

Audio and Video Recording Log (Required)

1. Name and address of contributor or interviewer.

Name of Contributor/Interviewer: David E Meyer (aka O'Shea) son of Earl D Meyer Co. H/379th IR/95th ID

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(Cyprus)

95th Infantry Foundation

Organization affiliation (if any):

2 Name and birth date of the veteran being interviewed as it appears on the Biographical Data Form.

Name of Veteran: James Woolner

Birth Date: 11/02/1920 (RIP)

3. Recording format (please check)

Video type

Audio type

Digital Video (MiniDV, DVCAM, DVPRO)

Cassette

DVD-R Video

CD-R

USB (thumb/flash) drive

USB (thumb/flash) drive

OTHER (identify) Original was mixture of CD recorded Marantz 650, cassette and minidisk transferred to CD:

4. Digital File type (please check)

WAV

MPEG2/MPG

MOV

MPEG4/MP4

OTHER (identify):

5. Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 185 minutes

Recordings must be at least 30 minutes in length and unedited

6. Dates of recording: November 24, 2004 (Metz France); July 2006 (White Plains)

7. Location of recording (City, State): Hotel Mercure Metz France; Mr. Woolner's home – White Plains

8. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence. You may estimate the minute marks. Providing this information ensures that key interview topics are readily identifiable and will greatly increase access to the collections for researchers (see next page).

Audio log

Narrator: Colonel James Woolner

Interviewer: David O'Shea Meyer

Date: November 24, 2004; July 2006

Log compiled by: Teresa Bergen, October 2020

Log updated – June 2025

As explained at the start of the recording, this interview is a compilation of two interviews with Colonel James Woolner, the first recorded in Metz, France in November, 2004 and the second in White Plains, NY in July 2006 when Col. Woolner (ret.) wished to add importante material that he found missing from the earlier interview.

When submitted to the Veterans History Project, the two interviews were painstakingly interwoven with the 2004 interview usually being the main theme and the 2006 interview inserted as enhancement and new information.

To keep historical integrity, a separate track was created each time the interwoven interview changed recording dates. The tracks were gathered on three compact disks and presented to the VHP. This presentation was suitable for the Library of Congress but is unwieldy and jerky the 95th Division's website.

For the 95th Division website, the various tracks of each CD have been appended to each other creating three long tracks – each representing each CD. The transcript and this log have been altered to reflect this organization.

This log gathers time codes in the following manner. The original CD number is written as a bold print Roman Numeral followed by a slash (“/”). The time codes written in Arabic numbers follow.

*For example. “**II**/05:15” would refer to the point in the Recording Number Two at the Five Minute Fifteen Second Mark.*

Begin CD1

- | | |
|---------|---|
| I/00:00 | Introduction to the two interviews conducted with Col. Woolner in 2004 and 2006 |
| I/00:39 | Woolner was battery commander of A Battery, 360, military battalion, the 155 outfit, served from 1941-1945 125 men under him. |
| I/01:35 | Didn't lose any men. Rare for infantrymen like him to survive entire war |
| I/01:55 | Came out as major (separation promotion and why) |
| I/02:00 | Woolner's surprise at being awarded a separation promotion to major. |

Audio Log: Colonel James Woolner

- I/03:25 this promotion had the unexpected consequence of sparing him serving in Korean War, when only reserve captains and lieutenants were called to duty
- I/04:21 released from reserves in early 1950s, had family by then
- I/04:59 at Yale in 1938, his history professor, Frank Monaghan, predicted the war
- I/06:00 Woolner decided to join the reserves, entered ROTC at Yale
- I/06:54 training in gunnery
- I/07:24 handed his active duty papers along with degree and commission at commencement in 1941
- I/07:42 at the end of July, reported to Governors Island, New York; over next year, trained at Fort Bragg, NC, Fort Sill, OK finished in May and Camp Swift, TX
- I/08:19 artillery school at Fort Sill
- I/09:02 heard about Pearl Harbor attack while at Fort Bragg, was excited about the war
- I/09:53 at Camp Swift, filling all the necessary jobs in the 95th Infantry Division
- I/10:32 the personnel varied in quality, sent some of the 7th division cadre out to make room for brightest guys. Then sent who we didn't want to the 97th division.
- I/12:00 Lieutenant Colonel Henry P. Gantt, whom Woolner admired, made him battery commander at age twenty-two. Gantt says "But you're so young.)
- I/12:32 Gantt had taken much longer to make captain in peacetime army
During World War Two, promotions were fast
- I/13:15 Woolner's three officers junior to him were OCS
- I/13:43 Jay Badeau was his talented exec, is still alive at 90 in Annapolis
- I/14:03 Badeau was a terrific officer with many skills and physical prowess, four years older than Woolner
- I/15:40 everybody was about the same age, between nineteen and twenty-six
- I/15:42 lists places he trained
- I/16:15 went overseas (and came back) on ship called Mariposa

Audio Log: Colonel James Woolner

- I/16:25 describes taking part in Red Ball Express convoy system from Cherbourg to Soissons. 50 trucks and 250 men. Drive day and night. Two men a truck. Base camp at Chartres. One way traffic. Two weeks. Stories.
- I/18:48 the canvas truck tops doubled as tents when they weren't driving
- I/19:23 landing in Normandy. Still debris around. Looked like the pictures.
- I/19:49 relieved 5th Infantry near Moselle, France. Seamless transfer
- I/20:22 First day in action. Close call with a Tellermine on way to observation post
- I/21:54 shelling during their first day of action. In October, 1944
- I/22:24 Patton's frustration that Third Army was stopped by impregnable forts at Metz
- I/23:44 description of forts, and staggering losses required to breach them. On General Patton couldn't stand that his army had been stopped by impregnable forts.
- I/24:30 disastrous attempt to capture Chateau Brioux in Maizieres-les-Metz at night
- I/26:03 night patrols were common, attacks weren't
- I/27:06 planning the attack with Lieutenant Colonel Ross Hall
- I/29:05 harrowing voyage out to the perimeter to register his battery, led by brave GI named Harold Odom
- I/30:32 reconnecting with Odom in 1992 and becoming close friends
- I/32:10 General Patton's insistence on night attack on Chateau Brioux, despite other generals trying to talk him out of it
- I/34:06 attack was a disaster, lost many of their infantrymen
- I/34:52 Germans counterattacked the following morning by overrunning K Company
- I/35:36 Woolner and his men fired concentrations, but infantry mainly responsible for stopping counterattack
- I/36:36 Still hears the Lieutenants voice (Co K) screaming, "They're coming through."
- I/37:07 Fire those concentrations But the infantry always saved us. "They fought a different war."

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- I/38:02 Driver and Jim are only ones left in the command post. “My own men saved me.”
- I/38:56 Ten in the morning. General Patton’s idea to attack at night.
- I/39:09 Always described American soldiers as attacking and Germans as counterattacking
- I/39:38 Germans were superb soldiers
- I/40:02 if they hadn’t stopped this counterattack, consequences could have been dire. “My battery would have been overrun.”
- I/40:30 mission and range of artillery, and role of weather on accuracy. Accurate up to 10,000 yards.
- I/42:17 explains K-factor, or correction factor.
- I/43:02 90% of the division’s casualties were in infantry. Mostly rifle companies
- I/43:49 the night attack on Chateau Brioux was “the worst night of my life”
- I/44:35 Germans were in a fortified chateau while American GIs worked their way through minefields in the dark
- I/47:03 describes personnel involved and time of attack
- I/47:29 went back with his son around 1980 to revisit the site, but the chateau was no longer there
- I/49:58 in 1994, met the Countess of Brioux, who was still upset her chateau had been destroyed in attack
- I/50:17 not knowing whether he’d survive. Worst night of his life.
- I/ 50:51 When did you finally feel save again? When battalion commander came back to the command post. You never think you’re going to get killed. You do what you were trained to do. Not a hero
- I/52:00 Patton probably thought the nighttime attack was successful, but Woolner thinks they should have attacked in the daytime
- I/53:00 first time Woolner heard Patton speak, the general claimed they’d “go through the Germans like shit through a tin horn”
- I/54:14 second time, Patton warned them not to get caught screwing the women after they attacked Saarlautern

Audio Log: Colonel James Woolner

- I/55:07 capturing Metz. Infantry goes in. Artillery stays and fires missionsl.
- I/56:00 Capture and surrender of General Kittel (German commander of Metz.). Metz fell 18th of November and Chateau was attacked on the 8th of November.
- I/57:22 next big target was Saarlautern, the beginning of the Siegfried Line - pillboxes and dragon's teeth Fortified city. Pillboxes spread all around.
- I/58:45 Story from December, 1944. Bitter weather. German shelled us started fire in the powder bags. Lieutenant Bodeau put out the fire in the powder bags
- I/1:01:00 On going to observation point on the above Dillingen on the Saar River, stayed two hours returned. Next morning, headed back, left the jeep walked up path they made day before – don't know why. Found a trip wire with grenade attached "right smack dab in front of me." Have to be lucky,.
- I/1:04:00 types of German booby traps and tricks, including fake landmine warnings
- I/1:08:11 taking a lookout position in a house in Dillingen
- I/1:08:27 95th takes strategic bridge over Saar River, Germans trying to knock it out with regular artillery. No good. Brought in a railway gun. Fire huge shell from 20 miles behind the line
- I/1:11:00 Three railway shells landed in yard of house where Woolner was sheltering, Huge sound. (Could tell shells by the sound.). Called in ordnance experts to examine shells
- I/1:12:50 Germans gave up trying to destroy bridge with railroad gun. Still fighting in Saarlautern right across the river.

I/1:13:18 End of CD 1 – 73 minutes

BEGIN CD II

- II/00:00 Introduction to the second CD, identifying Woolner and Meyer
- II/00:40 house to house fighting in Saarlautern, requiring dangerous high-angle fire. Dangerous to troops because margin for error is so small and can hit your own troops. Very tricky. Good description.
- II/03:50 description of 155 howitzers used to penetrate pillboxes More explanation of dangers of high-angle fire
- II/04:35 using self-propelled 105 driven up track drawn but not armored to take out pillbox

Audio Log: Colonel James Woolner

- II/05:20 explains modern roadside bombs. Two 155 shells (95 lbs each six inch diameter) tied together. Horrendous weapons
- II/06:34 Confidence in his men to be good at their works. explains choosing gun positions within “goose egg” defense. Three firing batteries in goose egg positions. He could go anywhere in the gooseegg and give orders.
- II/08:12 We would pick gun positions. Badeau would make suggestions but make decisions quick.
- II/09:02 describes time he got howitzers stuck in the mud. Looked good but when full track vehicles churned up mud stuck. Used fifth vehicle to pull the others out.
- II/10:16 for many years in civilian life, he would still catch himself looking for gun positions and dreaming about it
Still dream of it? No it's over.
- II/00:00 strafed by German fighter pilot outside of Saarlautern, who was then shot down when strafed a second time by anti-aircraft – shot down by Vittiglio.
- II/12:17 man named Vitiglio got credit for shooting down the plane
- II/12:38 German pilot landed spectacularly, only to be killed by a GI as soon as he got out of plane
- II/13:00 they were supposed to capture pilots to get intelligence on German Air Force
- II/13:25 the GI who killed the German pilot was court martialed
- II/13:42 somebody immediately stole the pilot's boots
- II/14:00 was slogging through Saar Valley in December 1944 when Patton pulled out the 90th and 10th armored to send to Battle of the Bulge. “We are the easternmost troops.”
- II/14:35 Woolner's division had to take over ground of two divisions, battery commanders chose new positions
- II/15:38 Woolner's division then taken up north into the 9th Army under Montgomery for the attack, had to cross the Ruhr River in flood time
- II/16:11 tough crossing – Germans had blown dams and engineers built pontoon bridges. River
- II/16:39 getting dive bombed while crossing pontoon bridge as Germans tried to cut supply line by knocking out the bridge. Bombed us but didn't hit the bridge.

Audio Log: Colonel James Woolner

- II/17:18 bridge crossing led to crack up of battalion commander, who was dismissed for battle fatigue. Jumped out of jeep and left it on the bridge blocking Woolner. Came back when called. Commander replaced.
- II/18:31 Woolner had a history with the cracked-up battalion commander, a colonel and ex-football coach from Maine who replaced Gantt. Coach was a bully.
- II/19:30 during Woolner's early training, the commander disliked him and took it out on his battery
- Went to the desert training. Command given to weed out officers who "didn't make the grade.
- CO took it out on Woolner's battery. Woolner says "Don't talk about the commander during meals. Ruining meals.
- II/22:15 Woolner's battery scored highest on army ground force tests. Bully commander had to congratulate Woolner (after previously trying to degrade him). Woolner proud. Had to give a superior rating.
- II/23:31 Nasty bully. Battalion that had this commander previously had party when he was transferred to us;
- II/24:15 commander was a miserable coward who never went to an OP (observation point); Woolner suspects he faked battle fatigue. Glad to get rid of him.
- II/25:24 thrilled to get Judd Clansit, excellent new commanding officer
- II/25:57 Woolner's friend and battalion exec, Cliff Jones, later became lieutenant governor of Nevada
- II/27:03 Legitimate Battle Fatigue. Sergeant Rockwell, a good soldier and tough guy. Sent to commando school, had been boxer but developed legitimate combat fatigue Couldn't stand being at guns and was career army and he was staff sergeant chief of firing battery.
- Woolner didn't want to send him back to avoid disgrace of being sent home so took him away his staff rating stayed a sergeant and put in charge of bringing ammo to guns and didn't have to stay at the guns
- II/28:59 couldn't predict who might fall prey to battle fatigue, Fear brought on by who knows what. Able to hang on with him. Didn't want disgrace of combat fatigue. Wouldn't have picked him as candidate for combat fatigue.
- II/31:24 Two of his battery's men, Dave Ketchinson and Joe Smith, were badly hurt at Wallerfangen. Neither came back to battery. One lost a leg. Noone died.

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- II/32:32 meeting and sizing up his men, determining best positions for them
- II/33:16 On instrument team. In charge of surveying and mapping. Benchmarks all over Europe so had good maps.
- II/34:15 His Battery's assigned position at Wurms had an Achtung Minen sign ("Attention Mines.") So couldn't put battery there. Could have been fake so moved to another area.
- II/35:32 Found alternative places to house his men; he and recon officer Linden Thayer bedded down in a German dugout, which caved in during night, pinning Thayer with a big slab of mug. Wooler free so could free Thayer
- II/38:26 while in that position, saw German V1 buzz bomb go over, -- putsputts - one cut out and fell on the 920th battalion, killing ten. Up 800 or 1000 feet. Could see them coming. Told not to try to shoot them down. Knew the people of the 920th Battalion.
- II/41:16 journey from Ruhr to Rhine, through Monchengladbach and Krefeld to Duisburg. Not much opposition.
- II/41:34 Come upon a distillery in Duisberg .. getting casks of schnapps from a distillery. "Good thing we didn't have to fire that night.
- II/43:01 sleeping in cellars, trying to stay warm in the record-breaking cold winter of 1944. Lots of snow. White sheets cut into ponchos.
- II/44:02 always found houses so his men could sleep inside
- II/44:36 put newspaper inside galoshes (overshoes over combat boots) to stay warm. Still cold
- II/45:09 describes different sections. Full track vehicles pulling our howitzer. Five prime movers on full-track vehicles Describes the 25 vehicles.
- II/46:33 Never went over 25 or 30. Bogie wheels fragile but could me fast. 105s pulled by trucks.
- II/47:20 description of howitzers and shells. Powder bags.
- II/48:05 firing the howitzer at night interdiction fire. loading shells
- II/48:54 Handling the 95 pound shell. How to put the shell into the howitzer

Audio Log: Colonel James Woolner

- II/49:42** Could fire every ten seconds. Every shell fired would throw out a little. Split trails and railroad ties to anchor gun. If you found six rounds a minute, tube would melt from the heat.
- II/50:55** Got almost to Paderborn (very far east) then turned West and fought east to West through mountainous Ruhr area
- II/51:39** captured Dortmund the night Roosevelt died; worries about Truman's leadership
- II/52:15** shocked, hadn't known Roosevelt was sick
- II/52:49** a company of the 101st Airborne attached to Woolner's battalion during fight in Ruhr mountains; the battalion was teamed with them. Lieutenant in charge of that 101st company warned Woolner that they shot at anything that moved at night. So his men wouldn't get up and take a leak.
- II/54:22** Continued fighting our war. Montgomery took three weeks to cross Rhine, Patton took 24 hours
- II/54:50** Went around the Rhine and fought West. First Army from the South and Ninth Army from the North armies fought parallel together to Rhine
- II/55:22** Woolner's battery in exposed position near Hamm, decided to dig in. Battery all by itself. Saw no one else Germans left men behind with radios. Training kicks in.
- II/56:07** explains process of digging in. Dig parapet around howitzers and then trenches or dugout for the men (six feet by ten feet as deep as you could go) Cannoneers took care of howitzers and themselves. Knew something was going to happen. Dig in the howitzer
- II/57:36** tells story of a wire section sergeant who violated order to help dig in howitzers, Sgt says, "My men our tired." Woolner instantly demoted him to cannoneer private
- II/59:00** when they were almost dug in at Hamm, Germans shelled them the hardest ever shelled all the time in combat. Seriously injuring two men, one howitzer damaged. Without the dugouts the damage would have been tremendous. Instinct was right.
- II/1:01:36** Explains more about digging parapets (wall) around it to protect howitzers. Build a wall around it as best you could.
- II/1:02:34** Never again spoke to man he demoted to private and he never spoke to Woolner

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- II/1:03:49 that day, both his instincts and his training about digging really paid off. What he had been trained for came to a head. .
- II/1:05:10 Woolner never lost any of the 125 men under him. Very proud of that.
- II/1:06:00 tells story about how he dealt with a sergeant named Dobos who tested him when Woolner was new to the division, earning the respect of his men
- II/1:10:00 how commanders could get rid of “eight balls,” i.e, screw-ups. Transfer to other units.
- II/1:11:25 but generally the noncommissioned officers took care of personnel problems not the battery commander.
- II/1:12:00 Other commander wants to get rid of Dobos. Wants to become part of Woolner’s battery. Now had been busted to cannoneer. .
- After Woolner became commander of A Battery, he got Dobos back.
- II/01:12:56 End of CD 2

CD 2 = 73 minutes

Begin CD3

- III/00:00 short intro identifying Meyer and Woolner
- III/00:48 Began to capture Germans in large numbers. The day forward observer brought back forty German prisoners
- III/01:32 Woolner had 30-caliber machine gun mounted on his jeep, mostly symbolic.
- III/02:07 On V-E Days, Woolner was in Munster out of action for four or five days preparing for whatever to come next. Cleaning equipment.
- III/02:53 after V-E Day, story of being on leave, heading to Riviera. Out at Lyon to pick up food. “Hey train is leaving’. Had to crawl across a moving flatcar to get to his train which was also leaving the Lyon. Just made it.
- III/04:24 *Time for relaxation?* Only three days off the whole time -- had 105 straight days of action, with only three days off
- III/04:55 Woolner was in Shelby, Mississippi, about to deploy to Japan, when they got news that the atomic bomb had dropped

Audio Log: Colonel James Woolner

- III/05:27 POM. "Preparation for Overseas Movement." Waiting to go to Japan.
- III/05:49 Early in morning. Hot. Heard it through the window. "Atomic Bomb dropped on Japan. War May Be Over."
- III/06:36 Camp Shelby, Miss. Disbandment. Five or six every day. We were going to Japan.
- III/07:00 explains point system, how soldiers earned enough points to get out of war. Needed 85.. then reduced.
- III/07:24 his first parade was at Fort Sam Houston after he'd become battery commander
a sergeant major asked Woolner to assign a man to carry the guidon; defines guidon as a pennant flag. "Guides on the line."
- III/09:36 Woolner concerned about parade details, but sergeant major said just send your tallest man
- III/10:38 recalls Cornelius Esperan, a strong Minnesotan lumberjack who could pick up multiple railroad ties; ties used to stop gun recoil
- III/10:56 tells story of how he covered \$10 shortfall when paying his men, they paid him back by cutting poker game
- III/11:54 Mess sergeant Evanson was talented, won Superior Mess, made best apple pie
- III/12:44 Woolner always told Evanson first when battery was moving, as it took a few more minutes to pack up kitchen. March order.
- III/13:48 men never complained about the food, except for some who wouldn't eat mutton
- III/14:31 had to build zinc-lined GI ice box for Louisiana maneuvers
Evanson had to climb inside ice box to clean it
- III/15:00 Commanding General Twaddle once shocked to find Evanson barefoot inside the ice box, but had to admit there wasn't a better way to clean it
- III/15:49 General Twaddle was a wonderful gentleman who cared about his troops. He was the only division commander to stay with his division the whole time. Probably not promoted because he wasn't a West Pointer.
- III/17:13 advice to Woolner's grandson J.T. from Woolner and his wife Trudy: study your history, serve if called by your country, but don't join the infantry

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- III/18:56** Recites service number. How war changed him? From 22 years old to 25 years old. Woolner had to mature fast when handed the responsibilities of command
- III/19:55** Men give Col Woolner a plaque that shows places Woolner served: Coxcomb, Indiantown Gap, Myles Standish, Liverpool, Omaha Beach, Red Bull Express, Battle of Metz, Saarlautern, The Bulge, V-E Day, Munster, Myles Standish, Shelby. Recalls 'We were so young.'
- III/20:53** Trudy (Mrs. Woolner) mentions they were engaged when James was overseas. She closely watched New York Times for news of 95th
- III/21:46** French man gave him memento, they became pen pals
- III/22:30** They listen to Gene Krupa's "Blue Skies" and Benny Goodman's "The Blue Room," songs Woolner wants played at his memorial service, and talk about his love of happy big band music and dance.

III/29:30 End CD 3. 29:30

Total time for CDs 1-3 = 175:44 or approximated 2 hrs 56 minutes