

## **Charles Whittington audio log**

Narrator: Charles Whittington

Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)

Date: August 6, 2011

Transcriber: Carol Slezak

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Log compiled by: Teresa Bergen, October 2022

### **Begin Track 1**

- 00:00 introductions; everybody calls Whittington "Red" because of his hair; served with Company I, 377<sup>th</sup>
- 00:37 served from August 7, 1942 – August 28, 1945; final rank was tech sergeant
- 01:08 born December 12, 2021 in St. Louis Crossing, Indiana to Lester Whittington and Hazel Bauer Whittington
- 01:40 father was a farmer who raised hogs, cattle, soybeans and corn
- 02:02 has three sisters and one deceased brother
- 02:40 graduated high school during the Depression, worked on a seed corn farm for 15 cents an hour; description of duties
- 04:45 describes his shrapnel wounds while in the service; spent four months in a hospital in England, then five months in hospital in Clinton, Iowa
- 06:01 hearing about the Pearl Harbor bombing; knew he'd join service because people were already being drafted
- 07:15 went to Indianapolis to enlist in the air force; didn't want to serve in army: "But I was a green country kid, I got in the wrong office, I signed, then I was U.S. Army unassigned."
- 07:53 didn't realize he'd signed up for the army until he arrived in Camp Swift, Texas after a three-day train ride
- 09:00 Whittington was always paid last because his name was near the end of alphabet
- 09:30 barracks were new at Camp Swift, Whittington and his fellow soldiers had to put in the sod; the camp had been opened the previous month and was just getting populated
- 10:58 company didn't come up to full strength until it was transferred to Indiantown Gap, PA in 1944

11:08 they were hard on the ASTP guys who came in. “They’d been on the gravy train as far as we was concerned.”

11:43 ASTP guys got stuck with KP and guard duty; mentions the ones he remembers

12:50 memories of Sam Houston in San Antonio, TX

13:53 didn’t get promoted to sergeant until they were doing swamp maneuvers in Louisiana

15:00 scored well on an army test, but didn’t get called up for officer training; some guys from his company did become officers

15:44 Whittington rose through the ranks as officers above him were killed or wounded, such as becoming platoon leader during the attack at Maizieres-les-Metz, France

16:42 but that didn’t last long, because Whittington was wounded in November 1944

16:53 back at Camp Coxcomb in California before he went overseas, he won an expert infantryman badge and earned a 15-day delay en route to Indiantown Gap; he used that time to go home to Indiana and get married

18:00 got married on Saturday night, left on Monday morning; they saw each other a few times while he was at Indiantown Gap; wife Glenna [Talkington] was seventeen and still in high school

18:55 they had been married sixty-four years when she died in 2008

19:15 they started going out in 1940 when Glenna was in eighth grade; Whittington had graduated high school in 1939

20:08 mentions the ASTP guys in his platoon; one is a retired lawyer who did prison time and now lives in a gated community in Florida

21:30 mountain maneuvers in West Virginia; learned mountain climbing: “I didn’t like it, but you do in the army what your orders are.”

22:10 his squad went on a weeklong survival training course in West Virginia, camping and scavenging for food

23:50 moved up to Myles Standish in Massachusetts

24:15 shipped out on the USS West Point, the US’s biggest ship, carrying 8500 men

24:42 Whittington’s battalion traveled outside on the sun deck, no protection from elements; “But the worst of it was all them guys that got sick down below was coming up there.”

25:18 Fellow vet Ceo Bauer chimes in: “We stayed on the promenade deck. Played cards. Got dirty.”

- 25:55 overcrowding, everybody scared and sick, at least one man committed suicide by jumping overboard
- 26:44 by the time they got to Europe, all the men were mad and ready to fight
- 27:04 landed in Liverpool; then landed in Omaha Beach; remnants of D-Day—equipment strewn around, wooden crosses marking the dead
- 28:25 went into hedgerows; spent two weeks there in pup tents before moving up towards Metz; calisthenics and rifle training every day to keep busy
- 29:47 relieved the 90<sup>th</sup> Division at Maizieres-les-Metz, the first place they saw action
- 30:45 attack on Chateau Brioux: “I got hit in the arm with a piece of shrapnel. I went back to the first aid station and they pulled it out, awarded me a Purple Heart, gave me a tetanus shot, and sent me back up there.”
- 31:20 attack failed; many casualties; “It was a disaster”
- 32:03 thinks Patton made a bad decision to attack the chateau at night and use a march and fire strategy; “None of them got very far.”
- 33:20 K Company was almost annihilated in chateau attack
- 33:58 after getting hit by shrapnel, Whittington was back on the line the next morning
- 34:16 the next day, they took the chateau; slept some, picked up the dead; waited for replacement officers, including Vince Geiger
- 36:34 Geiger was his company commander for the next couple of weeks, until Whittington got wounded the final time November 26, 1944
- 37:02 crossing the Moselle River; by this time Whittington is platoon sergeant; getting bedrolls
- 39:20 a German soldier who shot himself rather than be burned to death in a garage
- 40:32 incident where Whittington refused to patrol a third time in German-infested woods; commanding officer threatened to court martial him; “Well, we had lost people every patrol. And I wasn’t going to do it again. We knew where they was at.”
- 42:24 Whittington took it up with a higher-up officer, who told him not to worry about it
- 43:00 later saw the officer who wanted to court martial him at a racetrack in Louisville

- 43:38 Whittington started attending the 95<sup>th</sup> reunions in 1962; “I don't think I've missed one since.”
- 44:20 about eight minutes of duplicate audio from earlier section about Vince Geiger's arrival and bedrolls
- 52:41 wearing a white arm band and not carrying a weapon to pick up dead; otherwise, Germans would shoot you; mentions people who were shot picking up dead
- 54:00 friend Donald Fields from Indiana who went out to smoke a cigarette and got shot
- 55:23 Whittington got shot by a rifle, just a flesh wound
- 56:00 surrender of Metz
- 56:45 they got in the brewery; fourth platoon sergeant got drunk and refused to move out, got in trouble
- 57:50 encountering booby trapped tunnel in a basement in Metz
- 58:29 Metz townspeople were hiding
- 58:45 brief break in tape, section missing
- 58:50 fighting at German headquarters in Metz; Germans wouldn't surrender except to a high-ranking officer
- 1:01:33 third time he got wounded, a German 88 got shrapnel in his lungs, wounded his face and “it blowed half my ass off;” long recovery, nerve damage in legs made him unable to walk for a long time; discharged on V-J Day, August 28, 1945
- 01:03:33 recording ends