. Of course my father worked at a school seating factory, where they built seating and tables for schools and churches. Then of course the Depression came along. And he had worked there I guess about 13 years. The Depression came along and he had to .. he went to Warsaw to another furniture factory, and he was laid off there shortly, and then he had to go to the farm. So from then on we were at the farm.

**Interviewer:** *Was it your farm?*

**Snell:** No, it was rented farms. It was the Depression. Nobody had anything.

**Interviewer:** *What did you grow?*

**Snell:** Corn, soybeans, wheat, hay.

**Interviewer:** *What did you look like growing up?*

**Snell:** I was always skinny. Tall, skinny.

**Interviewer:** *Did you enlist or were you drafted?*

**Snell:** I was drafted.

**Interviewer:** *What were you doing before you were drafted?*

**Snell:** I worked in a book bindery in North Manchester. Binding books and magazines. I had the printing department.

**Interviewer:** *What were you doing when Pearl Harbor was attacked? Do you remember?*

**Snell:** When Pearl Harbor was attacked I was in South Bend, going to a stage show. I had taken two other couples with us. We were sitting in the car and it came in on the radio. There was sobbing in the aisle when we heard that. We went off the stage show and of course went on home. I knew of course something was going to happen soon.

**Interviewer:** *How old were you when you were drafted?*

---

**Snell:** I was 22

**Interviewer:** *Do you remember the day?*

**Snell:** It was in July of 1942. I don't know the exact date. I was 21. I had just turned 22 when I was inducted into the service.

**Interviewer:** *Where did you join?*

**Snell:** At Fort Harrison, at Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Interviewer:** *Was it a big induction center?*

**Snell:** It was a big induction center. I have a roster at home, but I bet there was 30 fellows inducted the same day from my county. So we all went together. Frank Bever here [at reunion] was one of them.

**Interviewer:** *[5:00] And what did your family say when you got drafted?*

**Snell:** Not too much. My boss tried to get me deferred. But it didn't work. So I willingly went.

**Interviewer:** *And when you said good bye to everybody, what was that like?*

**Snell:** It was a little sad, naturally. We didn't know what we was getting into. I had no idea what army life would be like. So,, it was a change of life completely. I had just bought a new car and everything, and here I had to leave my new car, and went into the service. And then they outfitted us with army clothing. And so it was a complete change.

**Interviewer:** *Did you get on a train [at the induction center]?*

**Snell:** We got on a train, and we went from Fort Harrison to Camp Swift in Austin, Texas. I was one of the first groups that went into Camp Swift. Big change. So that's where we got our basic training. And we had about 13 weeks of basic training. Kept drilling, you know, and marching through the hot sand. Boy was it hot. Oh man, it was quite a change.

**Interviewer:** *My wife always asks, What was their first night away from home in the barracks like? Did that take some getting used to?*

**Snell:** Well, we were all in the same boat. Every one of us. We all had just gotten in. We were new recruits, and of course there was a cadre that was trying to train us. So they had to teach us how to march, how to shoot – of course we had to go to the rifle range. So it was completely new. We weren't used to Reveille in the evening. Or we had to get up at the same time every morning. We had to go to chow for breakfast. And of course we had to keep our beds and everything immaculately clean.

**Interviewer:** *Now did they have a drill sergeant?*

**Snell:** Yes. He was tough.

**Interviewer:** *Do you remember his name? Do you remember anything about him?*

**Snell:** He died just a few years ago. In fact he remembered me for some reason or another when we were in St. Louis for a reunion several years ago. He lived near that area, so he knew the association was

coming there. So he came in and saw my name on the roster. And so he called me up in my hotel room. I can't think of his name now.

**Interviewer:** *But he was rough?*

**Snell:** Yes, he was pretty rough. I don't know – evidently he wasn't too hard on me, but...

**Interviewer:** *But he remembered your name!*

**Snell:** He remembered my name. And how, I'll never know that.

**Interviewer:** *(8:30) What was a typical day like in basic training?*

**Snell:** Well it was the same thing every day. You get up in the morning, you're called out, you take exercises, and you go to breakfast. And then after breakfast you come back and prepare for the day. So of course, you had to be in full uniform, fatigues, and so then you'd march. And man it was so hot, and the dusk, just walking it rolled up over you – the heat. So it was torture. It was really torture. And there was no way to get out of it [laughs]. It was just like being a prisoner, you might say.

**Interviewer:** *Somebody said the other day, The army couldn't make you do anything. But it could make your life miserable if you didn't.*

**Snell:** That's right. That's right.

**Interviewer:** *What time did you go to bed at night, by the way?*

**Snell:** The lights went out, I think, at 9 o'clock. You had to be in bed at nine, and you were up by six, I think it was.

**Interviewer:** *(9:30) So from Camp Swift did you go to Fort Sam Houston next?*

**Snell:** San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston, right. And then we had more training there. We went out in the hills and trained. Camp Tupelo (?) was one of them, I think.

**Interviewer:** *Somebody said that's... that's where you went on the 25-mile hikes.*

**Snell:** Yes, we went on 25-mile hikes.

**Interviewer:** *What's that like, hiking 25 miles?*

**Snell:** **[10:00]** Well, I was lucky because I was tall, for one thing, long-legged. And I could take it better than most of them I think. A lot of them .. these little short guys, man, they had to struggle. But it's surprising how well they kept up. Everybody had to be in step generally. Not always on an 18- or 20-mile hike, but you should be in step.

**Interviewer:** *So everyone's in step? So it's not like a leisurely...*

**Snell:** And of course you were carrying your back pack, and maybe sometimes a gas mask. And so you had on fatigue clothes, they were hot, but you had to have a jacket on. And you're pants ... And at that time, of course we had shoes, and then we had leggings, too, coming up. That's before Eisenhower boots were [created].

*Interviewer: And then from Sam Houston you went to?*

**Snell:** We went on the Louisiana maneuvers. And I don't know how long we were down there. Probably, oh I bet two or three months.

*Interviewer: Then you went to Coxcomb?*

**Snell:** Then we went from there to California, Camp Coxcomb, desert maneuvers.

*Interviewer: What was that like?*

**Snell:** The memories I have from there, here again it was hot. In the daytime. Nighttime it was cold. And we'd put down paper – anything we could find. I think it was a four-man tent. We had a cot. ... And it seemed like the cold came up from the ground so much. So we put down as much on the cot to lie on as we did on top of us. And then daytime of course it would get hot again. But I drove a jeep most of the time.

*Interviewer: What were your duties?*

**Snell:** Well, it was still basic training, in a way. We still had to do all the marching. But we also... I was in the motor pool, with a jeep. And we had to be trained how to service them and care for them. And keep them clean. They had to be clean. And then if we would go on a maneuver of some type I would take the supply sergeant with me, and pull a trailer, and we'd be carrying artificial ammunition and rations – that sort of thing. And we'd try to go up the side of the mountain, maybe. And it was sand, and you'd bury that thing in the sand if you tried very hard....the jeep that is.

*Interviewer: Before you joined the army, did you know anything about jeeps?*

**Snell:** No, not a thing. No.

*Interviewer: So now you're learning...*

**Snell:** I always had a car, like I say. I had a brand new just right before I left, and I took care of that real well.

*Interviewer: [13:10] And from the Desert Center [Camp Coxcomb] you go back to [Fort] Indiantown Gap?*

**Snell:** Well we were actually camped about 100 miles north of Needles, California, in Desert Center. We thought we were going to go to the Pacific. But then they changed their minds. The order came down from headquarters that we were going to go to Europe. So then we go on two trains, and I think it was at least a week going across because we stopped at every little town – what's it called, milk stop, or something like this? – a lot of times you had to get off the train and take three exercises and all this.

*Interviewer: Oh you did?*

**Snell:** Oh yes, you had to stay in shape, you know. So we went clear across the states and back through Chicago, back to Fort Wayne, close to my hometown, and then to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. You know, we couldn't communicate in those days with our parents too much unless we get a letter. So I thought, I knew the mess sergeant. And I went back in the mess car, and I got a baked potato, and I

wrote a message on the potato. I thought, "Well, I'll drop it off here in Warsaw and maybe somebody will find it." Well, it just went to smithereens [laughs]. It's the only thing I could think of.

**Interviewer:** *What did you write?*

**Snell:** I just told them where I was at; I was going through there but I had no idea where I was going. They didn't tell you that.

**Interviewer:** *Now when you get to Indiantown Gap some people say it was cold there.*

**Snell:** We got there in mid-March, and it was cold. ... [W]e moved into some barracks, and ... we went into a bunch of bed bugs. (unintelligible) had lived there before and we went into a bunch of bedbugs. And we had to move out that same night yet. **[15:00]**

And we had our bedrolls. So we stepped outside that night, in the cold, because they had to fumigate our barracks. But that was our worst experience like that [laughs].

So then of course we had still more training and marching there at Indiantown Gap. And they took a bunch of us, jeep drivers and truck drivers, and sent us down to Carolina for .50 caliber machine gun practice. **[15:38]**

They had a small plane. They always said it was a woman flying the plan. We had a tow target on the back. We fired that tow target behind that plane out over the ocean.

But others went down to West Virginia on mountain maneuvers. We lost some men down through there.

**Interviewer:** **[16:00]** *And the .50 caliber machine gun, how big is that?*

**Snell:** It's a big gun. If you didn't put the brakes on it and put it in gear, it would actually make the jeep go back. ... But they had long range. You had tracer bullets. Every fourth bullet would be a tracer and you could see where you're firing at.

**Interviewer:** *And when you aimed at the glider – whatever they pulled – if you hit it, what happened? Did it explode?*

**Snell:** No it didn't explode. I don't remember what did happen. You just had a big tow target back there, and you fired at that target. Nothing happened. Just practice.

**Interviewer:** **[16:45]** *So you're at Indiantown Gap, and you've been with the infantry since Camp Swift, and all of a sudden the ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program] people start coming in who haven't been around the whole time. How'd they blend in? Did they have an attitude or anything?*

**Snell:** Well, we were hard on them, because we'd had so much training, and it was so tough, and they had trouble keeping up. It took a while for them to catch up. Especially the ones, after we got overseas if we had replacements, man they had... all kinds of trouble keeping up with us. And you could tell that they hadn't had any training. Just like they'd shown a bunch of recruits over there, and no training, and all strangers that they were working with. It was real rough on those poor guys.

**Interviewer:** *And they didn't have the stamina you guys had.*

**Snell:** No, they didn't have the stamina we did, of course.

**Interviewer:** *[17:45] So Indiantown Gap, you go from there to Camp Miles Standish [in Massachusetts]. Do you ship out at Miles Standish?*

**Snell:** Yes. I went on the [USS] Mariposa, from [Miles Standish, in the Boston area]. And the Mariposa landed in Liverpool [England].

**Interviewer:** *Some people had trouble on the boat, some people didn't. How'd you do on the way over?*

**Snell:** I did pretty well. There was a couple nights when I didn't eat too well. ... But I didn't get sick.

We had one guy whose name was Kagan (PH). That guy was a real good dancer. But that poor guy got so sick going over. And of course there was stormy weather. They played "Stormy Weather" so much on the intercom, and it was stormy weather. But that poor guy was so sick. He hung over the rail the whole way, and I think he actually turned green because he was so sick. He was sick all the way over. I felt sorry for him.

**Interviewer:** *How did they feed you on board?*

**Snell:** Well it was crowded. Man it was so crowded. I don't know how many thousands were on there, but there was a lot of us. ... And so... in one.. place where .. normally on a luxury liner [and that's what the Mariposa was originally] there would be three people in that stateroom; there was nine of us in that stateroom when I went on. Stacked, three high, and three rows.

**Interviewer:** *And were they cots?*

**Snell:** They were cots, hanging. Fastened to the ship.

**Interviewer:** *Were you on the top or bottom or middle?*

**Snell:** I don't remember that. But we had so many that we had to take turns sleeping on A-Deck on the deck itself. Because there were so many we changed off so they could have a bed part of the time, too.

**Interviewer:** *[20:00] And on the deck, I bet it was cold.*

**Snell:** It was. Each of us had been supplied two blankets. So we put two blankets down and two of us would sleep together, and two blankets on top, to keep warm. So you snuggled up pretty close to each other [laughs].

**Interviewer:** *So now you land in Liverpool. Where did you go? [20:25]*

**Snell:** We went to Winchester. And we were put in kind of a courtyard there with a whole bunch of barracks around. There was a big courtyard in the middle; we went out in it and did our calisthenics and training in the daytime. You always had to do your exercises every day.

**Interviewer:** *Are the exercises you're doing there different from the exercises you were doing...*

**Snell:** No, not necessarily. They'd be about all the same, you know. Jumping up and down, swinging your arms, and spreading your feet apart. ...

**Snell (cont'd): [21:25]** So, we travelled by troop-train, and drove trucks down to Winchester. And if I remember we were pretty close to the edge of London going on the way down. So it was quite a long trip, from Glasgow, Scotland. So we went down to Winchester and then we got our equipment all together – trucks and jeeps and guns and everything – and of course we were ready to go across the Channel. Down at Omaha Beach.

**Interviewer: [21:55]** *What did Omaha Beach look like?*

**Snell:** A mess. Oh, there was guns, there was vehicles, ships in the wreck right there. I was D-Day plus ... about 60+ days [they got over September 14]. ... So it was D-Day plus, and Patton was getting up pretty close to Paris. And so they were running out of ammunition and supplies. So they took all of us ... We had to wait ashore to get in there. And of course we saw the graveyard up there, the ones that had been killed during the crossing there. There was white crosses up there, just hundreds of them.

So they moved us in to the apple orchards us there, close to St. Lille, and all the fellows that had driver's licenses they took us out.

So we drove on the Red Ball Highway [Red Ball Express truck convoy system]. So then we hauled gasoline, ammunition, rations, everything, up to catch up with Patton to keep him going.

**Interviewer:** *Did you drive day and night?*

**Snell:** Yes. We had a relief driver. And you'd stop every two hours to kick the tires.

One time I remember we were hauling gasoline – Jerry cans, five gallon. And a Frenchman came out. And they could not get any petrol or gas. So he started throwing off the cans of gas for himself. And we had to get him stopped there, and put them back on. But he was wanting it so bad that they were willing to take a chance getting it.

**Interviewer:** *Now, would you just drive for eight hours and then rest? How did that work?*

**Snell:** No, I don't know how long it was, but we would drive up there, and in most cases we had German prisoners that would unload for us. So we didn't have to unload or load. And so then we would unload. Maybe we'd take a nap while they were unloading. And then we'd start back in a convoy and start back to the beach. Back there we'd get another rest until they got another load off the ships.

**Interviewer:** *And at night, did you have your lights on?*

**Snell:** Oh yes, in most cases. We weren't harassed by German fighters or anything at that time. I think there was a couple occasions, but I wasn't.

**Interviewer:** *How many weeks were you on the Red Ball?*

**Snell:** Until October the 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Interviewer:** *And then...do you travel train or truck to? ... Did you do the Forty and Eights [box cars]?*

**Snell:** Some of them did. I didn't – I was a driver. So we had to drive trucks. But anyhow, we caught up with the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, and relieved the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, and got in their foxholes, and took care of them. That

was beyond Paris now. They bypassed Paris to save the city and everything. So there was not much fighting in there

**Interviewer:** [25:00] *So the Germans were retreating, and you were following them. And you're with Patton's army now.*

**Snell:** Right, 3rd Army.

**Interviewer:** *You're going across and then you get up to where the 5th Army is, you relieve them, and you get in their foxholes?*

**Snell:** Yes. We got in their foxholes. And of course whenever you get in a foxhole you keep digging more, to get deeper, and more space, more freedom for you...so you take turns, one guy guarding, and one guy sleeping. You know, somebody had to be on guard all the time.

**Interviewer:** *How deep are those foxholes?* [25:35]

**Snell:** They would vary considerably. Depending on how much time you had to dig them. And how hard it was to dig [laughs].

The longer you were there, of course, the more you would dig. And you'd make them more handy, put a cover over them for more protection.

**Interviewer:** [25:55] *Are you near a city now?*

**Snell:** Different times. You'd be close to cities sometimes, and sometimes you'd be out in the country.

**Interviewer:** *So they kept moving you around?*

**Snell:** It's a different war than we have today, you know. ... It was a line that you might draw there, and...

At one time word come down from Headquarters that they wanted some prisoners.

And we were across a little valley, and the Germans were in the woods on the other side, and we were in a foxhole on this side of the valley.

So they said they needed about 10 volunteers. Nobody volunteered so they said, "You, you and you." And 10 guys had to go over, and they wanted some prisoners for information. Well, only about two guys got back. They were either mowed down or else taken prisoners, one or the other.

So, about two guys get back and they didn't get any prisoners – they didn't bring anybody back. Because they had the advantage, the Germans did, to us. Because they were in the woods, we were out in the open. And even though it was night when we went across, they could still see your silhouette or your shadow.

**Interviewer:** *So it could have been you.*

**Snell:** That's right. Oh, yes.

**Interviewer:** *So what's the next thing?*

**Snell:** Let's see. We were getting up close to Metz, I think it was, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion 378<sup>th</sup>, if you remember reading the history, we got the President's citation for taking the city of Metz. Or helping to take it, I should say. Just across the Thionville bridge.

**Interviewer:** *You crossed, which bridge?*

**Snell:** We were ready to go across the Saar river.

*(Interruption as Interviewer checks equipment and levels)*

**Snell:** [27:40] And when we went to go across the Saar river. At that time we were going across the river at Ensdorf.

**Interviewer:** *Just a quick question about Metz. Did you go into the city of Metz?*

**Snell:** Yes. But that's after this, I think. So anyhow...

The night we got into the edge of Metz, we came up to a ... not a bunker, but a ... moat. There was a moat around us. I can't think of the name of it. But anyhow, we got up there late in the evening, and they wanted to try and get into that fort. I'm trying to think of the name of the fort. And there was two big steel doors there, and of course they would drop down to a drawbridge to get into that fort.

Well, we brought up some big guns to lash into those doors and they hardly dented them.

So we kind of retreated that night ... 'til daylight.

[29:04] Then the next evening they went into Metz further. And that evening it was getting darker again, and so they had a place where they could get our troops some hot food. So I went back and got the mess sergeant with a couple guys working in the kitchen with hot food. We were going in there to help feed the fellows that night. They were in buildings and such. As we were going in, there's a cable hanging down the road. And of course I had my cat's eyes on, I couldn't have my lights on. And the cable caught my windshield and brought that back across us. ... It tipped [the jeep] over. There's four in a jeep. It tipped us over. From then on we put bars up on front to catch anything like that.

But that was one of our big scares. We got 'em in there, and got them fed, and of course I took the mess sergeant back with the food, and left.

**Interviewer:** [30:00] *Now at that time you're a driver, so anyone that needs to go a certain place, you drive them.*

**Snell:** I had to follow our company close, because there's two jeeps that supplies the Company. So each jeep has a trailer and we would haul the supplies and rations and that sort of thing with us.

**Interviewer:** *Did you bring mail, too, and things like that?*

**Snell:** Not that I remember, I never did. Because I stayed pretty close to the Company.

**Interviewer:** [30:45] *So, after Metz you go across the Saar River... into Saarlau...*

**Snell:** ... In December, we're going across the Saar River there. They all pulled up close to the Saar River. As we pulled up there, they had to wait until night to come in there. But anyhow during the daytime ... I pulled my jeep up and back in to a big barn area there... had two big barn doors for a kind of protection and to hide it you know. And uh...early in the morning the troops filed in there and picked up ammunition, rations and so forth before they went on across the river... over a little bridge-. foot bridge - that the engineers had put up that night. So they went across there.

**[31:35]** So they'd come through and pass my jeep and my trailer and pick up all their share [their supplies].

And when they were gone, I'd start rearranging the stuff on my trailer. The doors were closed.

And I was up there working... putting that stuff around on the trailer,

and a German .88 (eighty-eight millimeter shell) came in across the street from me. And I knew that the next one would be a little bit further.

So I jumped off that trailer real quick and got in the door. And the walls were that thick at least – stone and mortar – and the shell came through and just passed through those doors around down. It just blasted that jeep all to pieces. It.. the concussion knocked me down. There's an old cow in the stanchion close by. It knocks her down. She had her bellowing. I knew I was hit, but I was not hit. The concussion knocked me down. I think that's why I have to wear this today – partially.

But anyhow, then our fellows got across into Ensdorf, and we were so short of men, so many had been wounded or taken aback, and so there was 38 men left. We finally had to come back.

But before this – I'm getting a little ahead of my story – after the men got over there but they couldn't hold them. There wasn't enough men to hold the area they took over – the houses and such – and so they asked for all the jeep drivers and the cooks and everybody to help carry supplies over them.

So we had the supply sergeant ahead of me, and some of the cooks, and I was following. And as we start across some more German 88s start coming in. And it was muddy and cold.

And a little guy behind me, Charley McGee (PH) was his name, from Toledo Ohio. He didn't want to get too dirty. So he didn't hit the ground too flat. He kind of just got down on his knees. And a piece of shell came through and hit him in his stomach here, and I took him back. And that's where I got my Bronze Star.... I'm getting ahead of myself. **[33:33]**

And uh.. so then, as the shells start coming in, we went on and crossed that bridge.

A floating bridge, and you're carrying a .50 caliber machine gun and chest with you, it's heavy, and they go up and down like this.

Some guys went down the river. But anyhow, the supply sergeant was ahead of me and there was a little guy in-between us. So as we walked over the Germans now had control of the river.

It was flooded. In Ensdorf. We'd come from Lisdorf. As we were walking over there, any shell that would hit, it would dig a hole. So with them having control of the river, and the river's flooded, these holes would fill up right away.

So this little short guy between the supply sergeant and I dropped down into one of the holes. And he said, "Hey fellows, how about a lift?" So Sergeant (inaudible) and I ... we got him out. And he came up [and said] "Thanks" and walked off [laughs].

Like I said, there was 38 men left, so they had to come back across the river, and hold for a while until they got replacements and everything. [35:00]

**Interviewer:** *So that's Ens Dorf. From there, do you go toward the Bulge, or what happens? Now you're in December, aren't you?*

**Snell:** Yeah... that's ... that's later.

I kind of forget the order that this happened. But anyhow, for a short time we were transferred over to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army to help [General] Montgomery. And that's when we went to Maastricht [Holland] to clear the resistance there there. We went through Belgium and in Holland. And while I was in Holland they gave me a little Weasel [tracked vehicle] to drive, because you'd go across thin mud there. And then they had the Duck [DUKW amphibious landing craft] to go out in the water and unload from the ships and bring supplies in. But I was driving this little bit of a Weasel.

**Interviewer:** *What was a Weasel?*

**Snell:** It was like a jeep, only it was sealed... and it had a propeller on the rear end and you'd still have your wheels. It would go across mud and stuff ... and it had tracks on it. It didn't wheel it had tracks on it. I only drove it for a real short time. It was new to me [laughs].

**Interviewer:** *So..you drove those weasels.. that was up near Maastricht?*

**Snell:** Yes going into Holland, near Maastricht.

**Interviewer:** *From what I understand you only stayed up in Holland for a little bit.*

**Snell:** Yes, we stayed in Belgium for a little bit. For a couple of days I think it was. Liege Belgium.

And while I was there we stayed in a home, the Burgermeister lived there. They had three little girls. And the guy, this Burgermeister, he hauled coal in for the town of Liege. ...

And one evening he come in.. And they had little wood burners on each corner of the cab...and they'd build up the steam in order to propel the truck. But he ran out of steam, he got into the driveway and ran into a little rut, and couldn't go any further. So I said, "Just a minute, I'll get my jeep, I'll pull you out."

He said, "Oh that won't do it, that can't do it."

I said "Just a minute, I'll hook on to you."

So I got the jeep, hooked onto him, pulled him out.

And he couldn't believe it. He got underneath the hood, underneath the jeep and just shook his head. He couldn't believe that little jeep – of course it had four-wheel drive and it had lots of power -- could do that. But it worked out real well.

[38:05] So, I went through the Ruhr Pocket.

*Interviewer: The Ruhr Pocket. Did you go into Hamm at all?*

**Snell:** Hamm and Munster, yes. Dortmund. I was in Dortmund when the war ended. We were in Bremen then after the war ended. That's where they brought in big segments of submarines and assembled them in the harbor before they pushed them out.

*Interviewer: That's on the North Sea? Bremen?*

**Snell:** I guess it's on the North Sea, yes. I lost all my sense of direction over there.

*Interviewer: Just because we're near the end of the war, do you remember hearing about Roosevelt dying?*

**Snell:** Oh yes.

*Interviewer: Was that a shock?*

**Snell:** Oh yes. [He had no idea Roosevelt was sick.] We got Stars & Stripes, we'd get that every once in a while, whenever we were in position [to get it]. It was a shock to us.

*Interviewer: When you heard the war in Europe was over, did you know that it was going to happen any day?*

**Snell:** Well we were pretty sure, because the Resistance was getting very nil, you know. Very little resistance, and they had boys and they had old men fighting for them.

And of course there were hardly any planes up anymore... German planes.

When we went into the Battle of the Bulge, yah, we had a little liaison plane that was flying over, trying to spot any machine gun, or whatever. And a German plane came over, and saw this little liaison plane, and he took after him. Well the little liaison plane, all he could do was drop straight down. He went straight down... ee could pull out, but the German plane was so intent on getting him that he didn't pull up on time. It just went all to pieces. It splattered.

[40:15] Then after the war ended we went into the stationed at Bremen, that's where the submarines and so forth were. We were told that we were going to come back to the States, and of course we had to get those vehicles and take them back with us. So I was the driver for one of the lieutenants who led a big convoy to Le Havre. And I still have that map that they drew out. It's on parchment paper, you know. I still have that map.

*Interviewer: Was that Bremen to Le Havre? How long a drive was that?*

**Snell:** About 400 miles.

*Interviewer: Is it two-lane road back then?*

**Snell:** All two-lane roads back then. But now a lot of them have been blacktopped, you know. Some of them have been patched up. They'd had shells hit on them blast a hole in them. ... They weren't too bad

of roads, if I remember right. Of course anything would look good to me at that time, going towards home [laughs].

**Interviewer:** *Are the French happy to see you?*

**Snell:** Oh, they were tickled to death to see us. You remember the picture of the French people coming out after we liberated the city of Metz. Oh, they hugged us and everything else... they were happy [laughs].

We went to Camp Lucky Strike [in Janville, France], that's where we left all of our vehicles – the tanks, everything. Because it would cost too much to bring them back so they just left them there in row after row after row. So the French people since then they bought a lot of these jeeps and trucks and stuff, and they used them in the parades that we had over there on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. That's the way they came about.

**Interviewer:** *[42:00] Before I forget, did you bring any souvenirs back?*

**Snell:** Yes, I brought a German Luger that I took off a cop in Munster, and I had a little .25 pistol that I still have. And I have a "0" "3" rifle that is not an army rifle that I picked up in a home – an O3. A twenty-two.

**Interviewer:** *Do you still have that, too?*

**Snell:** Yah, I guess I do.

**Interviewer:** *[42:35] So you make it to Le Havre, how long -- then what happened?*

**Snell:** We were there just a very short time. We got on the Mariposa, the same boat we went over on. My group, yes, on the Mariposa. We landed there, Lucky Strike, that's where all our vehicles were, row after row – jeeps, tanks, 2 ½ trucks, tanks, guns, everything.

**Interviewer:** *And basically you leave most of that there?*

**Snell:** Right.

**Interviewer:** *That must have helped the French start up there economy again, or something.*

**Snell:** It had to.

**Interviewer:** *[question asked by Mike Flora, son-in-law] Did you pick up your Eisenhower jacket at Camp Lucky Strike before you came home?*

**Snell:** I don't know where I picked it up, Mike.

**Interviewer:** *You picked up an Eisenhower jacket?*

**Snell:** Yah. Earlier they had issued the combat boots in place of leggings. That was a big improvement too, it helped so much.

**Interviewer:** *Before I forget, how difficult was it to get a shower? Did you have to go a long time without one?*

**Snell:** Well, on the ship you know there were so many men that we had to bathe in salt water. Did you ever bathe in salt water? You get sticky from it.

Now once in a while if you make a friend that's a sailor, you could use one of their showers. But not very often [laughs]. You had to be a good friend [laughs].

**Interviewer:** *So you'd wash and you'd end up sticky, that's awful.*

**Snell:** Yah. You just try it sometime.

**Interviewer:** *[44:20] And did you shave every day?*

**Snell:** No, no. Whenever you had the opportunity to shave, you did. I know during combat you went two or three weeks without shaving. You'd get itchy. ... And dirty, and everything.

**Interviewer:** *[44:41] Did you have time to make friends with any of the French people? Or Belgium people?*

**Snell:** In Belgium, yes. Like I said we stayed with the Burgermeister. They had three little girls, and I have their names in my scrapbook at home. It was a big house, and they had a hallway that went right down the middle. We stayed in one half, and they stayed in the other half. So those little girls would come in, they'd kick off their little wooden shoes, and go into their part of the house.

[45:00] Interviewer checks equipment and recording levels

**Interviewer:** *[45:15] Now you're in Le Havre and you go back to England and you go back to the United States.*

**Snell:** We didn't go back to England we went right straight from Le Havre

**Interviewer:** *On the Mariposa.*

**Snell:** Right, Right.

We landed again at Miles Standish, on July the first, '45. I went back to Indiana. I had met a girl in Reading [Pennsylvania], [when he was at] Indiantown Gap and we corresponded the whole time I was overseas. She even went to my folks, to meet them ahead of time. On July the 14<sup>th</sup> we go from Manchester, Indiana to Pennsylvania, and I got married. We've been married 63 years now. Sixty-two years.

**Interviewer:** *Which reminds me, to go back, what did you do for relaxation [while you were at Indiantown Gap]?*

**Snell:** Well, we'd get weekend passes. And so a real close friend of mine, Leo Merrigan (PH), had met a girl in Reading. And so he asked me to go in with him one weekend. He said he'd get me a blind date. And so my wife was at that time was engaged. I was engaged to some gal at home.

And we met - we went to the theater that day. She borrowed her dad's car, which it was hard to get gas at that time, and took us back to camp.

**Snell (cont'd):** And so from then we corresponded and I'd keep going back in there all the time we were at Indiantown Gap. So we got to know each other pretty well. And like I said we corresponded all the time, and got to know each other...

Now that man [Leo Merrigan] was killed in a jeep over there. ... Never knew what hit him. A piece of shrapnel just took off part of his house. He was from Missouri.

**Interviewer:** [47:23] *Any other friends you want to remember? To talk about?*

**Snell:** Of course we have Frank Bever here, and also Richard Spielman (PH), he's here. I went to school with him. Both those guys went into the army the same day, everything that I did.

**Interviewer:** *Now you get back to Boston.. Miles Standish July 1<sup>st</sup>, and ... you get married. Then do you have to go back to Shelby, or does the war end?*

**Snell:** No, the war wasn't over in Japan, see. So we went back to Camp Shelby [in Hattiesburg, Mississippi].

At that time ... they were going to ship us to Japan then. But anyhow, the war did end while we were there. And I'll never forget the night that the war was over with. Because there were cars come out that didn't have tires on, they could get gas again now, and they were just parading up and down the street, cars. So we sat along the sideline and watched them go, having fun [laughs].

Then they still were going to send us overseas in spite of this, as occupational troops.

Well, our wives ...sent telegrams and stuff to the White House. And of course most of us had enough points at that time that we should be relieved.

So the high pointers got to go. But anyhow, then they decided that they would disband the 95<sup>th</sup>, and they couldn't get rid of all of them at Hattiesburg, so then they sent us to Arkansas, Camp Chaffee, a whole bunch of 'em by train.

We got up there; they couldn't get rid of us fast enough there either, so I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. That's where I got my discharge papers.

**Interviewer:** *Do you remember the date?*

**Snell:** October the 24<sup>th</sup> of 1945. I was in the service three years, three months, and three days, to be exact. Three years, three months, and three days. **[50:00]**

**Interviewer:** *Just a couple more questions. Would you recommend military service now?*

**Snell:** I think it would be good for everybody to have a year of service in. It's compulsory for the Swedes to have military service for a year. I think it's good for teaching you discipline, manners, and everything else.

**Interviewer:** *How did the war change you ... the service change you?*

**Snell:** I don't know. I think I was more appreciative. But you know, it's a funny thing. In service I swore and everything, talked dirty like a lot of the fellows did. But the minute I got into civilian life, I never swore after that. Just change in life. A complete change. Everybody talked rough and swore at different times in the service. [Voice: You grew up quick. **Snell:** Yah, right.]

**Interviewer:** *These are just a few questions that the new infantry, the 95<sup>th</sup>, wanted me to ask. Because they want to profit from your experience. What do you see as a common thread between WWII veterans like you and the soldiers of today? What do you have in common?*

**Snell:** I think it's so different today than what it was then. It's a different war and everything. There's just no comparison. We ...we knew where the front line was, we knew who we were fighting against. They don't know who they're fighting against today. You know, some guy driving a truck or jeep as close as he wants... and blows 'em up, civilians and everybody. But we saved the civilians and we took care of them.

**Interviewer:** *Do you see any differences in terms of American support for soldiers today compare to when you came home from overseas?*

**Snell:** I don't think they receive the support that we did. I think we received real good support. We were highly honored.

**Interviewer:** *Were you? Did you parades or... how was it coming home?*

**Snell:** (mishears) I say we had a lot of praise -- "P" "R" "A" "I" "S" "E" -- praise.

*(short interruption from passerby)*

**Interviewer:** **[52:45]** *Do you see any difference in foreign support for soldiers today than when you were deployed?*

**Snell:** They don't have the support that we had. They don't have the allies that we had. We had lots of allies that today they don't have. We should never be there in the first place as far as I'm concerned.

**Interviewer:** *And what advice would you give today's soldier?*

**Snell:** I'd hate to say it. ... It's discouraging to send them over because they have no support. They don't have the support that they should have. It's not exactly an honor, I don't think for the poor guys today. I mean, they're honored, and we all support our soldiers, but for the reason we're there we shouldn't be there. Not by any means.

**Interviewer:** **[53:40]** *Two more questions. You've already talked about this, but do you recall a time when you felt afraid?*

**Snell:** Well I was afraid quite a bit. The most time I remember would be, if we were up on the front line for a while. Then come back and be relieved for a little rest. Then you were worried to get back up there. It was scary. You knew what you were getting into then.

Whenever you saw one of your buddies shot down or hurt or something, then you got mad, then you lost your fear. You would lose your fear when you got mad.

**Interviewer:** *And, do you have any words of wisdom for the way you lived your life?*

**Snell:** I don't know how to answer that. I guess you got to support our government, I guess. It's the good old USA, and we want to keep it that way. We want to keep it free. But we also need friends as far as foreign countries. We need friends. A lot of friends.

**Interviewer:** *[55:00] And [lastly], do you have a story you want to tell that you've never told before?*

**Snell:** I've talked a lot about my service and my experience and everything. I can't think of anything I haven't told.

**Interviewer:** *Well, then I'll just close off. This is David Earl Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H, 379<sup>th</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and I've had the great privilege, again – and this time the CD is clear – of talking to Mr. Edward Snell.*

**Snell:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** *And what was your Company again?*

**Snell:** Company F, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 378<sup>th</sup>.

**Interviewer:** *And your final rank again?*

**Snell:** T-5.

**Interviewer:** *And we're also here with Mike Flora, his son-in-law. Thank you very much.*

**[56:13] End of Interview**